

Sermon for March 1st, 2015 The Second Sunday of Lent

Matthew 13:1-8, 18-23

BLESSINGS TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD THE FATHER, OUR LORD
AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Since Tim Phillips, from the synod office, was with us **last** week I will be starting our 4 week Lenten Sermon Series today. The series is entitled: **the Parables of Lent.**

This week we received the Word in our gospel reading where we listened to the Parable of the Sower and the Seeds. Unlike many of Jesus' **other** parables where we might have to dig down rather deep to understand what Jesus was talking about, this one—as parables go, is pretty straightforward so **what more** is there for me to say? **You know me better than that!!!!**

I would like to shed a bit of light on what is going on here. Jesus was **overwhelmed** by the size of the crowd so he got into a boat and taught from there. The **first** thing he told the people was '**Listen**' exclamation point!!!! Then he proceeded with some rather earthy images of seeds and soil. Something the people of that time could relate to. Pretty clear and simple terminology: the sower went out **sowed** seeds on the path—the birds came and ate them up, seeds fell on rocky ground—they sprang up quickly, they were scorched by the sun because they had **no** root, they withered away, seeds fell among the thorns—the thorns grew and

choked the seeds, and finally other seeds fell on good soil—they brought forth **grain** in varying amounts. Pretty clear—even **we** who live here in Southern California where we do not farm too much can understand this!!! **Right??**

But **here** is the part which we do not have in our text because as you can see there are 10 verses between the first part of this reading and the second part. What we do not have is where **Jesus** says, “*Let anyone with ears listen.*” The **disciples** asked Him, “*Why do you talk to them in parables?*” Jesus’ **reply** was, “*For to those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. The reason I speak to them in parables is that 'seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand. For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn-- and I would heal them.'*”

Now we come to the second portion of our reading. After this idea of the lack of understanding by the people through their lack of seeing and hearing Jesus **changed** the terminology: Jesus says, “**Hear** then the parable, when anyone **hears** the Word of the kingdom and does **not** understand it—the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart—that was the seed which was thrown on the path. As for the seed on rocky ground—the one who **hears** the Word and

immediately receives it with joy but the seed has no root in that joy, it only lasts a while and falls away. As for the seed among the thorns—the one who hears the Word but the cares and lure of the world pulls them away, they yield nothing as well. But for those who are good soil—these are the people who hear the Word and understand it, they will **bear fruit and yield** a great amount.”

Now, I suppose that it is only human nature for most of us to think that **we** **certainly** are the good soil. Who **doesn't** want to be the one who hears the Word, understands it, and yields a great amount? I know I would like to think that I am that good soil.

But the truth of the matter is for the **majority** of us—unless we are what could be called a ‘**saint**’ in this world—we have all been/or at one time or another have the **possibility** to be each and every one of these types of soil. The **four kinds** of soil reflect the human condition which **all** of us share. Of course, I can **only** speak for myself here but I know that is true in my life. There have been times when I have fallen away from **God and God's Word**, where the temptations of this world have lured me from my **walk with the Lord**, in younger days there have been times when someone has challenged my faith and I have backed down for fear of being **verbally persecuted** for what I profess to believe.

This parable is a statement of reality then and now. It is meant to cover the bases of our existence. We **live** our lives in the context of pain and trouble. Each

of us at some time or another endure the '*rocks*' and lack the '*root*' to stand firm in the face of adversity. We live amid the '*thorns*' of the world which can choke us and pull us off the path.

But one thing about God, the sower, in this parable: if there is **any** hope for the unproductive soil it is that He keeps sowing generously, extravagantly, even in the **least** promising of places. Just look at Jesus' disciples He did not simply give up on them **in spite of** their many human failings and lack of understanding. As Christians we **trust** that God will not give up on us either, but He will keep working on whatever is hardened, rocky, or the thorns in and among us. We trust the promise He made to us to be **with us** until the end of the age no matter what.

Today we will be baptizing baby Alexys. Her family has chosen to plant her firmly in the good soil. To give her a good foundation on which to build her life. A good foundation rooted in faith in God and Jesus Christ. A foundation which will be with her all her life as she grows to face the challenges of this world.

We are **blessed** to have a sower which, as I said, **continues** to sow the seeds of extravagant generosity even in the least promising of places. God will **not** give up on us in spite of our failings and shortcomings. **That** my friends is the Good News of God and Jesus Christ during this **Lenten Season**. God never gives up on us. All **thanks** be to God. **AMEN**.

