

The Sower & the Earth

Gospel: Luke 8:5-15 AV: *A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And others fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock [are they], which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of [this] life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep [it], and bring forth fruit with patience.*

"And others fell on good ground, and sprang up,
and bare fruit an hundredfold."

The parable of the Sower is one the most important Biblical passages loved by people, and the

clearest to them. The disciples asked the Lord Jesus about the parable, and He explained it to them, as we heard today. The sower is God and the seed is His word, and the different kinds of earth represent the different kinds of people.

Firstly, it is clear that Christ does not talk about how hard it is to be fruitful. Instead He describes the conditions of fruitfulness. This is contrary to the first impression that we might have upon hearing this passage citing paved roads, rocks, thorny earth, and dead fruits.

Every kind of earth, or of man, is good unless we transform it to a road, we harden it as rock, or we allow for thorns to grow in it.

The problem then does not lie in the nature of earth. For the wayside has at its base, good earth, but it was hardened to make it a path for everyone to walk on, and not to be fruitful. The same is true of the rock.

And Jesus, when giving this example, expresses our human position toward his cultivation of the Word. He describes all the causes that lead to the barrenness of our cultivated earth.

Upon hearing this passage, the first question that comes to mind is, "How can I be a good earth, unlike the wayside or the rock or the thorny earth?"

To achieve this, the first condition is not to be similar to the wayside that is being stepped over by everyone. We do not need to be a passage trodden by anyone, without restrictions and prohibitions, open to all, attacked by all the birds of the air, with no place for the Word of God to abide.

How numerous are the Christians who lead the way to odd ideologies, being themselves a passage to all strange currents. Who monitors whatever comes and goes through him, that is all the policies, ideas, plans, and advertisements?

Watch how Christians follow the media. They accept all the ideas then hear, without testing or purifying them. They ought to judge these ideas in the light of the Gospel. Who effectively judges all the educational programs presented to us, or political ideologies, in the light of the Gospel?

We are susceptible to be dominated by a cheap authority, bought by any passerby, or any rising ideology. It is as if we do not possess the basic earth for faith.

The Christian is self-isolated. He does not read his faith and remains standstill. God forbid! He, however, passes all ideas and ideologies under the light of the divine word, straightening and correcting them. The Christian turns the light of the Gospel on whatever is in the heart and mind.

This movement itself is called in Christian literature, "keeping vigil," or "watchfulness," meaning that all the seeds of the Word of God in the heart are kept in the heart. In the light of Christ, everything is tested. The Word is cultivated in our earth, and our earth is made for this Word, and not for anything else. The love sowed in our earth is much more precious than the feet of the passers-by or the beaks of birds. We have to stay watchful.

The second condition is that we ought not to be like the rock; that is to deal with the Word of God in a superficial way, taking Religion without its essence. We ought not to worship as a habit, practicing the outward forms of Christianity. We will end up being pharisaic in our worship, practicing liturgical forms with out any essence or depth, living superficially in the Church.

Any practice or virtue that does not go deep, which is into Christ, stays superficial. Otherwise, man's fruits grow without roots, and die sooner or later.

Many Christians love Christianity, but they are not pious towards Christ. Christianity differs from all other religions in that it is not a religion of law or a book, but it is a Christian life, having Christ at its center. Christian life is, in a word, an encounter with the Lord Jesus. David the prophet said, "I looked to the Lord at all times." St. Paul exclaimed, "It is not I who live, but Christ who lives in me." In every virtue and at every moment, we ought to meet Christ. In the Gospel, I do not read a story but I meet Christ. In almsgiving and charity, I do not just give to the poor, but I share in Christ's needs. In prayer, I do not recite or chant, but I speak to Christ.

The depth in Christianity is "prayer," that is meeting the Lord Jesus. This is why Christian life is called a "life of prayer." Prayer is not a recitation of written paragraphs in houses or churches. It is having our mind continuously in the presence of Christ, meeting Him at every event or place. Christian and Christ are in a continuous and alive encounter in every place and period. If we do not reach this depth, we remain superficial in our prayer.

If Christ is not the objective of all our actions in our life - that is in prayer-, we will after all deal with life superficially. Christianity as just a religious view is not worthy of our sacrifices, unless we enliven it with the living Christ, as Paul did. Christ is not the founder of a sect who died, but He is the living One, now and forever. By enlivening our existence, the Christian will not find any fear or pain, when the love of Christ encompasses him. At that time, the seeds will reach a depth that will not be affected by the midday sun and he will know how to face life. He will bear much fruit. So the measure of a profound life is to transform everything from its shallow perspective to Prayer.

The third condition is that we ought not to mix the plants with thorns. We must not mix the world with religion, having the same honor for the Lord and for religion. The third earth full of thorns is like Christians who love God very much and love the world and the church very much. Plants, however, cannot live long among thorns. The pleasures of the world do not comply with keeping the commandments of the Word. We cannot serve two gods, and it is pharisaic to love two things that are incompatible with each other.

The ideologies of this age claims that we can go along with both the love of God and the lust, for example, the love of the Word and greed, love of the poor and selfishness, or accepting the wholesomeness of the message and the baseness of materialism. The mind of this age tells us that we can be an earth full of thorns and the seeds of the words at the same time. This philosophy is evil and deceitful and it declares that we can worship two gods, and give them each their rights.

Our God is a burning fire which could not keep befriend this age.

The issue is about the heart and passions. Is our heart for God, or is it a land of thorns. Fasting has an important place in directing our desires and straightening our human "taste" and "thirst." The heart cannot be cut in two. The Lord says, "My Son, I desire all your heart." The third condition then is fasting.

The Church chants for the righteous, saying, "By vigils, fasting and prayers you have received heavenly gifts (that is, seeds) and borne fruit an hundredfold." These three posts make up our tilling, making our land fertile instead of being a paved unfruitful wayside, and breaking up the rock of our hardness, and removing the thorns from our Christian life.

And the Gospel passage ends with: " He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Amen.