

**“Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word”  
St. Luke 8:4-15**



**Sexagesima**

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Words, words, words. To the world, words are cheap, yet words are what God uses to give you faith. *“...faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God,”* writes Paul. And so we pray, “Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word.”

Words travel from the mouth of a preacher into your ears where they strike your eardrums and then hit your heart. And thus the Word is scattered and sown in the soil of your heart.

Today's parable is one that is against the eyes. It challenges you to see with your ears.

The seed that the farmer recklessly scatters over the landscape is the Word of God. That Word gets several different kinds of hearings. For that reason, it doesn't seem to make sense to disseminate the seed where everybody knows it has little likelihood of sprouting. Shouldn't the farmer be more careful and less generous with the precious seed? At the very least, shouldn't he go into the field and plow up the hard places and dig up the rocks first. Shouldn't he invest in herbicides and get some scarecrows to frighten away the hungry birds?

But the Sower does none of this. He simply plants the seed.

Today, the church is unfortunately better at soil testing than seed sowing. Yes, we are very good at conducting soil studies, but we don't scatter seed. We do demographic studies and sociological studies and cross-cultural studies and psychological studies to tell us what the needs and wants are, where the Word is most likely to take hold. And there are those who will measure the local soil and tell us precisely where and when and what to plant for maximum return and success. Well, such things may be good for gardening, but it is bad for the Gospel.

Contrast this with the picture of the sower in our parable. He sows his seed with reckless abandon, broadcasting the death and resurrection of Jesus to the wind, letting it fall wherever it lands.

Keep this parable in mind the next time you are tempted to conclude that one of your friends or fellow students, one of your relatives or co-workers isn't ready to hear the Gospel yet, or if you aren't sure if you feel comfortable inviting them here!

It's rather simple really. The farmer goes into the field and he sows the seed, period. God has established His kingdom through the death and resurrection of His Son. His Word now announces that there is forgiveness of sins because Jesus Christ has answered for those sins with His own blood. He died in our place and He was buried in the tomb like a single grain of wheat is planted in the ground. On the third day, He sprouted up in resurrection victory fruitful with life and salvation for all who trust in Him.

The Word that we preach is that Word of Jesus' death and resurrection. It is the Word of Him who was put to death for our sins and raised again for our justification. There is no other Word, no other Gospel that has the power to save you, to reconcile you to God and give you peace with Him forever. That Word is God's seed and it is a powerful, fertile, faith-producing Word. It is the Word of God Himself. And wherever it is planted in the broken soil of hearts that have been plowed open by God's law, it germinates and springs up in fruitful faith.

You see this Word is God's Word. It is the power of God for salvation. It does not return to Him empty, but it achieves the purpose for which He sent it.

The Sower simply sows this seed.

Now some of the seed falls on the wayside, those places packed down and made hard by traffic. Here the Word is preached but it is not received. The hardened hearing of the Word of God is that callused heart that says, "I have no need of Jesus, of His Baptism, His Words, of His body and blood." This is the hearing of a heart that has become bored with God's Word.

The seed that falls on the wayside represents those who hear the Word with their ears but block it out of their hearts. The Word never really gets implanted and so it lies exposed on the pavement and is gobbled up by the devil just like hungry crows feast on spilled grain.

Then there is the Word that gets a shallow, surface hearing. This is the seed that is planted in the rocky soil-that thin layer of sandy soil that covers a base of hard rock. This represents those whose faith is grounded in feelings and not in the facts of redemption. These are those who get all excited about Jesus, but they don't want to be bothered by doctrine and careful study of the Scriptures, even though it is all about Jesus. They bubble over with enthusiasm but there is no depth, no substance to their faith. The emotion is soon spent and faith evaporates because it was not rooted in the gifts that Jesus gives in His Word, in Baptism, and with His body and blood. This is Christianity Lite and it has a short shelf life.

Some seed falls among the briar bushes. Jesus says *"And the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity."* Christ is preached and heard but there are so many clamoring voices competing with the words of Jesus that the sound of His voice gets silenced. There is the voice of anxiety: What shall I eat? What shall I wear? Where shall I live? Where will the money come from? The voice of anxiety is the devil's way of tempting you to believe that God cannot be trusted with your life and with your future. Satan wants you to believe that God can't or won't take care of you so you better take care of yourself even if that means that you do it at the expense of God and His Word.

Then there are what Jesus calls "the riches and pleasures of life." In times of stress or sickness, Satan would invite us to believe that God is against us. When things are going well, he tempts us to think that we don't need God, that we can get along just fine without Him. The temptation that comes from the riches and the pleasures of life is greed. Greed would make of God's good gifts, false gods that we end up trusting in the place of the one true and living Lord. And these false gods are greedy; they will demand that you give them what belongs to God alone. The end result is the same- a faith that is choked out and dies.

Then, there is finally the good ground, the soil that receives the implanted Word by faith and trusting in that good news of Jesus Christ bears fruit with patience. Faith receives God's Word with patience. The hundredfold crop that Jesus speaks of is not produced overnight and it is not always seen with the eyes. The life that grows from the seed of God's Word is lived for the long haul. The harvest will come in the resurrection of the body to life everlasting. In the meantime, God tills and turns the soil of your life with His law. He plows under our pride and He breaks the hard ground of our stubborn hearts. He weeds out everything that would distract us from Him, every idol that would choke out the life of faith. He sows Christ in us as He plants His Word in our hearts and as He fertilizes and feeds your faith with His body and blood.

It is this Word of God that holds you together when times are tough, and also when they aren't. It is this Word of God that will burst through the cares of this life, the wiles of the devil and the temptations of our own flesh, as surely as Christ has burst forth from the grave with resurrection and life. It is this

Word of God connected to bread and wine that gives you the very body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Savior. What more could you hope for? What more could we need in times of trouble? Yes, these are precious words, words, words. And this is why we pray “Lord keep us steadfast in Your Word.”

**In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**