



Around the Word
Bible Study
 Epiphany, 2017

The Light of Christ
 St. Luke 8:4-15

**On the Parables
 of our Lord:**

"The Lord speaks in parables, in the first place so as the better to secure attention of His listeners; for men are wont to be drawn to things that are obscure, and turn from what is readily obvious to the mind; in the second place so that those who were unworthy might not comprehend that which is mystically unfolded," (*Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, 388).

—St. Theophylactus

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Introduction: The light of Scripture alone!

The Parable of the Sower is probably one of the more mistranslated parts of holy Scripture. Everyone wants to be fertile soil for Jesus and no one wants to be on the way neither do they wish to be on the rocks or thorns. We're not given a choice, however, and are simply told this is how it is. The focus point is the seed and that's what we'll focus on also.

Opening: Psalm 44:17-26

- ¹⁷All this has come upon us,
 though we have not for- | gotten you,*
 and we have not been false to your | cove-
 nant.
- ¹⁸**Our heart has | not turned back,*
 nor have our steps departed | from your
 way;**
- ¹⁹yet you have broken us in the place of | jackals*
 and covered us with the shad- | ow of death.
- ²⁰**If we had forgotten the name | of our God*
 or spread out our hands to a | foreign god,**
²¹would not God dis- | cover this?*
- For he knows the secrets | of the heart.
- ²²**Yet for your sake we are killed all the | day
 long;***
**we are regarded as sheep to be | slaugh-
 tered.**
- ²³Awake! Why are you sleeping, | O Lord?*
- Rouse yourself! Do not reject us for- | ever!
- ²⁴**Why do you | hide your face?***
**Why do you forget our affliction and op- |
 pression?**
- ²⁵For our soul is bowed down | to the dust;*
 our belly clings | to the ground.
- ²⁶**Rise up; come | to our help!***
**Redeem us for the sake of your | steadfast
 love!**
- Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
 and to the Holy | Spirit;
 as it was in the be- | ginning,*
 is now, and will be forever. | Amen.**

Read St. Luke 8:4-15

**v. 4-5: And when a great crowd was gathering
 and people from town after town came to
 him, he said in a parable, "A sower went out
 to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell
 along the path and was trampled underfoot,
 and the birds of the air devoured it.**

In the Septuagesima study, we talked about the

vineyard being given to Israel. A vineyard, or
 promised land, they did not plow or till or set up.
 In this parable of the Sower, we hear the accusa-
 tion reversed onto God. See Matthew 25:24.

Now the Lord is a "hard man" who is sowing and
 reaping illegally, so to speak (cf. Psalm 60:3).
 Thus, in John (6:60), Jesus warns us that we will
 hear hard things and even this parable says so
 (v.9-10).

The path, or the Way, is usually mentioned with
 good connotations and meaning the Christian
 Way (cf. Acts 9:2). Yet, even there, there is perse-
 cution. What kind of path makes it easiest for
 birds to eat on? To what does this well-worn path
 lead? See Job 22:15-16; Proverbs 14:12.

What Way heralds life for all people? See John
 14:6.

**v.6: And some fell on the rock, and as it grew
 up, it withered away, because it had no mois-
 ture.**

We have heard "the rock" being spoken of in the
 positive (cf. Matthew 7:24-27, 16:18), but here we
 hear it used negatively. Where else are rocks
 used in a negative way in Scripture? See Matthew
 21:44; Romans 9:33.

What "stone" heralds life to all people? See
 Matthew 27:66.

**v.7: And some fell among thorns, and the
 thorns grew up with it and choked it.**

Where do these thorns come from? See Genesis
 3:18; Isaiah 5:6.

What thorns herald life for all people? See
 Matthew 27:29.

v.8: And some fell into good soil and grew

and yielded a hundredfold." As he said these things, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

The soil of the earth was called good once. Where was it and what happened to it? See Genesis 1:10.

What is the Promise to the vine planted in good soil and who might that be? See Ezekiel 17:8, 22-24; John 15:5.

They say a parable is an earthly story with heavenly meaning and many interpret this as being about the soils and their actions. But what is causing the reaction in the soils, in the first place? According to that, what is the meaning that "comes down from heaven" to us? See John 6:38; 1 John 4:9.

v.9-10: And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that 'seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.'

What is God's "secret mystery" that He has given to His disciples? See Colossians 2:2-3.

The Old Testament quote is from Isaiah 6:9-10 and is full of judgment. Why does it seem as if Jesus does NOT want others to understand clearly? See John 5:39.

What should they be hearing from the prophet? See Isaiah 6:13.

v.11: Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

The holy seed is its stump, says Isaiah. The promise is not made to seeds, but to one seed: Christ (cf. Galatians 3:16)

What is this seed going to do? See Genesis 3:15.

Are you also a part of this seed? See Galatians 3:29; 1 Peter 1:23.

v.12-14: The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.

Now we hear what the soils mean. The parable is already explained by v.11, but now is man's reaction to the Word. How does the devil "take the word"? See Matthew 24:5; John 8:44.

What was the devil's first lie? See Genesis 3:1. Is this still his best

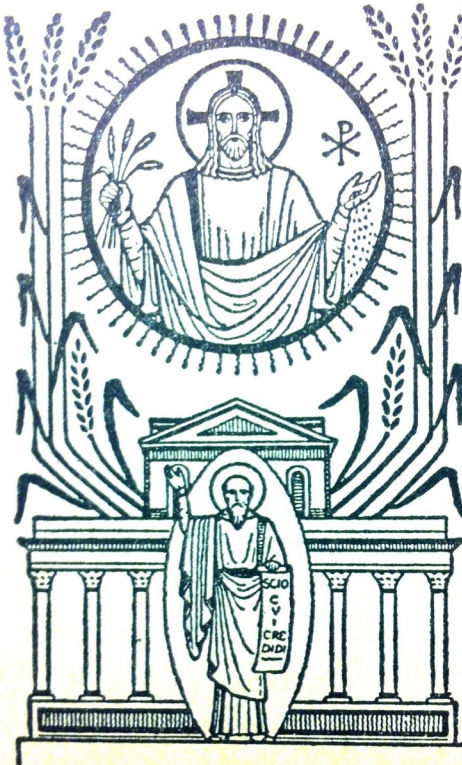
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lie?

What could possibly save the seeds that fall along the path? See Isaiah 45:19, 59:15; John 15:26.

As we said before, rocks could be good or bad, but what root could possibly save those that fall among the rocks? See Isaiah 11:1-10; Romans 15:12; Revelation 5:5.



What is said about maturity? See 1 Corinthians 13:11, 14:20; Ephesians 4:13. What sort of fruit should be brought to maturity in the Christian? See Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Peter 1:5-8.

What sort of tree bears this good fruit? See Matthew 7:17-18. How? Colossians 1:22.

v.15: As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

We have already seen the promise of "good soil" in Ezekiel 17, above. So really, each type of soil holds some sort of hope, when the Word comes to it. Thus, this parable is an example of how things are in the Church when the Gospel is preached.

Pastor Johann Spangenberg describes the good soil: "...they make every effort to build and edify the church with hand and mouth, with words and works, unconcerned

whether they suffer temptation, adversity, persecution, trials, indeed, even death for doing so...For the Gospel is a word of the cross [1 Corinthians 1:18]," (*The Christian Year of Grace*, 97).

A Christian must often bite bitter fruit, have patience, be content, and let the tempest pass. What must happen to the seed, even in the good soil, before it produces fruit? See John 12:24.

As with Christ Himself, it will be no different for us. Compare Matthew 10:24.

Closing: May God Bestow on Us His Grace (LSB, 823)

"Scio cui credidi: I know Him in Whom I have believed"

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