

2020 Sexagesima  
Luke 8:4-15 The Parable of the Sower

I saw an interesting article which was talking about cancel culture. Cancel culture treats people like they are all good or all bad with no in between. So, if you put something on your Facebook as a young teenage man that they consider homophobic, you must be permanently cancelled. You're either all good or all bad! And if you're all good then you're morally superior. The problem, of course, is that no one is all good or all bad. That's a very naive view of people. Those who embrace cancel culture but have not been cancelled yet are finding out that no one is safe.

We will have the same naive thinking if we drop people into the four boxes that Jesus has created in this parable.

Jesus tells us this 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. And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold." (vv. 5-8a)

No farmer in his right mind would do this. But this is how Jesus describes how believers are made and maintained. By the reckless sowing of the Word of God. It's just like the prophet Isaiah describes when he compares the Word of God to rain and snow coming down (Is 55:10). It get's everything wet, but not everything benefits from it. The Word of God pours down and faith is formed when and where the Holy Spirit wills (Jn 3:8).

Believers are converted by the Word of God. (Rom 10:17) And believers are maintained in the Faith by the Word of God.

As Jesus says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Mt 4:4) We need the Word. And Jesus recklessly sows the Word. Today he gives you warning, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." (v. 8b)

You are baptized. The Word of God was combined with water and placed on you directly. You must continue in the Word to continue in the faith. You have enemies that want to rob God's Word from you. That is what Jesus is warning you about today in this parable.

The seed that fell on the rocky ground is trampled underfoot and devoured by the birds. Jesus says that this is the devil snatching the Word of God away from you. The devil is active in destroying the Word of God. He does everything he can to remove it from your life. He wants you to neglect the Word of God.

Your native man hates the Word of God. The Word of God tells you what you don't want to hear. Namely, that you are a sinner. You're born an enemy of God, hating Him. "Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned (Rom 5:12)." Furthermore, there's nothing you can do about it. There's no amount of effort, will, or desire that will save you. Only God can do it through His Word. The saving work of Jesus on the cross is delivered to you personally only through His Word. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are visible forms of the Word. "For without God's Word the water is plain water and no Baptism (SC)."

But the devil tempts you to neglect the Word of God. How?

First, the devil entices you to miss church. The full richness of God's Word is found in the Divine Service. It has been tested over millennia and proved to be faithful to the Word of God. That's why we do Divine Service III, by the way. It's not that the other services are bad, but that they have not stood the test of time.

In the Divine service you get the Word of God in liturgy, hymnody, if it's good hymnody teaching the rich Apostolic faith, preaching, if it's good preaching which delivers the full counsel of God, and the Lord's Supper. To neglect to come to the Divine Service is to neglect the rich gifts of grace upon grace Christ freely dispenses.

Second, the devil tries to distract you at church. He tempts you to become bored by the same old liturgy. He tempts you to tune out the preaching. He tempts you to sing the hymns without pondering them or only singing enthusiastically on the hymns you like. He tempts you to be distracted with everything you need to do later in the day or week. He tempts you to neglect the liturgy and hymns the rest of your week. The liturgy and hymns, especially the hymn of the day, or sermon hymn, are great things to sing throughout the week.

Third, the devil tempts you to neglect the Small Catechism. And I mean the actual Small Catechism and not the book with the huge explanation section which is good for daily devotions on the chief parts of the Catechism but is not properly speaking the catechism. The Small Catechism is great because it contains the Word of God. Even Luther's explanations are drawn from the Word of God even though he doesn't quote verses. As I've said before, it's the only catechism you can actually pray. And that's because it contains the Word of God.

Fourth, the devil tempts you to neglect your daily devotions. He tempts fathers, especially, to neglect leading his family in those devotions. He tempts you to neglect meditating on the Word. In Psalm 1, Psalm 19, and Psalm 119, God promises rich blessings to those who meditate upon His Word, but how easy it is for us to neglect it!

Repent and cling to the Word.

Some of the seed fell on rock and withered because it has no root. Jesus tells us that these are those who hear and fall away after a time of testing.

As soon as you're baptized, you have a target on your back. Satan and the world hate Jesus and they hate you. Jesus says, "If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before it hated you (Jn 15:18)." Jesus promises, "In the world you will have tribulation (Jn 16:33)." And Peter reminds us, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you (1 Peter 4:12)." I've been quoting that one a lot lately, haven't I. But it's still a great reminder.

Satan uses the world to torment you so that you would fall away from the faith. Look at what he did to Job. The only thing Satan didn't take away from Job was his life. He did everything to him he could think of. Look at what Satan did to our Lord. Satan would do injustice to you as well, so you think "well if God loved me, He wouldn't allow this to happen."

Repent.

God shows that He loves you on the cross. He didn't spare His only Son, whom He loved but handed Him over to death on a cross so that you and I might become children of God. And we are! Suffering is never fun or easy. But when you suffer remember your Lord on the cross. He suffered for you and He is with you in your suffering! He is with you in water, Word, bread and wine.

Some seed fell among the weeds. These grew up strong but were choked out by the weeds. Jesus tells us that these weeds are the "cares and riches and pleasures of life (v. 14)." In his first epistle, John calls these things "the desires of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and pride in possessions (1 Jn 2:16)."

Satan would tempt you with all manner of delights to take you away from your Lord. He's attacking the family right now with no-fault divorce, consequence free fornication, and the ridicule and despising of fathers. He's distracting you with all sorts of material goods.

Do you really need everything that's stored in your attic? He distracts you with all manner of wealth and fame at the expense of your family and friends. He distracts you with white noise. White noise is all the frivolous things around you that demand your attention like Facebook and binge-watching television shows. He tempts you to pray at the altar of your favorite sport.

Worse, he attacks you with guilt when you fall to any of these temptations. Look at how you've sinned! Look at what a horrible person you are! Church is the last place you should be. God surely doesn't want you! This is the same thing the Pharisees said about Jesus hanging out with sinners and tax collectors. But sinners are exactly who Jesus came to save!

Repent and cling to the Word of Forgiveness given to you in Absolution and Supper!

The last seeds fell upon good soil and produced fruit. These are those who cling to the Word of God in faith and believe it! This is the same thing Jesus says about being the true vine: "Abide in Me, and I in You. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the Vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing (Jn 15:4-5)."

You abide in Jesus by abiding in His Word.

Abide in Jesus. Come to church. Sing the liturgy and great hymns. Learn the catechism by heart and pray it. Read and hear the Word daily.

You will still struggle. You are not the one-dimensional person that cancel culture would have you believe you are. Instead, you are the man or woman that Paul describes in Romans 7. You struggle daily. You might fit into any of the descriptions that Jesus uses in His parable.

That's why the Small Catechism says "that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever."

"He who has ears to hear, let him hear (v. 8b)."

In Jesus' name. Amen.