

The Parable of the Sower (2)

The Thorny and the Good Grounds

1- Objectives

- ❖ Understand the parable and relate it to our life
- ❖ The thorny ground
- ❖ The good ground

2- References

- ❖ Holy Bible: Matthew 13: 3-22; Mark 4: 3-20; & Luke 8: 5-15
- ❖ Some writings of St. John Chrysostom
- ❖ Sermon by Fr. Abraham Wassef “Bearing fruit in the parable of the sower”
- ❖ Ascending the Heights: A Layman’s Guide to the Ladder of Divine Ascent by Father John Mack.

3- Scriptural Verse

- ❖ “And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But not a hair of your head shall be lost. By your patience possess your souls” (Luke 21:17-19)
- ❖ “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11)

4- Lesson Guidelines

- ❖ Quick review of the Parable of the sower (1) and the sidewalk and stony ground

III – The Thorny Ground

- ❖ According to the Lord Jesus Christ’s own interpretation, the seed is the word of the kingdom, the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word and it became unfruitful. Also, the desires for other worldly things and the pleasures of life choke the word.
- ❖ What is growing in parallel and conflicting with our love for God is the love of the riches and pleasures of life that hinders our spiritual growth and obstructs our heavenly focus.
- ❖ The Lord Jesus gives repeated warnings not to be anxious at all about what you will eat, what you will drink or what you will put on, as you live to serve Him and obey His Word (Matthew 6:25). Four times He says, “do not be anxious” or worry, (Matthew 6:28, 31, 34), even about tomorrow (Matthew 6:33). Our Father cares for the birds, that neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and we are of much more value to Him than they are (V. 26).
- ❖ Worry distracts us from God’s Word; worrying is trying to figure things out with our own understanding, instead of leaning on His promises; it implies persistent doubt or fear.

- ❖ The deceitfulness of riches chokes the word. In our practical life we don't need deprivation (because that would be a difficult temptation for us) but we need to pursue a simple life (Proverbs 30:7-9).
- ❖ Possessions and riches pose a trap to all of us. The Lord Jesus said that our soul is of more value than owning all the wealth of the world (Luke 9:25). All we can see, touch and possess is about to pass away (2 Peter 3:10), but our soul is eternal and lasts forever. So make sure your treasure is in heaven, not on earth (Matthew 6:19-21, 2 Corinthians 4:18).
- ❖ We need rest, relaxation and recreation (pleasure of life); but we shouldn't let entertainment, hobbies, sport, etc... be the center focus of our lives. Let us discipline our lives (1 Corinthians 9:27), our minds (Colossians 3:2), our words (Psalm 19:14) and deeds (Colossians 3:17) by the strength of the Holy Spirit (Philippians 2:13) to keep our priority in God's will and Word.

IV – The Good Ground

- ❖ The good ground has the right consistency: moisture, air content, bacteria content... So that when the seed falls on the ground it finds a good home. This is the heart that acknowledges its weakness and knows where its darkness lies and realizes that in God's words there is conviction, and light.
- ❖ The eagerness with which the heart accepts the word of God is just like how the seed immediately found a home in the good soil. It comes when the heart realizes its sins, and its need for salvation and protection from an almighty God.
- ❖ A good soil is ploughed, tilled, and fertilized; it is worked on to prevent weeds, and loss of nutrients. In order to produce fruit we have to daily persevere in our knowledge of God, and His truths. We must daily struggle against our weak nature that wants us to conform to the world, to sin and to succumb to temptation and trust in the Lord who has a plan for our lives, that He will take care of our needs, and He will help us in our struggle.
- ❖ A good soil bears much fruit. Why 100, 60 or 30? One explanation goes as follows: fruit that is the hundredfold are the saints who died for the Lord Jesus Christ, spread the gospel throughout the world and lived ascetic life in the desert; sixtyfold are those who have the same heart but may not have been able to go to the extent of those with the 100 fold; thirtyfold are those who physically may not have been able to do much but prayed and called on God's name throughout the day. The beautiful thing is that our God is a loving and merciful God. He accepts different levels of fruits based on the talents and abilities of a person and we are not set to one specific standard. God accepts the little and the much as long as it is done with a loving heart. (St John Chrysostom said: It doesn't matter to be a sun, a moon or a star in the sky but the most important thing is to be up in the sky).
- ❖ We must *persevere* in our lives and it is not going to be easy. St. Paul tells us that we need certain tools for this struggle (Ephesians 6:14-18).

- Gird your waist with truth: constantly feed yourself with God's Word.
- Wear the breastplate of righteousness: persevere in works of righteousness.
- Shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace: keep yourself always ready to declare your faith and to witness to the Lord Jesus Christ and live at peace with all people.
- The shield of faith: trusting in God's goodness and that He is in control of our lives and that whatever He permits is really for a good purpose.
- Helmet of salvation: constantly renewing our mind and transforming our thoughts.
- The sword of the spirit which is the word of God: fighting against the devil and temptations of the flesh by knowing the word of God.
- Constant prayer: we are not doing God a favor by praying, we need to realize that prayer is a protection from temptation and from the enemy, its being in communion with God so that we can persevere and bear fruit and continue the long and hard journey of this world.
- Being watchful to this end, with perseverance: continuing steadfastly in doing all of these things and watching that we don't slip along the way; there will be times of weakness and times when we stumble but being watchful means that we don't turn into the thorny or the rocky ground. Our patience must be coupled with hope that we aren't doing this for no reason, that there is a God who will reward our efforts no matter how small they are.

5- Conclusion

- ❖ The thorny ground is a heart that has been deceived by the world and therefore has no room for God. The good ground is the humble heart that acknowledges its sin and weakness and its need for God. It perseveres and is patient in its struggle in the world, relying completely on God's grace and in due time will bear much fruit glorifying God.
- ❖ Let us give up what we can't keep (the pleasure of the world) to gain eternal treasure which we can't lose! (1 John 2:17), otherwise, we will perish with the world.
- ❖ We are surrounded by a superabundance of "things." We work hard to attain "things." We must learn how to practice detachment of the heart. We must hold all the things of this world with open hands" (Father John Mack: Ascending the Heights).

6- Activities / Discussion Points

- ❖ Discuss the following verse in the shadow of the parable: "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).
 - Humility: I need help.
 - Pray and Seek: Seek the one that has the power to change us.

- Repent: Continual process of repenting “For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again, but the wicked shall fall by calamity” (Proverbs 24: 16).
- God will hear: He will not turn a deaf ear.
- Forgive us: Restore us, make us whole, wash us from our sins.
- Heal our land: Change our nature, make us whole, make us Christ-like.