

SERMON- Parable of the Sower, Luke 8:5-15, Sunday, October 14, 2018

One of the famous places to visit in our area is Lake George. Most of us have probably at one time or another taken a boat ride on what some have called “the queen of American lakes.” There are many things to see along the shoreline of Lake George. For example, there are many famous and magnificent homes and properties along the lake. When I ride on Lake George, the thing that catches my eye and what I enjoy the most is seeing the various trees that grow along the shore, half hanging out onto the lake, their roots clinging to what seems to be bare rock along the shoreline, jutting out over the lake. What is amazing to me is how these trees can manage to grow and thrive with very little moisture and almost no soil that one can see with the naked eye. Bare rock covered with tangled roots, branches hanging out over the water; yet the trees are lush, full of green leaves, and full of life. Our hearts are sometimes cold and callous like those bare rocks that these trees grow on. Sometimes our hearts have become calloused and overly attached to worldly distractions. Our faith sometimes may be weak, and the love of God sometimes grows dim within us. That is why we Orthodox consider the little things to be so important. To say our prayers, to attend Divine Liturgy, to fast the best that we can, whatever we can offer to the Lord, it is like that little bit of soil and moisture that a tree can still manage to survive and thrive on. When our Savior gives, He is not stingy and sparing, giving only a little with a closed fist. When our Savior casts His seeds, He casts them abundantly and generously with a wide open hand to everyone and everywhere. It is up to us to prepare the soil of our hearts, to fertilize and till the soil with keeping the commandments, by reading the Word of God, by praying, by fasting, by confessing our sins, and by attending the Divine Services. No matter how weak or negligent we might be, we all have hope. If there is even just a small amount of soil and moisture, just one tear of sorrow for our sins, out of the multitude of seeds that our Lord casts upon us, some will find the little bit of soil and moisture and be able to take root. Even if we offer only a little, it can be enough for God’s grace to grow and flourish within us. Naturally those who have done more, who have cultivated their hearts like the farmer who cultivates the field through much toil and sweat, will see a great and abundant crop. We may never achieve the heights of the saints and martyrs and great elders of the Church, yet if we try and offer even a little, God will not abandon us and we will find salvation and sanctification.

Brothers and sisters, the road is narrow and many are the distractions and thorns along the way. God casts his seed abundantly, but He does not force us to accept the seeds and cultivate the seeds within us. We have a choice. We can ignore the seeds and let them die. We can choke the seeds with sin and earthly pleasures and let the seeds die through indifference, negligence and lack of care. Or we can strive to prepare our hearts by cleansing, and nurturing the soil so that the seed of God’s word might come to life and blossom in the way it should.

It may seem that what is required of us is overwhelming or too difficult. It is not so. Really it does not take much. Approach God with simplicity and sincerity. Approach God knowing that He loves us more than we will ever know, no matter what our sins and failings may be. Approach God knowing that He understands and knows our struggles and temptations, for the Lord Himself was incarnate and experienced as a man everything that we experience, every emotion, every temptation, every struggle that we go through. God knows and understands, and He is on our side. Why not trust in Him and have faith in Him, and offer Him what we can? If we do this, God will never abandon us and will always help us. If we get lost along the way, God will shine a guiding light, like the lighthouse that helps lost ships find their way, and God will gently and lovingly lead us back onto His straight and narrow path. God created us and He is our Father. He wants good things for us like any loving father would for his children. Through laziness, lack of time, or some other excuse, we can let our garden become overgrown and ugly. I neglected my garden this year. But one of our church mice quietly,

without any fanfare, came on his own, unannounced, and carefully toiled and worked and cleaned the weeds and trimmed the bushes. What was a wild and overgrown mess became a clean and beautiful little garden, revealing the beautiful plants hidden within. So it is with our hearts. Without fanfare, with humility, put on your garden gloves, get your rake and your clippers, and clean the weeds and thorns from your heart, and you will reveal the beautiful garden that God has planted there, just waiting for a little tender loving care. He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Amen.