

SERMON On The Parable of the Sower
Luke 8:5-15, October 18, 2020

Our Savior explains the parable which we heard today to His disciples. God is the sower, and the seed which God plants is the Holy Gospel, the Word of God. The hearts of all of us and of all people is the soil which receives the seed. Different people receive the Word of God in different ways. Some people are more concerned about themselves and their own personal interests and forget about God. Such people have cold hearts and they have no place in their hearts for God. The hearts of such people are like the rocky soil which has insufficient moisture and so the seeds cannot grow and they die. Such hearts are also like thorny soil. The hearts of these people do not think or care about God, so the thorny cares of this world which interest these people more choke the seeds and they wither and die. However, there are some people whose hearts yearn for God and understand that they need God. These hearts are like fertile soil. The Word of God, planted in these hearts, grows and flourishes and bears much spiritual fruit. These people become full of the grace of God and the grace of the Holy Spirit. These people become saints.

Recently I watched a documentary about monastic life on Cyprus. In this film Cyprus is called "the land of saints." Certainly Cyprus has produced many saints. We can say the same thing about Russia, Greece, Serbia, Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, the Egyptian desert, ancient Alexandria and so many other places. God sent apostles into these lands at just the right time when the people of these nations needed God the most. The hearts of the people of these lands were fertile and ripe and ready to receive the Word of God. When the seeds of the Word of God were planted in their hearts, the Holy Evangelical words flourished within these nations and produced an innumerable amount of saints. We can read thousands of examples in the Lives of the Saints about how sinners and even criminals opened their hearts to the Word of God, enacted upon it and as a result devoted their entire lives to Christ. For example, St. Anthony the Great, the founder of monasticism, was in church when he heard during the Divine Liturgy the story of the rich young man who approached Christ and asked the Lord what he should do to inherit eternal life. The Lord tells him to keep the commandments, to love God above all things and to love his neighbor as himself. The man replies that he has done all these things and asks what else he must do in order to be perfect. The Lord tells him to sell all that he has and come and follow Him. The young man walks away sorrowful, because he was very rich and not ready to give up his wealth. When St. Anthony heard this Gospel in church, unlike the rich man who walks away, St. Anthony sold all his property and possessions and gives all of his money to the poor. The Holy Father then goes into the desert to live the ascetical solitary life of the monk and devoted the rest of his life seeking to unite Himself with Christ. This is only one example. There are thousands more like it.

The lesson for all of us is that we must open our hearts to the Word of God. We must open our hearts to our Lord Jesus Christ. On Golgotha and at every Divine Liturgy our Lord offers Himself to us, waiting for us to offer ourselves to Him. The Lord sacrificed Himself for us. What do we sacrifice for Him, and is it enough? We are taught to keep the commandments of Christ, to do good to those who do evil to us and to love not only our friends and family but our enemies as well. If we try to do this by ourselves we will be unsuccessful, because with only our human strength it is not possible to keep these commandments. However, if we turn to Christ and open our hearts to Him, then the Lord will plant Himself within us like seeds. If we nurture the seeds with prayer, if we water the seeds with tears of repentance by going to Confession, if we fast and receive Holy Communion and do not neglect going to Church, then the seeds in our hearts will grow, flourish and bear much fruit. God will then be able to act through us and give us the strength and power by His grace to fulfill the Gospel commandments, which are impossible for us to fulfill by ourselves without God's help.

Firstly, let us always keep our hearts open to God and may we nourish and cultivate the Word of God planted within us. Metropolitan Philip of blessed memory said that "Orthodoxy is the best kept secret in America." Let us all be not only disciples but apostles of our faith and

be willing to share our faith with those around us. Let us beseech the Lord to give us the mindset, the wisdom and the strength to imitate the Lord and become sowers and spread the seeds of our faith into the hearts of others. To paraphrase our Lord, the field is plentiful but the laborers are few. With God's help we all have the ability to do this. Furthermore, it is everyone's responsibility. Many people are spiritually thirsting and hungering for what they can find here in our church. What greater kindness and love can you show others than to share your faith with others? May Christ flourish abundantly in our own hearts so that He may work through us and bring others to Himself and to His Holy Church as well. Amen.