

“The Lord works through His Word”

No one would ever mistake me for a master gardener. I’m always planting my garden later than I should – and when I get around to it – I plant it all in one day. I begin with a plan – even disciplined in planting the various seeds according to the directions. But I run out of daylight, I get tired – and at the end, I just cast the radish and onion seeds out and rake them in – only to end up with clumps of radishes and onions.

My reckless and undisciplined sowing of the seed is reflected in a less-than-productive harvest.

Jesus, in the Parable of the Sower, is even more reckless! He throws the seeds all over the place – almost as if He doesn’t care where it lands. He preaches His Word to the ends of the earth – to the “four winds” and the “four corners” of the earth. This preaching, or sowing, is not a one-time event, either – but what He continues to do, over and over again throughout your life.

It’s not that there are just four kinds of soils and we need to determine which one we are – rather, all four describe us and the world we live in. The Sower sows – the Lord preaches His Word to ALL the world – and in so doing, it falls on ALL kinds of ground.

We hear this parable and tend to focus on the soil – and miss the all-important point. The seed grows, regardless of what kind of soil it falls on. To be sure, the seed that falls along the path is snatched away before it has a chance to grow – but that doesn’t mean the seed has somehow failed.

You’ve seen trees growing out of rocks, and grass growing in your sidewalk. In other words, the problem is not with the seed. The seed is effective – it has life-giving power in it – it is designed to grow and produce fruit.

But, as the parable shows us – the seed finds itself growing in all kinds of places. The seed on the rocky ground springs up immediately – but then it is scorched by the sun and “withers away.” The seed grows in the weeds – until the thorns choke them. And the seed that falls on the “good soil” not only grows – but produces a harvest.

So, what does this mean? What is Jesus teaching us in this parable? Simply this – that there is LIFE in the seed – that the Lord Himself is at work in the seed, ruling in His kingdom. Wherever the Word of God is preached, there God the Holy Spirit is at work – calling people to faith, gathering them into His Holy Church, enlightening them with His gifts, making them holy, and keeping God’s children in the one true faith.

Yes, man can close his ears to the Word – it can be snatched away – it can be persecuted – it can be choked out by “the cares of the world” --- but there is LIFE in that Word – and that Word bears fruit in your life.

And what is this fruit, this harvest? The text doesn’t say – but we know from the context (and from the Scriptures as a whole) – that the chief fruit is faith. God, in His Word, leads you to trust not in the goodness of the soil of your heart – but in Him alone.

Jesus speaks this parable to a great crowd of people – some of whom stopped their ears and would not listen to Jesus and His Word. Already in Matthew’s Gospel He says that “every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven ... but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.”

The “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit” is unbelief – a refusal to hear and believe God’s Word. The reason why this sin will not be forgiven is because – the Word is the Seed – it is the very means by which God’s creates and produces fruit in a person.

To reject the Holy Spirit is like trying to grow a crop without seed. It doesn’t matter what kind of soil it is – without the seed, without the Word, without the means by which the Holy Spirit works – there can be no fruits of faith, repentance, life and salvation

The sinful heart is like a well-worn path – hardened to God and His Word. To refuse to listen to God’s Word means the seed lays there in the open – ready for “the evil one” to come and snatch it away.

Through the seed of the Word, the Holy Spirit creates faith – a faith that understands that it cannot live without the Word of God. Faith continues to hear the Word to be nourished and protected – because the scorching heat of persecution will come, and “the cares of the world” will try to squeeze all the life out of you.

Faith trusts that “the fruits of the Spirit” (like love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, self-control, and the like) – are actually produced by the Holy Spirit, working through the Word of God.

Okay, what does this mean in your life? Well, for example, when you discipline your child – do you speak a Word of God to them, or do you resort to various forms of social manipulation? Do you desire to be more patient with your parents, or spouse? Well, do you look inward – to your sinful, impatient, out of control heart – or do you listen to a Word of God by which the Holy Spirit brings forth patience,

When the scorching heat of guilt and shame bears down – when your sins are wrapped tightly around your neck – do you listen to God’s Word, trusting that it actually does what it says?

Dearly beloved, hear the living and active Word of the Lord. My Word is like the rain and snow which come down from heaven and do not return to me, until it brings forth the fruit for which I sent it.

He sows the seed of His Word into your ears and hearts today in order to bring forth the fruit of good works by which your fellow man is loved and cared for. By His Word He burns off the thorns and thistles and sends the root of your faith deep into His love and mercy. He sends forth His Word – so that you may have life.

Hear the Lord who speaks to you, saying – “I forgive you all your sin.” May His forgiveness sprout and bear fruit – an abundant harvest of faith and love – a good and abundant life that knows no end. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.