

Pay Attention

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Seventh Sunday after Pentecost) is Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23. This text is the parable of the Sower and its explanation.

The crowds gather around Jesus, so he gets in a boat and takes a seated posture, a posture of teaching. However, Jesus uses a rather obscure teaching form; he speaks to them in many parables. This is not the most straightforward way of teaching. Even the disciples later in v 10 question Jesus about his method. Jesus replies that he is fulfilling the judgment prophecy of Isaiah (Is 6:9–10).

Jesus' third discourse followed immediately after He experienced rejection from "this evil generation" (12:45).

Fields in Palestine were quite small plots. The seed was cast by hand. There were no fences. This sower, unlike other sowers, casts seeds without apparent regard for where it lands. That is how it is with the reign of God in Christ; grace trumps efficiency. What is important is the bearing of fruit, not a certain amount of it.

On the path: The Word is heard but quickly rejected. "Those fussy spirits are to be rebuked who, after they have heard a sermon or two, find hearing more sermons to be tedious and dull. They think that they know all that well enough and need no more instruction"

Rocky ground: The shallow ground describes the person who gladly hears the Word of God and believes it. He is very enthusiastic about being received into God's kingdom and into membership in a Christian congregation. He expects that His Christian faith will exempt him from the troubles that other people experience in this life. He looks for success and prosperity, good health and uninterrupted happiness.

Among thorns: The thorn-ridden ground, Jesus says, is the hearer overtaken by the cares of the world associated with the curse spoken to our first parents. Sin's deceitfulness, to which Eve succumbed, and the idolatrous flesh choke the plant before it can mature and bear fruit.

Good soil: Finally, Jesus explains that the beautiful, or good soil is the person who hears and comprehends the Word. From these hearers will come abundance in various multiples.

"Listen," He says, for that is what the whole parable is about – listening, listening to the Word of God. Some hear but don't really listen. Some hear and listen, but only for a little while. Some hear and listen for a while, but imagine that they need not give their undivided attention to what God is telling them. They are too easily distracted. Some keep on hearing and listening: they grow in faith and in sanctification. They produce the fruits of faith in great abundance.

Prayer: Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that, by patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. From "Grace to Receive the Word" (Page 308 in TLSB)