

Sermon Matthew 13 1 9 18 23 4th S af Pent

Sermon: 4th Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-23

Theme: Where does the seed fall in your life?

Goal: In spite of the hindrances, God achieves His purposes through His Word.

Dear Friends

Introduction: What are the obstacles in your life that block the growth of the good seed of God's Word? What impedes a fruitful, plentiful harvest?

When we hear this parable about the sower, we must not think about others only, as we were nothing but the good soil. We need to learn from our own experience how the Word of God works or doesn't work in our lives.

I – The obstacles

Jesus mentioned three major obstacles in the Parable of the Sower. In a larger sense, no one of us is a good soil. We have always stones and thorns in our life that make the growth of the good seed difficult. The Epistle to the Romans (8:7) says that “the sinful mind is hostile to God”. And, even as Christians, we have our Old Adam, - the sinful nature, in us, that works against the Word of God.

The 1st obstacle is the birds, that come and eat the seed, - the “evil one”, according to Jesus' interpretation. The “evil one” - Satan himself – is always ready to snatch away what is sown into the heart of the listeners. This explains why so many have the opportunity to hear the Gospel, but they don't believe. For some, it seems that the Gospel is too simple, and they don't accept it, running after other preachers and messages. The good seed cannot even germinate in their hearts.

The Apostle Paul warns the young pastor Timothy against this: “For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.” - The sower – the preacher cannot give up! He has to sow the good seed in spite of the birds!

The 2nd obstacle is the stones – people who “hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.” - We don't suffer open persecution here in our country; but we have some other problems because of the Word, that can end in persecution to the Christians. In an era when it is “politically correct” to allow everything and not to raise your voice and speak against some behavior of our society and government, we have a big challenge as Christians. If our Christian roots are not deep in the soil, we will fall like many are falling. - Stones that hinder the growth of the good seed need to be removed from our lives through repentance, confession of sins and forgiveness.

The 3rd obstacle is the thorns. “The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.” - In my opinion and experience, the thorns are the most dangerous obstacle for church members. The seed grows, the faith is there, people gather together in the church, the soil is not bad, - but thorns and weeds grow among the good plant, impeding it to bear fruits. In the Gospel of Luke(8:14), Jesus adds a third interpretation about the thorns: “life's worries, riches and pleasures...” This is the case of many that grew up in Christian families, went to the Sunday School when they were kids, maybe were even confirmed and married in the church – but now they

don't have time any more for the church and for God because they are occupied with several worries, or to obtain and manage their riches, or to enjoy world's pleasures. - Thorns and weeds are always trying to grow around us. We need to allow the gardener to clean around us, taking out the thorns and weeds by daily repentance and forgiveness. If not, without fruits, we will be cut and put to fire together with the thorns. - This is a very strong admonishment to the lukewarm Christians (Rev 3:16).

II – The Good Soil

In spite of the many obstacles, God doesn't give up as a good sower. Jesus had to face strong and fierce opposition from the leaders of the church and even from His own family. But He didn't stop preaching and sowing the good seed of the Gospel. - When the Apostles were prohibited to teach or preach in the name of Jesus, they answered: “We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:20). - Jesus is still sowing the Good News of the Kingdom through His church and through His preachers: the Good News of forgiveness to all who believe and rely on His love shown on the cross.

“The seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

I like that Jesus differentiated between the crops: a hundred, sixty and thirty times. We are not equal. We have big differences, not only physical or cultural differences, but we have different skills in the Kingdom of God. Once inside the Kingdom, once a good soil by God's grace, the seed grows and produces in one thirty, in another sixty, and in another one hundred. This doesn't make us better or worse Christians than the other. We are all Christians, God's farm, growing the good seed. But we serve in different ways according to our skills and gifts, one more in one area, the other more in another area; but we all do our best to produce fruit.

Conclusion: “He who has ears, let him hear”, concludes Jesus before He goes to tell another parable. We shall not be deaf to God's Word. We shall not reject God's Word. We shall not resist to God's grace that insists to sow the good seed in our lives. He wants to see good fruits in us, the fruits of the Spirit. His promise through the prophet Isaiah (55:11) is still valid: “so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”

I received a report from a couple friend of mine. They are Americans, and have been working for more than 25 years among the Wayampi, native Indians in the North of Brazil, along the border of Venezuela. The couple works with translation of the Bible. They visited one of the villages last weekend, and he wrote: *“We had a time of worship together on Sunday evening (in Wayampi). We sang some Wayampi hymns and I read something from Romans 8 and commented on it. But the highlight of the evening was our Indian helper preaching to his relatives. You should have heard his presentation of Jesus' parable of "the Sower" and its relevance to their lives. You should have also heard the responses: one of our long-time friend said that he's coming back next year to study the Bible. He wants his life to be like the good soil the seed landed on . (Allen Jensen).*

I think that we don't realize how blessed we are to have a church and to have the Word of repentance and forgiveness in our own language, which is offered in a regular way. A text that is very familiar to all of us was heard for the very first time by a pagan Indian, shared by a converted fellow, and he was touched by the Gospel of Jesus.

May God remove all the birds, stones and thorns from our way, so that we can really produce good crops as fruits of our faith in Jesus, that endure for eternal life. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle

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