

Sexagesima  
St. Luke 8:4-15  
February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC  
Augusta, GA  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

They Had Come to Him from Every City

*In Nomine Iesu!*

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:**

Lord God, heavenly Father, we thank Thee, that through Thy Son Jesus Christ Thou hast sown Thy holy Word among us: We pray that Thou wilt prepare our hearts by Thy Holy Spirit, that we may diligently and reverently hear Thy Word, keep it in good hearts, and bring forth fruit with patience; and that we may not incline to sin, but subdue it by Thy power, and in all persecutions comfort ourselves with Thy grace and continual help, through Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

We pray in the Collect of the Day this week, “that we put not our trust in anything that we do.” Faith never trusts in itself. We do not put faith in our ability to have faith. We do not put faith in the amount of our faith. Faith that relies upon itself will surely fail, for faith requires an object outside of itself. But faith in an object outside of itself also requires that it be placed upon the right object. Many people put their faith in false gods; gods of their own making and choosing—riches, cares of this world, and pleasures of this life. This is why we also pray in the Collect of the Day this week, “grant that by Thy power [the Lord God’s power] we may be defended against all adversity.”

The devil prowls around like a hungry lion looking for whom he may devour and we are tasty. This is why the Lord God Almighty has given us His holy Word to defend ourselves from the onslaughts of the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh. The Lord God gives us a place into which we may place our faith. He gives us Himself that we may cling to Him in faith; cling to His holy Word and promises in faith. It is to Him to Whom we are to look in times of trouble and persecution. It is to Him we are to look for salvation. It is to Him we are to look rather than riches, cares and the pleasures of this life. He is the One in Whom is found salvation. It is through the Second Person of the Holy Trinity—the Lord + Jesus Christ—that we find redemption from our sins and trespasses.

We are told about our Lord and Savior through the preached Word of God. The seed is cast into our hearts, we receive it with joy and bring forth fruit an hundredfold. But this is not the case with everyone. Our Lord + Jesus in the Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke tells us that there are in fact four responses to the Word of God. The Sower—the Lord + Jesus—Who sows the seed of the Word of God through the Church and her ministers, goes out into the field of the world and proclaims the good news of salvation in the Lord + Jesus and His works and merits alone. That Word that He preaches through the Church and His ministers is received by some and rejected by others.

We are told by our Lord + Jesus in the parable that some seed fell by the wayside. The ground was hard and dry, there was nothing the seed could do to penetrate the soil and take root. So, the devil and his angels plucked the seed up and devoured it like hungry birds of prey. The Word of God was not allowed to touch the heart of those who received it in this type of soil. These are the ones who reject the Word of God outright. The unbelievers and people who worship all sorts of false gods, like Buddha, Mohammad, nature and all sorts of created things. These people reject the Creator for created things. Things they created from their own imagination and will. They have no use for the One, True Triune God, for they have put their trust in foreign objects and false gods.

This group would include the atheists and God-revilers. The people that actively rail against the Lord God and all of us who adhere to His Word and His promises. The Word is proclaimed to all these people, but the devil plucks it out of their ears and hearts so that they refuse to believe and are therefore condemned. They condemn themselves because they refuse to hear to hear. They have no ears to hear the Word of God.

The rest of the parable talks about those who do hear the Word of God with varying effects. There are those who hear the Word of God with joy, but fall away because of persecution and temptation. Now this certainly includes outward persecution from those who desire to destroy your faith; who desire to take your faith away from you. All those in the first group who revile you and call you all sorts of names like “unintelligent” and “weak-willed.” Yet, they are the ones running to their therapists and yoga instructors, so who really is the “weak minded” one. There are indeed Christian martyrs, people who die because of their belief in the Lord + Jesus. And there are those who fall away under this kind of persecution.

But our Lord + Jesus uses the word “temptation” here. What He desires for us to understand by this word is not just the kind of persecution that martyrs undergo; it is not just people reviling us for our beliefs. There are many temptations and trials in this life. We may have financial troubles; struggling to pay the bills and make ends meet. We may have relationship troubles always arguing and getting into fights and conflicts with those we love and with whom we are in a relationship. We may have health problems, either from sickness or some medical issue that lingers on and on possibly for the rest of our lives. All these things, and there are certainly more trials we face in this life, can cause us to doubt the Word of God; to doubt His promises for us. We say, “God is able to take this affliction away from us. Why is He not taking it away?”

God gets the blame more often than not. And this is the type of person our Lord + Jesus is describing in this parable: those who because of the trials of life blame God and lose their faith. The Lord God gives us trial and temptation in order that He may prove our faith; that we may cling to Him even more in times of trouble. He allows us to endure hardships and pain so that we may learn to look to Him for all good things. He wants us to trust in Him fully. Sometimes He needs to strip away from us all of our props and false idols before we can fully trust in Him. The Lord God wants us to learn to hear His Word, to cling to His promises, and trust solely in Him. Sadly, there are those who are either unable or refuse to do that and so the seed in them withers and dies because of lack of moisture; the moisture of faith and trust in the Lord God.

Therefore, our Lord + Jesus commends us who have ears to hear is holy Word; to believe on Him and in Him alone as the One, True Lord and Savior of mankind. But not only does the seed fall on the wayside and in rocky soil, it also falls in among the thorns. These are the ones who are Christians in name only. They are good at going through the motions. They come to Church. They may even be active in the worship and life of the Church, but their heart is far from it. You have probably met these people. They are the ones who when pressed to give an answer as to why they come to a place of worship and are a member of a parish will talk about their family tree. They say, “My family has been a member of this parish, or this Church body, for generations.”

Well, that is all well and good, but what makes *you* a member of this parish. The answer should always be it is because you find here the means of grace distributed to you in their truth and purity. You find here the Lord + Jesus Christ being preached into your ears; His works and merits are your salvation, not your paltry and sinful good deeds. It is because you find here the Word of God preached in its truth and purity, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution. For it is in these things that the seed of faith is not only implanted into the soil of our hearts, but it is what makes it grow and flourish. Through the Word of God—through the seed preached and administered—we are granted and bestowed with faith, and that faith clings to the works and merits of the Christ. We cling to His crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection as the means by which He redeemed and saved us from sin, death and the devil. We have our life and well-being in Him and Him alone.

When we are constantly hearing this wonderful good news, the seed implanted in us produces fruit an hundredfold. This fruit is faith. And our faith does not cling to itself, or anything inside of us. It clings to an object outside of itself, and it does not cling to false objects that do not save us in any way, but it clings to the Lord + Jesus and Him alone; to His works and merits on our behalf. He fulfilled the Law perfectly for us, and He took our place in our punishment on the tree of the holy cross.

This message—this truth—is so wonderful for us to let the riches, cares and pleasures of this life take it away from us. For this is the temptation when we find ourselves just going through the motions of being a Christian. If our hearts are not really clinging to the things the Church has to offer, we can be pulled away by so many things: family, as I mentioned earlier; pursuit of money, riches, and a good life. We can often find ourselves seeking good days and vain glory. We do not want the cross. We want the glory. And when the cross is placed on our lives, we are tempted to blame God and forsake Him.

This why the Church and her ministers continue to go out into the world and spread the seed of the Word of God. For the Word, as promised, will go forth and produce fruit, just as the Prophet Isaiah proclaimed in the Old Testament Lesson and just as our Lord + Jesus proclaimed in the Gospel reading. The preaching of the Word of God is what produces faith in the hearts of all those who hear it. We have proof from our Gospel reading. For, it begins by telling us that “they had come to Him from every city.” The crowds had flocked to the Lord + Jesus to hear Him preach. He spoke as One Who had authority and not as one of the scribes. He proclaimed the truth. He preached that salvation was found in the Son of God—in the Messiah—and His works on behalf of the people.

As we approach Lent, we are drawn closer to the cross of our Lord + Jesus. Next Sunday, the Church hears before the healing of the blind man that the Lord + Jesus pulled His disciples aside and began to teach them that He would be going to Jerusalem to suffer and die for the sins of the whole world, so that whoever believes on Him might have life and salvation.

My dear friends, cling in faith to this promise. For it is your life and salvation; it is forgiveness for your sins. Do not be like the false idol worshipers and atheists and God-revilers who let the devil and his angels pluck the seed of the Word of God from their hearts. Do not let the temptations of this life dry up the faith that has been implanted in you by the preaching of the Word of God. Do not let the riches, cares and pleasures of this life—the false idols we are most tempted to follow—choke the Word of God from you. But rather, my dear friends, use the faith that has been planted into you to cling to the One, True Lord and Savior of the world—the Lord + Jesus Christ. In Him is found forgiveness, life and salvation. Cling only to Him, for in Him is found true joy and happiness in this life.

For He promises a life to come; a life in Heaven with Him and all the angels. There we will sing the eternal liturgy of the Lamb in His Kingdom as we celebrate the eternal wedding feast of the Lamb and His Bride, the Church. We will be there in white robes, with glorified and perfect bodies, as the singing of the Liturgy fills our ears and the smoke from the incense encircles our heads. May the Lord carry us through this life and bring us to our eternal home with Him in Heaven, so that we may be part

of the crowds who have come to Him from every city and praise Him on bended knee. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Almighty God, merciful Father, we give Thee most hearty thanks for Thy divine Word, which Thou art pleased to sow as a heavenly seed among us, and we beseech Thee Thou wouldst by Thy Word and Spirit make our hearts a good ground, guard us against the dangers arising from cares and riches and the pleasures of this life, and keep our faith from being uprooted by the blasts of affliction, that in an honest and good heart we may bring forth abundant fruit; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

**The Votum:**

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*