

**GOD’S WORD IS YOUR SEED, YOUR HOPE, YOUR LIFE;
SO LOOK UP AND REJOICE IN HIS ABUNDANCE!**

IN NOMINE IESU

Beloved of the Lord,

I love the parables of the Lord. They are so evocative. You can picture, can’t you, a farm and the farmer. He has a cloth sack that has a rope tied on that goes around his neck, with the sack opening at belt level where his hand can reach in easily to grab one handful after another of that seed, that grain that will, after its due season of quiet then growth be harvested and eaten to the health of the farmer and so many others.

Now what I know of farming I have learned second hand, but I know that **efficiency is key**. Today there are farm machines that cost a boat load of cash that carefully cut the furrow and place the seed at exact spacing, conforming to the irrigation systems. The farm is laid out so that the sun’s rays will work most efficiently, the topography with its natural drainage, the chemical analysis of the soil, schedules for everything from watering to pest control... all these things and so much more goes into the science of farming. Yet, as the Psalmist describes the Holy Sower and His yield we hear truths about Him like,

- ² O You hear prayer, to You all flesh shall come.
- ³ When iniquities prevail against me, You atone for our transgressions.
- ⁹ You visit the earth and water it;
- ¹¹ You crown the year wit Your bounty; Your wagon tracks overflow with abundance.

To quote Ray Concella in the Movie, *Field of Dreams* when asked by one of the old baseball players who came out of the cornfields, when asked, “Is this heaven?” Kevin Costner’s character replies, “No, this is Iowa!” Well, though it sounds a bit like Iowa, what the Psalmist is describing is heaven... but not just heaven at the close of the ages. It is heaven now, heaven now every time you forgive your neighbor. It is heaven now every time you receive forgiveness for your sins. Baptismal grace, the overflowing abundance of the Meal before us on His Altar... wow... heaven on earth now, and yes, the foretaste of THE FEAST to come!

Returning to the Parable of the Sower, this mental picture of the Sower going out to sow in his field with the sack of grain, by hand, is quaint and perhaps a throwback to those days when today’s technology couldn’t even have been imagined. Yet some degree of efficiency would still be had in those days. The Sower should be careful where and how he casts the seed. Now behold, the grand Sower, our Savior, Jesus, His ways may appear to us as foolish or inefficient.

Want proof? Look to the Incarnation. The Eternal Son of God in all His strength and wealth comes to us wrapped in swaddling clothes and was laid in a Manger... and I love this part... for there was no room for them in the Inn! Couldn't He just swoop down from His lofty perch in heaven and leave us some special gifts, maybe by email or text.

Want proof? Judas' kiss of betrayal, that awful set of sham trials by night, the agonizing walk up the Via Delarosa after the scourging, and ultimately being hoisted high on that Tree of Indignation and Certain Death! It seems that this is such a waste, so unnecessary!

Yes, from our fallen, sinful perspective with our myopic vision, the clouds on the lens of our hearts like a cardiac cataract, we cannot naturally see the "why's" and the "wherefores." So, Jesus spoke to them in parables.

And even though He explained our parable from our reading this morning, telling His disciples its full meaning, ultimately, it would take the Resurrection, it would take Pentecost, it would take the Spirit, now given through this Word, yes, and in the Word clothed in water wherein you were drowned and laid in that borrowed tomb with Jesus. Yes, it takes the Word given to you, Jesus given to you under the bread and the wine... all for the forgiveness of your sins.

Yes, Jesus, bringing full forgiveness for sins! Last week we had the beauty of Jesus declaring that the Father has hidden the Gospel from the heart that looks only inward, to self, not to their Savior, that it takes being a Little Child to see Christ Jesus as Savior. Jesus called the little ones to come unto Him, the ones who labor and are heavy laden, for indeed, in Him, and only in Him is true Rest. His yoke is forgiveness and our yoke is our sin.

Yes, let me say that again and listen carefully: **The Yoke of Christ is that He Forgives**, He Forgives completely by taking all your sin into His very flesh, by dying for you. And so we see that **our yoke is that very sin**. Jesus does the Sweet Exchange, the Gracious Exchange where your sin is His, and His forgiveness is yours. Thus, He exchanges forgiveness for sins. Take My yoke, My forgiveness and learn from Me – you will find or be found by my Rest.

All this sets up our Gospel today. Jesus has been in Gentile country, showing that He is Lord of the Sabbath... that word "Sabbath" literally means "Rest." After our Triune God created all that was in the 6 days of Creation, on the Seventh Day He created something special just for us, yes, Just for You. He created Rest, He gave the Sabbath. The disciples ate grain on the Sabbath and in the end Jesus tells His detractors "The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath." He is Lord of our Rest.

He goes on to heal a man with a withered hand... shock and horror of it all... ON THE SABBATH. He is saying clearly that He is indeed Lord of the Sabbath. His abundant grace is on display Several other events happened that day where the leaders of the Jews would become even more upset with Him. Speaking of this same time and place Mark tells us: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." (Mk. 2:27)

Our Gospel begins with these words:

¹ That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. ² And great crowds gathered about Him, so that He got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³ And He told them many things in parables,

Yes, Jesus went out on the Sabbath and went to the beach and got into a boat, probably putting out slightly so that the waters could act as a natural amplifier for His voice. Here by the Sea of Galilee and seeing the exceptionally large crowd He speaks... in parables. Jesus gives them the parable we know as the Parable of the Sower:

"A sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵ Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, ⁶ but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷ Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸ Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹ He who has ears, let him hear."

We will let Jesus give us the interpretation, but what I want you to see clearly is that this Sower, He appears to be lavishly, Abundantly wild in how He sows. No careful planting, no design using computers and GPS mapping. He cares for all... for all!

The Word is cast seemingly carelessly along the hardpan of a path. The Word goes out among the rocks. Yes, and the Word is sown among thorns. How seemingly foolish and lavish. But then, beloved, behold the Word! It is so powerful and so rich, so high and deep.

Further, when the birds go to eat the seed on the path, they pick, pick, peck, peck, peck, and the hardpan is broken up. Also, the birds may leave behind their fertilizer on that hardpan. Good soil may have been hardpan, but the Word, it works. Was your heart at one time so hardened against Christ? Ah, you are here, now, with a softened heart. The Word, Law and Gospel peck, peck, pecks at the hardpan!

The Rocky soil that has no depth, with a quick yet shallow growth, getting scorched, still, the seed that is sown is good seed. You have seen how in places like Death Valley each Spring the seemingly barren and scorched land yields flower fields. Water, water is the key – Baptism. Never sell your Baptism or anyone's Baptism short. I was blessed by one man early on in my ministry who had probably 60+ years of rocky soil, but that Baptism that happened as an infant, ah, at the age of 66, this man was brought home!

Weeds choke. Weeds consume the nutrients that should go to the seed and its growing grain. Thorns destroy. Consider all the times you have worried, where between your fallen sinful heart and the siren song of the evil one these worries choked your faith. Hard times, incredibly sad and dark days, indeed. But you, beloved, when those thorns came, when they still come, the Meal of your Forgiveness, the Word of God, it brings you the nutrients you have needed. So also, beloved, for others who have lived, maybe their whole life among the thorns; small, weak, seemingly dead. Ah, but He has put you in their life. What an honor.

Finally, the seed is sown where we think is most blessed – among the good soil. But stop and think, good soil has probably at one time or another been infested with thorns and weeds. The Word has hoed and pulled them. God's pronouncement of forgiveness has thrown them into the fire. Rocks are in the soil as well. Again, God's Holy Word is like a spade which digs into the dirt so that these rocks may be put elsewhere. The Divine Word works Divine Forgiveness. Remember the great exchange, the gracious exchange where His yoke is your forgiveness and you lay your yoke, your sins on Him.

Good soil is good because it has been tilled. God soil is good because it is rich with the nutrients that come from droppings from ox and donkey, bird and dog. When trials of life come upon you, beloved, it may be the plow of the Word tilling you, it may be that the droppings that at first seem smelly are working to renew you.

He, the Good Sower, with His Word as that plow and dropping in the Law has prepared you to also receive the Gospel. And so broken and forgiven, you now yield fruit, some to 30, some to 60 and some to 100-fold. Whatever the harvest, it is not you, but God who brings the increase! Recall the words of the Apostle Paul to the church at Corinth: ^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 3:6** *I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.*

Now to the conclusion, the true understanding of this sweet parable from the very voice of Jesus:

¹⁸ "Hear then the parable of the sower: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. ²⁰ As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, ²¹ yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. ²² As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. ²³ As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

The bottom line here is that the Seed, the Word, truly works, it works salvation, it works preservation, it works sorrow for sin and joy for and in forgiveness. The Sower is of course our Triune God. As the Holy Spirit works through the Word, He reveals the heart of the Father through the gift of the Son. As Jesus details those things that distract and destroy faith, that distort the Word and deny the Sacraments, as He details all this, understand clearly, we are given this lesson that we might repent and be returned home, like the Prodigal. He gives us this understanding of the evil one that when we see the old fart-head, as I call him, we can bring the Word to bear in the life of others, we get to love them with this Powerful Seed, with the Living Word!

This Word is here in this House. You have a faithful shepherd under Christ. Here you bring your rocks and weeds, here hardpan is pecked into soil that receives the Good

Seed of the Sower, so, on this Day where we have confessed our sins, heard His Word, let us come forth to His Table and Eat and Drink the very Body and Blood of Him who loves us, even so, Amen and SOLI DEO GLORIA