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The Sower and the Seed
Text: Luke 8:4-15

The parable of the Sower and His seed is probably one of the most well known of Jesus' many parables recorded in the Bible. In fact three out of the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, relate Jesus' telling of this intriguing and confusing story. Intriguing because in each of these Gospels Jesus uses this parable to teach about the kingdom or rule of God in much the same context. Confusing because the meaning of the parable is not evident to all people who hear it or read it.

This story remained a mystery to most of the crowds of people who first heard Jesus tell it. And still today crowds of people are picking their brains trying to figure out what Jesus meant. However, Jesus did not leave everyone who heard this parable in the dark. Jesus told the meaning of the Sower and the Seed to His first disciples; "To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom/rule of God." The knowledge of this mystery did not stop with Jesus' first disciples, but it has also been given and passed down to you and me today; the Apostles passed it on to those people who became Jesus' disciples through the Apostles' preaching and teaching the Gospel- those new disciples then passed it on to others, who passed it on to others till the message of salvation reached us, who also are Jesus' disciples. You and I, who through Baptism have God as our Father and the Church as our Mother, are given to know this parable's meaning. Listen now to how St. Luke may have passed down Jesus' words of explanation to Theophilus, who probably became a disciple of Jesus through Luke's preaching and teaching.

My dear Theophilus, you are not the only person to be a little confused with Jesus' parable of the Sower and the Seed. When it was first told to me, I didn't understand it at

all. So naturally, I spent a lot of time speaking with the Apostles going over the important details of Jesus' life and ministry hoping to gain some understanding. Peter and Paul were very helpful in putting all the details together; I would not have understood it if not for their teaching, so I am very pleased to pass what I've learned down to you. Now don't forget Theophilus, when Jesus first told the Sower and the Seed He was in the midst of the great Galilean crowds a little after he raised the young man in Nain from the dead and ate in Simon the Pharisee's house. Basically the parable goes like this: the Sower went about sowing his seed on various soils; some fell beside the road and was devoured by birds; some fell upon the rocks and withered because it had no moisture; some seed fell in the thorns but they choked the seed out; and finally some seed fell on good soil and produced much fruit. Isn't it strange, dear Theophilus, how we can memorize Jesus' parable and go over it over and again, but not gain any more understanding unless someone teaches us. Well, what St. Peter told me helped me to understand and I'm sure it will help you too.

The seed which the Sower sows upon the soils is the Word of God. The Word of God is not like the word of people. People may speak words to communicate and to convince one another to do various things, but these words have no power to actually take shape or do the very thing that is spoken. God's Word creates- it calls things into being that never were before. God said let there be light and there was light. God said let there be the sun, moon, stars, oceans, dry land, plants, animals, and mankind- and just as God spoke, it came into being. God could say let there be focaccia cheese bread and lemonade and instantly it would appear. You and I would have to gather the flour and cheese and water and lemon juice together and then bake and mix to the proper specifications before

we could enjoy such food and drink. God simply says it and it is. This all powerful and active Word is the seed of the parable.

So one day God decides to sow His Word to a man named Adam and his wife Eve. Eat the fruit of any of the trees in the garden except the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, God says. Adam and Eve hear God's Word, but along comes that sneaking Serpent, Satan. He snatches God's Word from their hearts by convincing Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. Satan's lying, scheming, and snatching, leaves unbelief and death for Adam, Eve, and all their children. To this very day Satan snatches the Word from their children by telling them to look for God in themselves; "God is within each of us. Look into the depths of your soul. Find the still quiet voice of your true self- the god within that points to inner peace and happiness." This crafty lie stops them from hearing God's Word of Peace in Christ Jesus, which reconciles Adam and Eve's children with God.

God continues to sow His Word. Some of Adam and Eve's children are like the rocky soil in the parable; they receive God's Word with great joy because it creates in them peace and new life that they never knew before. But then things get tough; the old temptations of daily life suck all the nourishing moisture away and no firm roots are established. One lie to your parents becomes another and another- they don't need to know where I am; complaining about wife and kids at work and work at home becomes the normal conversation- why is life so tough for me? "Eat the forbidden fruit, its really ok- look within yourself give in to your desire, that's where you'll find god and peace; God's Word really doesn't apply to your life situation."

Still God sows His Word. Other children of Adam and Eve like the thorny soil, receive God's Word and things look good and promising at first, but then are choked by the concerns of the world. From Baptism to Sunday school to catechism class, Sunday after Sunday God's Word is sown in Solomon's heart. Things look promising for Solomon; he graduates high school with top academic honors and receives a full scholarship at Harvard. But once at collage, his church attendance starts to drop. More important pursuits begin to fill his time- studies, sex, and getting sauced. Solomon is choking God's Word from his life. After college Solomon's pursuits now leave no time for the hearing of God's Word- after all work, women, and wine is a 24-hour commitment.

And yet, my dear Theophilus, God continues to sow His Word; His living and active Word which goes out and accomplishes the purposes that God intends, penetrating and judging the heart of man, creating life, and bringing joy and peace. Some of Adam and Eves' children hear this Word of God and respond to it in faith by holding on to the Word. Good fruit in abundance is produced in their children's lives as God's creative Word makes the hearts of Adam and Eve's children to be new, noble, and good. Hearts that were once snatched away to disbelief, disobedience, and death by the serpent Satan are destroyed and in place of those hearts, God's Word creates new hearts. Hearts that trust and obey God's Word; hearts that consider it a joy to gather in church; hearts that take joy in telling your parents where you really are going; hearts that do not complain about work, wife, and kids but are thankful to serve them; hearts that are filled with and joy and peace that are not darkened by the trials of life.

I am very grateful that St. Peter took the time to explain to me Jesus' parable of the Sower and the Seed. Much, like you Theophilus, I was lost for its meaning. But Peter's

explanation reminded me that as I go about proclaiming the Word of God, there are different responses to it, all of which are out of my control. I cannot produce any good fruits of faith in people, I cannot get people to believe the message. It is God's Word that is living and active and accomplishes in man what God desires. I am only given to proclaim that Word and to rejoice with great thanksgiving in the day God's living Word touched me in the waters of Baptism and produced good fruit in my life. Remember dear Theophilus when you first heard and believed this Word of God. Remember when you were baptized by water and the Word in God's Triune name- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. At that moment God's living and active Word came to you. At Baptism you were united with Jesus Christ our Lord- The Word of God made Flesh. Jesus gave you participation in His death for the disbelief and disobedience of Adam and Eve and all their children. Jesus also gave you participation in His new life. From that day onward you have continued to hear God's Word and have held to it by faith. Even now you are sharing this Word of God with your family, friends, and neighbors trusting that God's Word will produce the fruits of repentance, faith, and good works in their lives also. So now my dear Theophilus, continue sharing the Word of God and pass what I have taught on to others after you.

Dear members of Holy Spirit Lutheran, thankfully you and I, can rejoice with thanksgiving in the day that God's Word touched us in Baptism, just like St. Luke and Theophilus. God's living, active, and creative Word has produced in us the fruits of repentance, faith, and good works. We have participation in Jesus' death for disbelief and disobedience and also participation in His new life. We now have God as our Father and the Church for a mother- we have been made Jesus' disciples and the mystery of the kingdom/rule of God has been given to us. No longer must we wonder and guess as to the

meaning of Jesus' parable of the Sower and Seed, for it has been taught and handed down to us. Like St. Peter, St. Luke, and Theophilus before us, we are now given to proclaim the Word of God to Adam and Eve's children. As we proclaim this living, active, and creative Word, it will do in the hearts of people as God desires. We will proclaim this Word to all and rejoice with thanksgiving that it has come to us and made our hearts new, noble and good producing fruits of faith in Jesus Christ our Lord. A-men.