Luke 8:5-15: Parable of the Sower

Sermon by Fr. Terenti Wasielewski

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Whenever a priest prepares his sermon, he must always think about who he is talking to. Sometimes the intended audience is a well-educated parish, sometimes to priests or students at a seminary, maybe to a group of children and other times it might be to common folk from the prairies of Manitoba. Whatever the audience a priest must discern who he is speaking to and he must be able to deliver the message on a level that can be understood. If a priest does not tailor his message to the appropriate population this seed will end up on the ledges and will either rot or be eaten by the birds.

But the sermon is only half of the equation. For the most part, the faithful need to be able to understand the words and apply the message to their lives. In other words, the onus is on the recipient to capture the essence of the word and to carry it home and make a difference not only in their lives but as an inspiration to others especially within the family structure.

The essence of today’s gospel is just about that: capturing the word of God. We don’t acquire God through the process of osmosis where it just flows from priest to parishioner, nor have we developed a process to transmit the word via electrodes into our brains. Rather, we receive it by what the gospel tells us: planting in good soil.

So, what is good soil for us Christians? Whenever we plant our gardens, usually we go to Hewitt’s pick up some miracle grow or a bag of 5-10-10 bring it home and work it in the soil. In the same way, we as Christians must prepare our spiritual soil prior to attending Liturgy and hearing the word of God. Do we attend Vespers on Saturday evening to usher in the new Sabbath? Do we prepare ourselves properly by reading pre-Communion prayers prior to the Liturgy? Do we come to general confession monthly? These are just a few examples of how we can be sure we are going to have a productive Christian life on this earth without weeds limiting our growth.

This gospel not only speaks to us, but to another population and this our children, grandchildren, anybody who is the future of the church. If you look around these grounds how many people are under the age of 40? Very few. If this is not alarming to us, then we must be putting our heads in the sand. If there is no youth in our church how can they possibly hear the word of God and be planted in sturdy soil. Soccer games, swimming meets, apple and pumpkin picking, whatever they are doing outside the church on a Sunday morning will ensure that our children will be lost forever.

Even if our children come, what guarantee is there that they heard the word of God and made it part of their Christian life. How many here raised their children in the church, and now that they have gone off to college are no longer church goers and have lost whatever they learned when they came each Sunday.

This lesson unfortunately describes them as the plants in good soil that were attacked by the thorns and weeds that have prevented them from growing into a fruitful generation? These weeds and thorns are the pleasures of this world, whether it be partying, worldly pursuits, serious failures as drug or alcohol addiction or perhaps it is just plain apathy towards religion. .

How many of us think about the seeds of the future? Will there be any seeds to plant? How will the church survive? Should we consider sponsoring Orthodox from other countries in order to keep our doors open? After all the Baptists have done this years before. Instead of wasting time planting seeds that seem to go nowhere, we might need to think of transplanting young plants from an Orthodox land.

Whenever I have had discussions about how to gain new members in our church, it is followed by the suggestion that we need to merge with other churches. To that I say, What is the gain? It means that the church may stay open for a little longer because you will have a better financial structure, but the church will not sustain itself at any length unless new seeds are sown in sturdy soil and they grow into pillars that will keep the church flourishing in the ages to come. .

You see this is why we need to take the last commandment of our Lord he gave us before his glorious Ascension-- that is to go forth and baptize in the Trinity bringing more into the fold. Mormons and Jehovah’s witnesses have acted on this last commandment of our Lord to the fullest and that is why they are top growing churches in America. By going out in two’s to each home just as our apostles did centuries ago, Mormons and Jehovah’s witnesses seek new seed and they get them. It’s not about staying in our churches on a Sunday morning and hoping that people to come us, rather we must go to them.

In years past, we counted on the next generation of our families to take over the church. That worked until the last half of the last century, but families are not that tight knit now and generally don’t remain in the same area any longer. The days of having a few clans that compose the church is over. How many do you see here today from the dominant families of year’s past--very few. Either they have passed on, they have become lapsed Christians, moved out of the area or joined other churches.

The point of this sermon is not to present a doom and gloom situation of our Orthodox church, rather we need to recognize that we need to work together to find ways of attracting new people. We need to be proactive and apply an apostolic approach to our Christian faith just like Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses employ to increase their population. We still have time to reverse this erosion but time is running out and there is whole lot work to be done.

May the Lord God give us this blessing.