

“How fruitful are you?” Mat 13:1-9, 18-23

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. 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, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear.”

“Hear then the parable of the sower: 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. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, 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. 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. 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.”

Sometimes we may get tired of being reminded that we need to keep listening to what God speaks to us, that we need to study His word, His message to us, to grow in our understanding of Scriptures. More and more, till the end of our lives. ‘Yes, yes...’ we can say, we have heard this so many times.

Today for our meditation we have one of the most beautiful parables in the New Testament. This is the parable of the Sower. And this parable deals exactly with the same issue. Listening to God, trying to understand His message.

As we look closer at this parable, we’ll find the reason why God keeps reminding us to remain in His word, to study them. If we had to explain this reason briefly – our Lord commands us to remain in His word, to study it as much as possible so that with His help we could be what He designed us to be.

So that you can be the best you possible. So that we can flourish in all our relationships and activities. So that you may receive the joy, peace and happiness which the Lord has prepared for you.

So that when you have finished this life you could receive the inheritance and rich rewards in Christ’s eternal Kingdom. So that you can be protected and rescued for Satan and eternal condemnation.

As we can see, God’s command to study His word is given – to benefit whom? Of course, us. It is given for your sake. So that He could bless your live and through you, lives of many others. But now, let’s take a look at this parable.

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.

Pay attention to these words “Does not understand it”. If we hear the word of the Kingdom, but don’t understand it, there is a little or no benefit from that. It means that we don’t get what God is telling and giving us in His word.

Today there are so many obstacles to Biblical message created by surrounding culture. One of the greatest and probably the most harmful is misrepresentation of what Biblical message is.

Lately it is so often described as one of religions. That is, something that people have made up. And then, if this is just something that we ourselves have made up, then we can easily move to the next step and say that ‘if this Christian religion works for you, fine, use it’.

Thus we make the Biblical message sound like one of options for our self-satisfaction. If it makes you happy, or helps you feel better, whatever... But these are evil lies.

These are evil lies which unfortunately have been repeated in our culture so often that they are directly responsible for so many Christians being deceived and robbed of their faith.

Biblical message is not a human invention. It is God’s message to us. God, who spoke and acted in history. God, whose miraculous deeds were witnessed by hundreds and thousands of eyewitnesses.

God who confirmed His message by signs and miracles in such a way, that people need to really harden their hearts not to see it. To believe historical accounts is not an option. Not to believe - is to deny reality in which we live. To reject Biblical message is to reject the truth about our reality and about us.

If we don’t understand it, then we don’t understand who we are. Created in God image, and redeemed by Jesus, so precious in God’s eyes. Each of you. Then we don’t understand how deeply sin has corrupted our entire being, and how desperately we need God’s help, His healing.

Then we don’t understand that God is our Loving Father who cares for us daily and has prepared for us indescribable riches in His kingdom. If we don’t understand these foundational truths, we will spend our life in lies.

Then we are left with foolish ideas that drive our culture today, that we are basically animals and need to indulge whatever beastly instincts we may have. We see it happening around. And people are proud of it. Then we are deceived, misled, robbed

of the most precious what is given to man, that is – loving relationships with his Creator and Redeemer.

We need to pray for those who have bought into these lies about the Biblical message and to do our best testifying them the truth. With God's help. For this is how we help to build the Kingdom of God. When the truth is spoken.

As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, 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.

Here Jesus describes another group of people. Those who are happy to receive the Word. Of course, they are happy. For the Gospel of Jesus is the most joyful message, it make every heart to sing. For when you realize that you are so much loved by God, this really changes everything. You want to share it with others. You know the feeling...

However, this world is not welcoming to this message. People generally don't want God's love, even if they desperately need it. People prefer to believe that they are gods themselves. They are so afraid that admitting that God is God, they will lose some imaginary benefits.

Therefore instead of embracing the Gospel, they oppose it. And they turn against those who try to share the good news about God's love and forgiveness. Suddenly, bringing the most beautiful message we encounter hostility.

You know how difficult it is, when others look at you as a fool. It doesn't help much that we know that actually they are being fooled by devil. Still, we all want to look good in eyes of this world, in eyes of our peers. Who wants to be rejected?

Especially it is a difficult challenge for our younger ones, or for those who just make their first steps following Christ. How to share these news God is your loving Father? How to remain strong in our faith when facing rejection?

Again, this is why we need to be rooted deep in the Word. For through His word God gives us His strengths and His wisdom, then we begin to understand how this broken world operates, and how we can help other while boldly confessing God's truth.

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.

I think this is what we see the most. This is what really breaks our hearts, for this happens with so many of our loved ones. They may not exactly be against Christ, at least not initially. But as the saying goes 'if Satan can't make you sin, he will try to make you busy.'

Today this is one of his most efficient weapons. Make you busy. To tie you down with all the good things we need to do. When I say good things, I mean good things. For usually people are busy striving for something good.

It can be career, or their own business. Or just a necessity to work more so that you can afford to send your children to better schools, or to pay mortgage. Busy trying to provide as many activities for our children as possible.

Busy traveling and busy attending social events, busy caring for our loved ones or others who genuinely need our care. Busy trying to find happiness, or security for future. Busy, busy, busy...

Thus step by step this world chokes our faith. These activities seem so innocent. For these are good things that people are striving for. But striving for important things people tend to forget about the most important.

“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?” (Mat 16:26) “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these [good] things will be added to you.” (Mat 6:33)

We may not believe it, but this is how our Lord does things. He wants and He can provide for us much better than we. He is the Lord of Universe, the Earth is His and everything on it. And He is happy to give us all that we need and desire, if only we seek His kingdom first.

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 one who hears and understands. He bears fruit, a lot of fruit. Understands what? Understands what Jesus' message to us is. We can try to summarize it this way. We are much more evil in our hearts than we can imagine, and we are much more loved than we could ever hope.

We are much more evil in our hearts than we can imagine, - we can understand it only when the word of God sheds its light on us. Then we can see that all our faculties are corrupted by sin. Our wills so often desire what we know is not right.

Our hearts produce anger, jealousy, envy, hatred and we can't control them. Our thoughts are occupied with worries and passions which we can't get rid of. We are totally tainted by sin as are all our relationships and actions.

But at the same time, we are loved more than we could ever imagine. God the Father knows your heart. Yes! He knows what is going on inside of us. We would be so ashamed if content of our hearts was showed to others.

But He already knows it, and knowing all of this, He still loves us. Exactly as we are. He loves us and accepts us, He wants to dwell in us, and by His presence renew our hearts, our will, our emotions, thoughts, so that we can be the best we possible.

When we understand this, when we understand how undeserved and how abundant God's love is, our lives are filled with joy and peace. Joy and peace that comes from God's presence, from His love.

We use the phrase 'shaped by God's word'. It is not just a phrase. It is how God works. When He reveals who we are, what is His design for our lives, when His love changes our hearts and we want to receive His blessings, then we are enabled and motivated to live according God's will.

Then we learn what marriage is and how to live it out. What our tasks as parents are. Why do we work and how we should approach our work. What to do with our possession and how to rest. All of this is shaped and guided by our Lord.

Put it otherwise, when we understand God's message, we understand that to be a Christian is not something we do on Sunday, this is who we are and how we life every day in everything we do.

We can't look at details in all of this today, these are too broad topics, but this is what understanding of God's message gives us. Transformed lives. Freedom and wisdom to do things differently. To live caring for others, considering others as more important than ourselves.

The last thing. When you look to this parable it is clear that God is very bad a sower. So much of what He sows gets lost. So much of what He does is taken away by the evil one. So much withers away, because there are no roots. So much is choked by this worlds deceitfulness. What a waste! We wouldn't waste so much.

When we sow we try to be as efficient as possible, but Jesus seems to be extremely careless. But He is not careless. He is super abundant in His generosity. Jesus has come so that everyone can know to the truth and be saved. Everyone.

Jesus doesn't look at us considering whether we will be fruitful or not. He just pours over us His gifts, His grace, His forgiveness. He speaks Father's love to us knowing that we don't deserve it, that so many will reject it. This is how our God treats us. This is how we are invited to treat others. Serving them generously.

When we serve people in our lives, when we pray for them, let us be as prodigal and generous as Jesus is. Let us love our neighbors, let us serve them. Let's make sacrifices for their sake. Even if some of our efforts seem to be a waste. For when we are so generously blessed by Jesus, we are free to do the same for others.

Amen.