

The reading is from the Holy Gospel According to St. Luke (8:5-15; Titus 3:8-15)

+ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit +

The sower is Jesus Christ. The seed are His commandments, teachings, and doctrines for eternal life. The seed is the Gospel, and it produces eternal fruit and sustenance for the soul. We cannot pick and choose from the seed of Christ; accepting the seed we like and discarding the rest, because that is what heretics and false teachers do. They pick and choose which doctrines, practices, and morals they like and which doctrines, practices, and morals they dislike. Claiming to have the Holy Spirit, they reject authority, are disobedient, grumblers and complainers who walk according to their own lusts, and they speak with powerful words, flattering people, but who do not know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God.

So they cause division. But Christ, the Apostles, and the Fathers of the Councils, who we remember today, knew that such people arise. And so they warned us against false teachers and rightly taught us the Word of Truth. Why?, so that our hearts might receive the seed of God, so that we might be united and obedient to the mysteries of the Kingdom of God.

Now, it is the Lord who Himself sows the seed of His Word, but where does He sow this seed? In our very hearts. Hearts, as we hear in the Gospel, can resemble the wayside, the rock, or the being among the thorns. The hearts that resemble the wayside are those that are trampled by evil passions “and by most wicked demons who oversee these things,”ⁱ and so the devil takes the Word of Life from their hearts. Factions, quarrels, and falsehood come from corrupted passions cooperating with the devil.

Those hearts resembling the rocky ground are at the same time both faint and hard hearts. In these hearts the word sprouts up, but because they are fickle and hard of heart they do not take root. So they fall away in the time of trial, temptation, and change. Fickle and prideful hearts cause division, confusion, falsehood.

Hearts that resemble the thorny ground are those preoccupied with wealth, influence, vain-glory, status, and pleasures of the flesh; who focus on the **Cares, Riches, And Pleasures** of the world, rather than the things of God. And so the pursuit of the **C.R.A.P.s**ⁱⁱ of the world is also the source of dissension, disobedience, and falsehood.

But the good ground are those with a noble and pure heart, who having heard the Word of God keep it and bear fruit with patience. Such a heart is humble and eager to receive the seed. It treasures it, tends o it, knowing it to be the pearl of great price. The seed in such a heart matures and bears fruit. From such hearts come unity, concord, and Truth.

For Christ says, “He that has ears let him hear” and “my mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and keep it.” In other words those who hear are not only those who understand, but who put into practice what they hear because their hearts are fertile ground for Word of Truth.

How do we prepare our hearts and how do we turn them into good ground? Through repentance and confession, by not blaming, judging, and condemning others. By being watchful over the heart and the things we allow to settle there. By remembering death. By abstaining from evil in every aspect of life; in all respects. We do ourselves no good if we are faithful and obedient in some areas, while unfaithful and disobedient in others, just like the teachers of falsehood and iniquity- picking and choosing what we like and don’t like. But when we are choosey we are like a man who flees a lion and is met by a bear, or went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall and was bit by a serpent.

The day of the great spiritual harvest will surely come. If we speak Truth and seek righteousness in everything we shall take root and bear much fruit. Let us flee division, heresy, falsehood, and opinions, greed, fornication, and anger. For doing evil and seeking falsehood are those things that harden a men’s hearts, making them like barren trees to be cut down and thrown into an everlasting fire. Through repentance however we can soften our hearts to receive the Holy Spirit, just as soft ground receives water. And with the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit in us we may raise up with the one Lord Jesus Christ who came into the world raising up the image of God in us that fell at the beginning.

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ⁱ St. Gregory Palamas

ⁱⁱ Thanks Fr. Peter Gillquist. Memory Eternal!