

## **Devil, World, Flesh**

### **Luke 8:4-15**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

You have heard this parable of Jesus, and the explanation He gives of it, many times. You are familiar with it, but even hearing it again, there are things about it that leave us concerned. They leave us concerned because we want to be the good soil that produces a crop a hundredfold.

But as Jesus talks about in this text, we are very familiar with our enemies, they are only too evident to us.

First there is the devil. In our text, there are those where the seed falls on the path. In them, Satan snatches the word away from them before they even believe. It is as Luther says, "it goes in one ear and out the other." Others hear any mention of God or Jesus, and immediately they tune out what God might try to begin in them, Satan has already so totally corrupted them.

Another enemy is the world. Some the seed falls on the rock; it has a little soil, but soon it withers. These hear the Word, find great joy in it, have great expectations, but when trials and tribulations come, they fall away.

The world is cruel to Christians. Look around and you see it is true. Where are the beliefs of Christians supported in the world? How many have fallen away from the faith because their faith is tested. People laugh at Christians for what they believe, because while Christians are in the world, they are not OF the world. We are not conformed to the world, but transformed by Christ. (Romans 12:2-3) So, when the teachings of the faith are challenged by the ideas of the world, there are many who fall away.

The world has corrupted some into false teachers who preach a theology of glory. Such preachers talk about how believers won't have problems. If you truly believe, God will give you the desires of your heart. God will make you wealthy, healthy, and happy.

But such teaching contradicts what Jesus declared, that blessed are those who are persecuted for His name's sake. And, we are to take up our cross and follow Him. Those following a theology of glory when troubles come up, have nothing to cling to, and many fall away.

Of course the last enemy is our own flesh. Some seed fell among the thorns which grew up and choked it. These hear the Word, but the cares, riches, and pleasures of life so tempt their flesh that their flesh leads them. It is so true? What are the fleshly desires that turn people from God?

"I can worship God better in nature," and so they spend their time outside. Their flesh is so enamored with the creation that it neglects the Creator. Some are so busy satisfying the fleshly desire of their eyes, their bellies, or even their minds, and are led away from God, they are too busy keeping their flesh happy.

Dear friends in Christ, lest we become conceited and think that those descriptions are of other people, not us, let us remember that those are the same enemies we have. You and I struggle against the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh on a daily basis.

Remember Jesus rebuking Peter, calling him Satan.

And we know all too well that many things of the world beckon us seductively.

Our flesh is probably our worst enemy, and Paul expressed well the struggle against his own flesh. We may have the desire to do what is right, but his body, his flesh, constantly struggled against what he knows he should do.

This is our daily struggle, the struggle of every Christian. Each day the devil would have us tune out God, the world shouts at us so loudly to drown out the Word, and our flesh would betray us at every turn.

Jesus wants us to be aware that all these temptations are out there, and it is easy to fall from faith.

But Jesus continues.

Have you ever taken good potting soil (the stuff that was sterilized of all weed seeds), put it in some sort of container, put fresh rain water on it, set it in a sunny place, and watched it grow? Dirt doesn't grow, does it? No matter how good soil is, it will not grow.

What needs to happen for anything to grow in that container of good soil? It needs a seed! Without a seed nothing grows. There is nothing inherent in soil that makes it bear fruit, it is the seed.

What is the seed? The seed is the Word of God! Christ is the very Word of God. Christ changes the soil and makes it bear something. Hebrews tells us that Christ is the author and perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:2). That is, Jesus begins our faith, keeps it firm, and brings to completion on the last day.

Once when the Pharisees and Sadducees came to John, he called them to repentance. Then he pointed at some stones and proclaimed, "Do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our Father'; for I say to you that God is able to raise up from these stones children to Abraham." (Matt. 4:7-9) God could make believers even out of stones, if He so desired.

You see, it is the Word which is the seed, and it is the seed which accomplishes things. In our Old Testament lesson, God speaks to Isaiah and says, "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." (Is. 55:10-11)

Christ is the Word which goes forth from God's mouth. Remember how John's Gospel begins. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. This very Word brought all things into being, and apart from whom, nothing came into being that has come into being. This very Word which created all things, was God and is still God.

It is that very same Word which took on human flesh, that is, became incarnate in the womb of Mary. He became flesh, so that He could overcome the temptations of human flesh for us. He came into the world in human flesh so that he could overcome the temptations of the world as a man. God incarnate was the only one who could defeat Satan in human flesh, and do it for us.

It is the Word made flesh who crushes Satan's head, overcomes the world, and resists the lusts of the flesh for us – and then in perfection gives Himself as the sacrifice for our failures to overcome our enemies, and our failing from temptation into sin.

Today that Word of God comes to you in order to bear fruit. Christ comes to accomplish His task in you. He comes to you to build and strengthen faith. He doesn't care the condition of the soil, He is the seed sown, and this seed bears fruit. Christ, the Word will accomplish the task for which He is sent.

Satan cannot stand against the seed, for he has already been defeated when Christ took yours sins to the cross. Satan holds no more dominion over you. The seed of the Word is sown. Christ comes to you. He is the very Word that you hear and who bears fruit in you, building and strengthening faith.

In the water of baptism, the seed of the Word is hidden, Christ Himself is present. Each day lived in our baptism, is a day lived in Christ, and in Christ we have already overcome the devil, the world, and our sinful

nature. In Christ we already have eternal life. In Christ, we are only awaiting the day of our resurrection like unto His to enjoy that eternal life in His heavenly kingdom.

Bread? Wine? No! It is the seed sown, the very Word of God, His flesh you eat – His blood you drink. Christ Himself springs up in you to forgiveness, eternal life, salvation, and the strengthening of faith.

The seed is sown, and the Word of God, Christ, goes forth into you to accomplish His task. He is growing faith in you even now, as you hear this Word. Christ chases away Satan, for Satan has no power over you. The Word cleanses you of your concerns over the trials that come upon you. Christ forgives you for your sinful pre-occupation with the cares, the riches, and the pleasures of this life, and fills you with Himself. You are being strengthened in faith and life to bear the fruit of faith, for it is the Word which bears fruit in you with patience. It is the seed, the Word of God – it is CHRIST which produces in you a crop – a hundred fold.

Forgiveness of your sins and strength of faith – that you might love God and serve your neighbor – that is a crop a hundredfold. Amen.