

Secrets Revealed To You

Luke 8:4-15

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

How does a plant grow? You put a seed in dirt and it grows. Or at least, that is how most people picture it happening. I know as we have had a few warmer days, I have thought about what to put in the garden. I think it is a bit premature, but hey, as we hear this parable it is easy to go in that direction.

Speaking of our text, too often, when this parable of the sower is spoken about, everything is made about the different types of ground. And of course, the types of ground are compared to different types of people. The conclusion is that it is the people then who grow good crops.

But when the disciples went to Jesus, He explains there are only two types of people. "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand."

That was exactly what was already alluded to at the end of the parable, even before Jesus was asked by His disciples to explain it. At the end of the parable, as Jesus said these things, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." This is Jesus commentary, there will be some who will hear and some who will not.

Why does this happen? Why do some hear and produce a crop and others do not? At this point, neither the disciples nor those who were present to hear the parable were understanding. In fact, even Jesus' explanation of the parable still leaves it mysterious. Jesus emphasizes the very critical importance of hearing, for it is the Word that is important. He tells the disciples, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God."

But did the disciples truly understand? Remember Peter's problem when Jesus told them that He must suffer, die, and be raised on the third day? He said basically, this shall never happen. Jesus called him, "Satan," for he didn't have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.

But the bigger picture here is not the temporary inability of the disciples to see and hear. Instead, what is at issue is why some hear and eventually believe, while others do not, and end up in eternal destruction.

This parable seems to give an easy answer, the problem is with the people – some have "good" fertile soil, while others have hard hearts, no roots, or lots of weeds. I might add, that this is a very attractive explanation, especially to those who believe.

It is with just such an explanation that Pharisees made. Pharisees like to point to others and thank God they are not like them. Pharisees like to think that they have not been resistant to the temptations of Satan, testing, and the cares, riches, and pleasure of life. Pharisees like to believe

that they have been wise and made a decision for Jesus.

Dear friends, what is true is this, by nature we are all children of our forefather, Adam. We are all sinful and unclean. Let us repent of our sin of Pharisaism – our thinking we are better than others or immune to temptation.

Others like to believe that if the people are not to fault, then it must be God's fault. Maybe there is a problem with some of the seed. Maybe there isn't enough rain or sunshine. This explanation would lead to the heretical error that says God predestines some people to damnation. God's Word however contains the outrageous grace and power to yield a hundredfold. Looking at our text, Jesus does not lay any fault upon the seed or the weather conditions for why there fails to be a harvest.

When we study this, we are to see ourselves as each of the different kinds of soils. Through the Word, Jesus seeks to implant faith in the hearts of people, faith which would trust in Christ and His work for salvation. Satan doesn't want this to happen.

The ones along the path are those who have heard. Then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. If Satan can get us to believe in evolution, then we'll doubt the truth of all of Scripture. If he can get us to think that some things are not sinful, then we see no need for the cross. In these and other ways, the devil steals the Word from those who hear it, before they can believe. As numerous as the birds of the air are the cunning wiles of the devil.

And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away.

Many are those, ourselves included, who have thought that since we are believers in God, we should therefore be immune from all trials and troubles in life. Such thinking leaves us vulnerable. In a world corrupted by sin, with death as the wages awaiting us all, be sure of this fact – trials and tribulations will come into your life. If we think that Christians should have no problems, faith in God quickly crumbles when troubles come along. This is especially true if we believe that all should be glorious in the life of a believer. That is why so many fall from faith.

And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.

How often have I heard people say, "Pastor, I'll worry about church and God later, there's too much living to do." Or another one, "We need a balanced life, some God and some other stuff. After all, God gave us all this stuff to enjoy today, while we can. We haven't forgotten about God, just that these things are a priority now. We'll get religious later, God understands."

A couple years ago, I was called in as the chaplain to make a death notification. I visited with the wife of a man who was a few years younger than I was at the time. He was killed in a car accident on his way to work. He was living his life and following his normal routine. What his faith was like? I don't know. I won't even speculate. I bring it up for this simple reason, to

remind you that today may be all there is - even at any age. Do not let the cares and riches and pleasures of life that can so very easily get in the way, keep your faith from maturing.

Look around today, how many who claim to be members of this congregation are not hearing the Word this morning? How many who are here, believe that study of God's Word is for other people, especially the elderly and the women? How many come up with excuses why you cannot attend one of the Bible Studies offered in order to hear more of that precious Word of God which builds faith and produces a harvest a hundredfold?

Don't think that this text is so much about the idea that each of us is one of those different soils. Instead, we should consider that each of us is all those different soils at different times in our lives. All we need do is remember what we learned in the catechism. In these different soils, we see the work of our three enemies - the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. Those who succumb to these temptations fall away from faith – sometimes for eternity.

So, what does this parable mean? The key is the very word of Jesus, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God." There are those who have been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, and all the rest. Here it is important for us to know a bit more about a particular word used in this passage, the word translated here as secrets. In the original Greek, the word is *mysteria* - or as is easily seen, and most often translated in other English versions - mysteries. It is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God.

The secrets or mysteries of the kingdom are nothing other than Christ Himself. And everywhere that Christ gives Himself, He is thereby imparting His kingdom to us.

We can easily understand then, that it is by inspiration of the Holy Spirit that Paul calls himself - and all those who are called to be pastors - stewards of the mysteries of God, or stewards of the secrets of the kingdom of God.

Those secrets are nothing other than the presence of Christ, for where Christ is, there is the Word of God. Christ is the absolution, the preaching of the Gospel, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. What is even more curious is the fact that the Latin word into which *mysteria* is translated, is *sacramentum*. Christ is the Word, and the Word brings about the mysteries - the sacraments.

God's Word goes forth from His mouth and will not return empty. But, it is a mystery, a secret.

Remember how the Jews treated Jesus? They questioned whether Jesus could be God. He looks like a man? If He were God, why would He allow Himself to endure the suffering and excruciating death of crucifixion? "If you are the Son of God, come down off the cross, they mocked." Christ is the mystery of God, He is the Kingdom of God, veiled in the seemingly weak and powerless. In Christ's suffering and death are His victory over our sin and death. In His resurrection is hidden the resurrection that we too will share.

Today, that secret has been revealed to you. In the water of baptism is the powerful Word of Christ. Hidden from our eyes, Christ comes and unites us Himself – to His death for the forgiveness of our sins, and to His resurrection, that we might have a new life, and hope on the

last day.

The secrets are revealed to you, for hidden in the voice of a man Christ comes to you in the Word and your sins are forgiven you. Hidden in the voice of a man, the Word is working the miracle of faith even as you now hear that Word.

What lies on the altar before us this morning? Mysteria! A secret of the Kingdom of God - Jesus Christ, true God, in flesh and blood for you to eat and to drink. The Word made flesh comes to you as you eat and drink, forgiving sin and strengthening your faith.

Dear friends, it is the Word, and the hearing of it, that bears fruit in you, yielding a hundredfold. Hold fast that word, gather where that Word may continually do it's work, bringing forth in you a yield of a hundredfold on the last day. Amen.