

Sermon—4th Sunday of Luke
St George Orthodox Church—Albany, NY
Fr John Vazquez
10.15.23

Luke 8.5-15

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit—one God—Amen!

Glory to Jesus Christ!

If you are like me sometimes it is difficult to be patient

I want things to happen right now.

And to make things worse almost every add that I hear feeds this vice of impatience in me

I am constantly inundated with messages that I can have what I want right now.

I can buy using credit

I can get my paycheck sooner

I can have instant coffee

I can have packages delivered to me the next day

And yet, nearly everything that is good in this world takes time

The good wine is the wine that is aged

Flavorful food simmers for some time

Diamonds and coal are formed after years and years

The best relationships are those that have survived many years

And so I see that it is through patience that good things come

Our Lord even tells us *by your patience do you possess your soul (Lk 21.19)*

But you might be thinking what does this parable that our Lord tells us today have to do with patience?

Well, the parable of the sower has to do with gardening and gardening takes patience...much patience to weed and till and water

Gardening is an endeavor of patience

When God created Adam and Eve he put them in the Garden that he had planted (Gen 2.8)

And God place Adam and Eve in a Garden—the Garden of Eden. *Then God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and multiply fill the earth and subdue it* (Gen 1.28)

And in order to subdue the earth that our Lord had created Adam and Eve are to spread this garden to the whole earth.

Because the whole earth was not the Garden—Adam and Eve had work to do from the very beginning and this work involved tending a garden

Something else that we have to keep in mind is that God created us out of the dust of the earth (Gen 2.7)

Our bodies are earth—so when we say “on earth as it is in heaven” in the Our Father—what are we saying?

We are saying “on earth, on me, in me” be it done as it is in heaven

We are praying that we become a place where the garden is spread, where the garden of paradise can be

Now with this in mind we can turn to the word that hear today from our Lord

This parable about a Sower and his Seed and thorns and rocks and good ground.

When we hear theses words of our Lord and we realize and understand that we are the place where the seed of the Word is sown we realize that we have work to do

We realize that this parable is not about other people—it is about me

There are thorns and thistles, rocks and pests inside of me working to keep the word of God from taking root in me

So how do we care for gardens?

What happens when gardens are well kept and plants have taken root?

Seeds spread, they are carried to different places

When we become a well-tilled garden we participate in the work of Christ of spreading the Word and sowing the Word around the world

What are some things that we can do to work this garden so that we participate in this work of Christ?

There are three things that we can do to work in the garden of our hearts so that the seed of the Word can take root in our hearts

First we can Fast.

Fasting is uncomfortable and difficult but with fasting we weed out the thorns and weeds that would otherwise grow up with the fruit of the seed of the word of God

How does fasting do this?

Fasting does this because when we are hungry we are given the ability to see those things that are inside of us. We see the anger, we see the impatience we see our desire to judge others

Fasting helps us to see these things because it is uncomfortable

When we fast on Wednesday's and Friday's and Advent and Lent and Apostle's Fast and the Dormition fast we have this uncomfortable but beautiful opportunity to see those weeds and thorns inside of us so that we can ask God to remove them

Because our Lord does nothing against our will—we have to ask Him

It is He who does all the work but we have to do the asking and fasting prompts us to ask because it gives us vision to see

And this takes much patience

Next, we can use Confession to till the garden of our hearts

We confess our sins in private to God and we confess our sins in the Church to the priest

Confession is removing the stones from the ground our hearts

The stones of sins that do not allow the Seed of the Word to take root in our hearts

When we confess we allow God to remove the stones of these sins that are present in our hearts

And this work of confession takes a lifetime

The more we confess—meaning the more we practice this discipline of repentance—the more we see that we need to confess and so we are constantly removing stones from our hearts

This work of confession also takes patience

Finally we pray

Prayer is how we provide water and fertilizer for the soil of our hearts so that the Seed of the Word can grow and produce much fruit

Prayer is how we open ourselves up so that the dew of the grace of God can water our hearts

And prayer is also something that takes patience—it takes years and years to grow in our prayer and for us to learn to pray and desire to pray

But little by little we do grow and our prayer becomes almost self-sustaining

We get into such a habit of prayer that it just becomes the words that are in our mouths

These three practices of fasting, confession of sin and prayer help us to tend the garden our hearts so that the seed that the Good Sower, our Lord Jesus Christ sows, will grow in our hearts.

Lord strengthen us to do this work. Amen.