

Eighth Sunday of the Holy Cross – What Soil Are We?

*Delivered by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian
St. Sarkis Armenian Church. Carrollton, TX
October 30, 2016
Gospel Reading: Luke 8:17-21*

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Right before today's Gospel reading, that is a famous parable, called the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:4-15). In this parable, Christ speaks of a sower who is spreading seeds and the seed fall on four different terrains. Some fall on the hard path, where they are trampled underfoot and eaten by birds. Some fall on the rocky grounds, where they sprouted and then withered because there was no water. Still some fell amongst thorns and when they grew up, they were choked and died. However, some fell on the good and fertile soil. They took root, grew and bore fruit.

This is a unique and special parable because it is one of the very few parables which Jesus explains to His disciples. He says that the seed is the Word of God which is sown among people. The hard path are those whose hearts and minds are closed to the Word of God and to whom the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts. The rocky soil are those who receive the Word of God, but have no roots and when trouble comes, they lose their faith. Those seeds that fall among the thorns are like those who receive the Word of God, grow, but the worries, pleasures and riches of this world and their fruit does not mature. But the seed that lands on the good and fertile soil are those who hear the Word of God, keep it and bear fruit.

So the question is: which soil are we? Of course we all strive to be the good soil and we believe we are because we go to church, pray once in a while and believe in God. However, if we are honest, we would consider ourselves to be the thorny soil because we are surrounded by thorns of worry, anxiety, pleasure and temptation. The devil knows how easy it is to distract us from the Word of God, sowing thorny concerns in our lives.

Each of us can make a laundry list of worries: bills, debt, marriage, relationships, work or the lack of work, illness, children's education, our own education, the presidential election, the economy, terrorism, and the future, to name only a few. When our lives are surrounded with these worries, we are distracted and cannot hear God's Word because worries and anxieties are loud, demanding our attention, and strangling our faith.

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Yet, all hope is not lost. We can still be the good and fertile soil, bearing fruits, if we do three things. First, we must listen attentively. We are reminded of this every time the Holy Gospel is read in church. The deacon declares, “Երկիրը ածուրթեամբ լուարուք” (yergyughadzootyamb lvarook) *listen in reverence* and then he says, “Պոռոսխուսմէ” (Proskhoomeh) which is a Greek word, meaning, *attention*. The deacon instructs us to give the Word of God our undivided attention and not allow things to distract us.

Second, we must think in our minds and heart about what we have heard, discovering the meaning for ourselves. We must understand how God is speaking to us, because what each of us hears differs, due to our past experiences and where we are on our journey of faith. And third, we must act. We must translate what we have heard into action, allowing the Holy Spirit to water the seeds He has planted and ultimately bear fruit.

So in this world full of worries and anxieties, let us pray that the thorns which surround us and clamor to choke the Word of God out of us be burnt with the same fire of the Holy Spirit which descended upon the Holy Apostles on Pentecost. May we be turned into fertile and good soil and bear fruit.

Amen.