

February 6 – 7, 2010 Sexagesima
Luke 8:4-15 “The Harvest”

In the Name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The mysteries of the kingdom of God have been given to you, that seeing you would understand and hearing you would believe, that you would turn - repent - and your sins would be forgiven. If you do not understand this parable, you will not understand any parable (Mark 4:13).

This is the first lesson in the kingdom of God: [pause]
THE HARVEST COMES OF ITSELF AND IN UNLIKELY PLACES.

The Sower does not prepare the ground, nor does He sow only where a harvest could be expected. Instead, He casts His Word to the wayside, upon the stony ground and thorny patch. He pays for labor that was not performed. He welcomes back sons who wanted Him dead. He forgives those who wasted His goods and looked after themselves. He delivers mercy to sinners. He pours on oil and wine, pays for everything Himself, and promises to come back.

He gives everything - His most precious thing, the Life of His only-begotten - as a ransom to reconcile mankind to His Father, to bestow His Spirit. He does not give His Life only for those who will return His love. [pause] He gives His Life for all: for the good and the bad, for the right and the wrong, for the faithful and unfaithful.

He is no respecter of persons. He has come for those who are sick with sin, weary with death, for those who are haunted by old grudges and oppressed by their own lusts and greed, for those with a scandalous past and secret sins.

He comes for the unrighteous and unworthy, for those being snatched at by demons, trampled with violence, choked by worry and fear, dried up in temptation. He comes to transform them into good ground, that they would hear His Word, be forgiven and cleansed, start anew, and bear fruit with patience.

For the kingdom of God like a man scattering seed on the ground who then goes off to bed. When he rises in the morning he finds the seed has sprouted and grown, though he himself does not know how. It was not by his efforts or wisdom. While he slept the seed rose.

The earth yields its crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain. God provides a harvest. There is more to our lives than simply seeking our next meal. So also the kingdom of God comes of itself: but we pray

that it may come to us also. We pray that we may learn to live by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God. We pray that our heavenly Father would give us His Holy Spirit so that by His grace we would believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.

Judged by the standards of men, God is wasteful. Not everyone receives His gifts. Not everyone repents. Not everyone believes. Not everyone is weary with sin and death, tormented by demons and temptations. Some are quite content in their sins, some think vice has its noble side.

Thus are they snatched away, choked out, or dried up. They do not enter into the kingdom even though it is bought and paid for and offered up to them for free. It is wasted on them. For not every seed bears fruit. Many are called, but few are chosen. But judged by the standards of the holy angels: [pause] God is not wasteful.

He is love. He is generous, merciful, kind, patient, and eager to forgive, not shirking His duty but going as a Lamb to the slaughter, laying down His Life to make us free, rescuing us from Satan's deceptions and torture.

And if some spill over the edge, if some refused outright, [pause] it does not matter. That is what it took for full coverage. That reckless sowing was necessary to get the seed to you. All men were covered so that you would be among the elect. All men were covered that all could know God loves them, as you know [pause] God loves you.

You need have then no doubt about whether you are the elect or not. All men were reconciled to the Father in the death of the Son. All men --including you. The Sower sows His Seed that it would grow, that men would believe. Thus have you been baptized and you do believe. The Word bears good fruit in you and God Himself is pleased.

Even as a great tree, full of flowers and aroma, giving shade to the weary and wood to the builder, is hidden inside a mustard seed, so is new life, hope, and peace hidden in the Word of God. For where it takes root, is watered by Holy Baptism, fertilized with the Blood of Jesus Christ, it bears a harvest a hundredfold.

The grace God gives is greater than the sins He takes away. [pause] Nothing is wasted. For this Love, this generous and creative Word of God, Jesus Christ Our Lord, is without end. The Kingdom comes of itself. As unlikely as it might seem: it comes to and for you. It cleanses and forgives you. By it, your heart is noble and good. God keeps His promises.

In the Name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.