

Today is Sexagesima Sunday. Sexagesima means sixty. Today is approximately sixty days until we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. Last week we focused upon the first sola, Grace Alone; today we will focus upon the second sola, Scripture Alone. The Bible, Holy Scripture, is the inspired Word of God. The Bible does not contain the Word of God, it is completely and fully the Word of God. Every word recorded for us, from the book of Genesis, to the book of Revelation is God speaking to us. It is proclaiming the fullness of God found in the God Man Jesus Christ. The Word of God, found in the pages of the Bible is the source and norm for what we believe and practice. Everything written on its pages points us to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Jesus is the key to understanding its meaning. The Word of God judges what is right and wrong. It is Law and Gospel. It is condemnation. It is grace, mercy and peace. The Bible is God's perfect Word; there are no errors or contradictions in it, it is absolute truth.

In His parable concerning His Holy Word, Jesus says, "*He who has ears to hear, let him hear.*" Whoever does not properly hear the Word of God, receiving it as absolute truth, hears it to their judgment. There are times when you hear the Word, but it goes in one ear and out the other, especially when God's Law is proclaimed, showing us our sin. The Word is also not properly heard when we hear it without paying devout attention to it, as if it is one word among many words, as if the Bible is no different than any other piece of literature. When the Word of God becomes mere habit, or when we hear it but hate everything that it says to us; then we hear the Word of God to our judgment. But when you hear the word of God and I as your pastor say, "This is the Word of the Lord" you respond, "Thanks be to God." Meaning what has been spoken, for our hearing, is so; we receive it to our blessing and good.

Many hear the Word of God preached and taught and the devil quickly comes in and moves them on to something else, pulling the Word away from them before it can ever take root. There are many others who hear the preached Word of God, they receive it with thanksgiving, delighting in it for a while, rejoice over the gift of forgiveness it proclaims, but then they are caught up in temptation and refrain from hearing it again. Others become so caught up in idolatrous pursuits of pleasure, entertainment and wealth that they have no time for the Word of God, so faith is choked out.

In the parable today, Jesus is the Sower of the Seed. The seed is the perfect Word of God. And we, the poor miserable sinners are the soil, where Jesus plants His Word. Jesus scatters the seed of his Word when and where He will, in every place and every time, creating faith us. Jesus regularly fertilizes and maintains it through His Sacraments. Jesus pulls out the weeds and removed all evil from us. Jesus creates the good harvest. The faith that is created in us holds fast to the Word that Jesus sows in our heart at Baptism, preached ever deeper into our hearts during the Divine Service and holy absolution, and fertilized and strengthened with the solid food of the Lord's Supper.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, when we receive the Seed of the Word and there is no room for it in our lives, the Seed does not take root. The result, is that such a hearer never comes to faith in Christ. They might believe for a time, but get angry with the Word because they have not received what they thought they might receive, especially in times of pain and

suffering. They eventually refuse to hear the Word altogether, so the devil comes and takes the Seed away. The example you have seen perhaps the most among the three soils not receiving the Seed is the last one Jesus speaks about in the parable. *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.*

There may be times when you fit into one of these three soils. Repent. Beware the trap of the devil, the world, and your sinful nature hardening, scorching, and choking the Word of Christ that richly dwells in you. You can't blame the Sower, because He *desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.* You can't blame the Seed, because it is a *Good Seed, the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, and a light to our path. The Word is a light no darkness can overcome.*

God, the Sower, calls us by the Gospel, enlightens us with His gifts, sanctifies and keeps us in the One True Faith; so also does God withdraw His light, His grace and His spirit from those who reject Him and fail to receive His grace, mercy and peace with thanksgiving. But God continues to sow His seed. By His Holy Word being sown in us, God's will is being done among us; where He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world and our sinful flesh, which do not want a bountiful harvest to be produced. By His Holy Word, God delivers us from evil: rescuing us from every evil of body and soul, possession and reputation, giving us a blessed end, and graciously taking us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven.

The question we ask ourselves is this, "Am I good soil?" The answer belongs to God. Those who hear the Word in simplicity and humility, receiving it as God's Word, are good soil and a bountiful harvest is produced. How can this be? It is a mystery, one not solved by human reason or strength but solved by God from eternity. God knows those who are His. Place your confidence there. Place Your fear, love and trust in God and His Word. You are His, be confident in that. God makes your heart into good land in His Word, especially in the preaching of His Word and in the reception of His Sacraments. Abide in His Word and Sacraments always and be confident, a good harvest will be produced. God is faithful He will do it.

When we properly hear the Word of God, the Seed will rise up in our hearts, putting down deeper and deeper roots, that we would live before God in righteousness and purity forever. This is not our own doing. It is the work of God by the power of the Holy Spirit among us. Either the Word will be received by us with great joy and thanksgiving or the Word will be snatched, scorched, or choked from within us and death and condemnation will be ours.

Because we hear the Word of God with great joy, because we believe that the Word of Christ made flesh died for our sin and rose for our salvation, because we trust in Christ as Savior from sin, death, and hell, because His blood covers us and shields us from the angel of death, because Jesus lives, we also shall live. How could something as beautiful as the Word of God which proclaims grace, mercy and peace, be so despised by the world? Sadly, it is. Jesus says so in His parable.

Take care then how you hear the Word of God and keep it. Your soul is dear to the Lord. He desires all men to come to faith and be saved. Glory be to You O Lord! Hear His

Word with great joy, receive it to your good. The Lord will surely give His blessing and produce a harvest one hundred fold. Praise be to You, O Christ! Thanks be to God. Amen.

Let us pray. O Lord, You sow the seed of Your Good Word in my heart, that I may read, mark learn and inwardly digest it. I wonder how much of it has been trampled upon. I am ashamed to think how much I have let it wither and die. And yet, O Lord, You never tire of sowing again. Lord, I know it's You who makes it grow, so I ask that You hold Your protective hand on the seed. Chase away the enemy's birds and pull out the weeds. Let Your Word take root so it can bear much fruit. Let it bear fruit that honors Your name and benefits my fellow man. Amen.