



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

PARISH OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LADY, “EVANGELISMOS”

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SUNDAY 16 OCTOBER 2016 – THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

EPISTLE The Reading is from St Paul’s Letter to Titus [3:8-15]

This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men. But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned. When I send Artemus to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing. And let our people also learn to maintain good works to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful. All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen.

EXPLANATION:

Here St Paul advises Titus to avoid petty, egocentric squabbling among members of the church and in particular to affirm constantly that Christians should be careful to maintain good works for the glory of God. **(3:8)** He says that disputes, genealogies, contentions and strivings about the law are unprofitable and useless. Why? Because

Christ has established a new covenant, fulfilling the old law. **(3:9)** Those who are zealous about the old law are **“divisive”** persons who pick and choose from the whole truth. They insist on circumcision and dietary laws, yet engage in immoral behaviour. They follow their own choices independent of Holy Tradition and if they do not understand their faults after the first and second admonition, they should be rejected. **(3:10-12)** Paul perceives that those who cause dissention in the church act in a vain, earthly manner, having nothing to do with God, and cause harm to the church. It is for this reason that they should be rejected. **(3:13-15)**

GOSPEL The Reading is from St Luke [8:5-15]

A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture, and some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold. When He had said these things He cried, *“He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”* Then His disciples asked Him, saying *“What does this parable mean?”* And He said, *“To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.”* Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. Now the ones that fall among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.

EXPLANATION:

The Gospels record some 30 parables. Their theme is the Kingdom of God. Parables are images drawn from daily life which reveal spiritual truth. Jesus invites us to enquire and to seek the truth. When His disciples asked Him why He spoke in parables, He answered that the truth is revealed to those who desire to learn and who have opened their hearts to receive the truth – the Word of God. But to those whose hearts are hard and unyielding, He speaks to them obscurely. By rejecting the Gospel and adhering to the law, the Jews sought to establish their own righteousness. Their ignorance of God's righteousness, a rejection of Christ Himself, is wilful and self-imposed. Christ puts an end to the law as a way for people to gain righteousness without Him. Thus He terminates the old covenant without nullifying the law as useless. For He fulfils the law. His righteousness is superior to that of the law. Everyone who believes in Christ participates in His incomparable righteousness. The Lord also hides these things from them so that they will not fall under greater condemnation for He who understands the mysteries of the Kingdom of God and disregards them deserves a more severe punishment. **(8:9-10)** In this parable Christ reveals Himself as the promised Messiah, the **“sower”** on earth. The **“seed”** is the Word of Christ – the Gospel. The **“ground”** is the souls of men. As the sower, the Lord makes no distinction in the ground submitted to Him, but simply scatters the seed without any distinction between rich and poor; wise or unwise; slothful or diligent, brave or cowardly. Although Christ knows “that the seed will not produce fruit on the road, stony places or amongst thorns, nevertheless he tells His disciples that they must preach the Word to all creatures, because it is possible for people to repent and change and be saved. For had it been impossible, the sower would not have scattered the seed in those places in the first instance. That is, any human being is capable

of change and be converted. Therefore, as Christ taught (sowed), His Word (seed) fell upon four different types of ground (souls of men). Some fell **“by the wayside”** (road); some fell **“on a rock”**, some fell **“among thorns”** and some fell on **“good ground”**. Those whose hearts are hard and unyielding and do not want to have anything to do with God are referred to as **“highways”** where no sacred or divine word can enter their soul; where no seed can take root and the word is quickly taken away by the devil. **(8:5)** Those who hear the Word and receive it with joy, but because of human weakness, temptations and tribulations are unable to allow it to take root in their heart, are referred to us people with stony hearts (**“on a rock”**). They immediately forget the teachings they have learned and take flight. They do not have strong enough faith (**not much earth**) and they are **“scorched with the sun”** (temptations) and **“wither away”** (forget their faith). **(8:6)** The seed that fell **“among thorns”** refers to those into which the seed takes root and they accept the Word of God, but the **“cares of the world”**, the obsession for wealth and material possessions choke the tender shoots of faith as soon as they spring up from the soul. Note, that they are not choked by riches, but rather by the **“cares of riches and pleasures of life”**. It is not wealth that harms, but the cares and worries about wealth, which fill the mind. Indeed, many have received great benefit from their wealth when they have used it for philanthropic purposes. **(8:7)** And finally, the seed that fell on **“good ground”** refers to those who have heard the Word and **“keep it”**. Their faith is the fertile soil which bears fruit according to their spiritual progress. The Gospel of God’s Kingdom is powerful, but our heart’s response determines its fruitfulness in our lives. **(8:8)** From this parable therefore, we learn that only one part of humanity is saved and three parts perish. Few are saved; most are lost. “Every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” (Matthew 3:10)