

(Luke 8:5-15, NIV84)

"A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown." When he said this, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." His disciples asked him what this parable meant. He said, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, 'though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.' This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop."

The devotion below has great advice for pastors and parishioners. Just as a lot more goes into writing a sermon than the mere writing of it, a lot more goes into getting ready for church on Sunday morning than simply getting dressed.

This Sunday at Messiah we will celebrate the Sacrament of the Altar -- the Lord's Supper. How important it is that we prepare our hearts to celebrate the Sacrament -- recognizing our sins and our need for forgiveness, and recognizing that in the Supper we receive Christ's true body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins and the building up of our faith.

I recall a dear woman who was once a parishioner of mine, Esther (who has since gone to be with Jesus). Before the Sundays we would celebrate the Lord's Supper, Esther would "announce for communion" -- she would call me to let me know she was planning to receive the Lord's Supper on that Sunday. She never failed to do that because already, days beforehand, she was preparing her heart for that event.

We would always do well to follow Esther's example and give careful, prayerful thought to upcoming worship opportunities, so that our hearts can be "good soil", prepared to receive "the seed" of God's Word.

Preparing with you to receive Christ,
Pastor Golm

July 1

It Takes Two To Make a Sermon

Take heed therefore how ye hear. Luke 8:18

During these days our pastor is busy, preparing for next Sunday's sermon. He is devoting many hours to prayer and study in order that he may bring us some important message from God's Word. He devotes much time to the preparation of each sermon, because he considers this one of the most important functions of his ministry.

But has it ever occurred to us that we, too, have a share in the responsibilities of this preparation? That we can prepare ourselves to hear a sermon, just as the pastor prepares himself to preach it? As someone has well said, it takes two to make a sermon-the one who preaches it and the one who hears it!

Whether or not a specific sermon will accomplish its God-intended purpose will depend, at least in part, on how well the worshipper has prepared him-or-herself to hear it. Whether or not you and I will be fruitful hearers this coming Sunday will depend very much upon our frame of mind-yes, our "frame of heart"-today, tomorrow, and throughout the week. Keeping late hours on Saturday, or engaging in family quarrels and bickerings until just before leaving the house in anger five minutes late for church, will surely not prepare our hearts for a fruitful sowing of the Word.

We shall take to church in our hearts next Sunday what we put into them today. How important, then, that already today, by prayer and meditation, we prepare the soil of our hearts so that the precious seed might enter! "Take heed therefore how ye hear!"

Well might we pray, not only each time we open this book for personal or family meditation, but also each Sunday as we enter our accustomed pew:

Lord, open Thou my heart to hear, And through Thy Word to me draw near;
Let me Thy Word e'er pure retain, Let me Thy child and heir remain.

(Devotion from: Daily Walk With God - Meditations for Every Day, by Herman W. Gockel)