

## 21th Sunday After Pentecost

*And the seed which fell on good ground brought forth a hundredfold (Luke 8: 5-15)*

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

Christ sows faith and love in our hearts with the words of His truth. For, as St. Paul teaches, the very word of God generates faith in God within the human heart: "Faith by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). The Word of God is the voice of God to man, a voice offering counsel, advice, support, and an invitation to build a bond of love and trust.

God speaks to us in different ways and responds to our individual needs. The one who truly seeks God will hear His voice, no matter how it sounds. The Lord speaks to us in our human language through the pages of Scripture, through religious books, through the words of a priest, a teacher, and through conscience.

It is recounted, that one day two monks were at an inn in Tarsus while traveling on church business. There they met a woman, a sinner. When they saw her, they sat down and were sad. One of them, without thinking for a long time, took the Gospel out of his bag and began to read out loud. The sinner approached and began to listen carefully. After a while, the monk who was reading pushed her away and angrily said, "What could be worse than that you, a sinner, are not even ashamed to come here and sit next to us?"

But, in fact the person in front of them was no longer a great sinner, but someone who had sincerely converted to Christ. And what had accomplished that transformation was nothing more than her having listened to the reading of the Holy Gospel. To the angry words of the monk, the woman replied, "Do not reject me, for although I have been a great sinner, I believe that the Lord God will not reject me, just as he did not reject the prostitute who washed his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head." After this encounter with the Word of God, this woman left all sinful things and entered a convent, where she undertook severe penance until old age, having great grace from the Lord God.

Although today's parable speaks only about the Word of God being sown in our hearts, the word of man is also sown there. Every word we speak to our fellow humans contains some thought, feeling, or desire. Words of gratitude, praise, support, advice, remarks, and

consolation in sorrow are thus sown in the human heart. However, along with them, the bad seed of criticism, sharp words, and insults can also take root there.

When Christians struggle spiritually with their own sins or shortcomings, seeking the help of the Lord God, they sometimes do not immediately see clear signs of God's help. Why is this? Most often the cause of the lack of clear sign lies not with God, but with us. We do not recognize the signs of God's help due to the lack of spiritual light in our soul. Therefore, the Word of God helps us to see the signs of God's help, to see God's answers to our appeals to Him. The Word fills us with spiritual light, advising us to hope in God, and encouraging humility, repentance, and purification of the soul, and thereby improving our spiritual vision.

In one parish, there lived a man who went to church every Sunday, but was very nervous, often angry, quarrelsome, and cursed others. In short, he lived like a non-believer. Although the priest drew attention to such sins in his Sunday sermons, the man was not affected. Very often, after the Divine Liturgy he approached the priest, saying, "Father, you gave them a good lesson today." One Sunday heavy snow kept the faithful from coming to Divine Liturgy. Only that man came because he lived near the church. Taking the opportunity, the priest gave a long sermon in which he again rebuked all the man's sins, hoping that this time he would take these words to heart. After the Liturgy, this parishioner again approached the priest and said: "Father, that was a great sermon! It's a pity no one was in church."

When Christ was in the wilderness and Satan tempted him to turn stones to bread, Christ replied "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Mt 4: 4). These words of Christ must be at the heart of every Christian's life. We must ground our lives on faith in God and on spiritual values, desiring what is good of the soul. We must fill every deed, every minute of our lives with God's truth. And the guide for our spiritual life must be the words of Christ. For if we truly believe in Jesus and sincerely love Him, then we can proclaim with the Apostle Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68).

Dear believers, the Word of God is like the sun shining in the sky. If the sun were to go out, all life on earth would perish. Similarly, without the Word of God, no human soul could live, for the Word of God is the sun of the soul.