

Lesson 9 Study Guide
For
The Gospel according to Matthew
A Torah of the Church
Fr. Lawrence Farley

From the Old Testament:

“So He said, “Go, and tell this to the people. ‘You shall hear indeed, but not perceive. For the heart of this people has become insensitive, and their ears hear with difficulty. They have closed their eyes, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return and I should heal them. (Isaiah 6:9-10)

From the New Testament:

“But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke:

“Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again:

“He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts,
Lest they should see with their eyes,
Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn,
So that I should heal them.”

These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him. “(John 12: 37-41)

Chapter 13

The Parable of the Sower (13:1-9)

Overview: Jesus sat by the seaside so that crowds might gather around Him to hear him face to face to speak to them in parables. This is so his identity as the Anointed One might become manifest. He mixes what is clear with what is obscure so that they may be drawn to the knowledge of the things not understood.

Christ speaks this parable as if to anoint his disciples and to teach them that they are not to be despondent even though those lost may be more than those who receive the word. It is with this same ease that the Lord himself continued to sow, even he who fully foreknew the outcomes.

But mark this carefully: there is more than one road to destruction. There are differing ones, and wide apart from one another. For they who are like the wayside are the coarse-minded and indifferent and careless; but those on the rock fail from willed weakness. (Chrysostom)

Some upon the good soil stands for those who abstain from deceitful wealth and who do good as far as they are able. The yield fruit thirtyfold. If they show contempt for all their goods and undertake to serve God, they have sixtyfold. And if they are afflicted by bodily infirmity and put up

with it patiently, they have a hundredfold, and the ground is good. The Lord says to his Apostles, who are capable of sixtyfold: "Sell what you have and give alms. But those incapable of sixtyfold he enjoins thirtyfold, saying "Give to everyone who asks of you, and do not turn away from the one who asks for a loan. (Anonymous)

Commentary: The Parable of the Sower is a profoundly relevant for those of us who are involved in evangelism and church growth particularly in church mission work. This is a very important message by the Savior and, when understood, it helps everyone keep a positive mindset. As noted above He said to His Apostles: "those lost may be more than receive the word." Let us look at what the process is according to the Parable:

- "Seed fell beside the road and the birds came and ate them up."
Result: Someone who hears the word of God and fails to put aside his/her prejudices or ethnic pride and refuses to accept the Word of the Kingdom to come.
- "And the seed sown on rocky places"
Result: This person hears the word and receives it immediately with joy. Since he/she has not been rooted in the faith or fails to root himself he/she falls away when confronted with church problems or personal suffering or trial, immediately stumbles and falls away.
- "And the seed falling among the thorns and the thorns choke them."
Result: These people hear the Word of the Kingdom but the worry of the world and the deceit of riches prove too much. Materialism takes over and chokes the Word of God in them.
- Last, "The seed falls upon good earth and it gave fruit and produces a crop some 100fold, some 60fold and some 30fold.
Result: Those who hear the word and have insight into its meaning and humbly receive it all. Some receive greater benefit than others but all stick to the Word of God and are good laborers in His vineyard.

Those of us involved in this Parish of St. Luke Church for the past 27 years have seen this over and over again among the people who have come to take a look see at our Parish and/or seekers of Orthodox Christianity. Some seekers come once and never come back. Others stay awhile but have little or no insight, fail to get rooted in the faith and leave. Many have come settled in right away and fell in love with Christ and His church.

1, How did the Jews think the Messiah/Son of man would come and save Israel? Explain

2. Tor F. The use of parables teaches those who are: (check)

unbelieving stubborn humble storytelling
 large crowds all of them

3. In your view, what is the most important message of The Parable of the Sower? What in your opinion are you, a person 30fold or 60fold or 100fold?

4. The twelve Apostles are _____ to know the _____ of the _____
_____. Similarly the humble who _____ will be _____.

(See John 15:15-16)

5. The proud _____ who cannot understand will be a _____.

(See John 9:39)

6. In essence, people _____ by choice, not by nature voluntarily shutting their _____ and closing their _____.

7. In the Parable of the Tares in the wheat field, the tares represent _____ and _____ and the wheat are the _____ on the Day of Judgment.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed (13: 31-43)

Overview: The Lord compares himself to yeast, which is buried with the judgment of death showing that the Law and the prophets are dissolved in the Gospel. The leaven, although buried is not destroyed. Little by little it transmutes the whole lump into its own condition. This happens with the Gospel. For the three measures of the flour the fathers offer various interpretations: the three passions of the human soul are blended into one, so that in reason we possess prudence; or, in anger we possess hatred towards vice and in desire the aspiration for virtue; or the fusion of Jews, Greeks and Samaritans. If we wish to hear Jesus and go to the house and receive something better than the multitudes did, let us become friends of Jesus, so as His disciples come, we may also come. The parables must not be explained word for word but as a whole, since many absurdities would otherwise follow. (Hilary; Chrysostom; Jerome; and Origen)

8. Mustard Seed and leaven speak of small things growing into something large. For example, mustard seeds grow into trees where birds can nest. Similarly, the leaven proved to be enough by the woman for the whole batch to serve 160 people. Fr. Lawrence compares the small beginnings of Jesus' ministry with: (check)

___ toppling Rome ___ no glory ___ no army ___no politics ___ a Kingdom of God

9. Jesus came on earth to reveal _____ not to lead a _____. He was a _____ not a _____.

10. Jesus explains the Parable of the Tares to the Apostles by these comparisons: (Match each)

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. good seed | ___ sons of evil ones |
| 2. sowing good seed | ___ angels of judgment |
| 3. field | ___ shine in the kingdom |
| 4. tares | ___ works of the devil |
| 5. enemy | ___ sons of the kingdom |
| 6. harvesters | ___ son of man |
| 7. lawless | ___ furnace of fire |
| 8. righteous | ___ the world |

Overview: One who conquers all earthly desires by observing heavenly discipline, no longer fearing anything that might destroy bodily life. Such is one who sells everything and buys the field.

The costly pearl is the living word, which is superior to the precious letters and thoughts in the law and the prophets. The faithful seek the one pearl of everlasting life, even at the loss of all else. Many who have been entirely foreign to religion have immediately recognized, by divine grace, the greatness of Christ, in that they despise all their former things and look to this alone. Love makes one turn away from extraneous earthly desires.

(Origen; Hilary; Peter Chrysologus; and Gregory the Great)

11. T or F. The Kingdom is compared to a hidden treasure. A common laborer sold everything he had in order to purchase _____ and keep the hidden _____.

12. An inner dedication to _____ is necessary to receive the _____.

13. Who is it that will separate evil from the righteous? _____ and when will that happen? _____.

14. The teaching of Christ does not contradict or replace the old wisdom of the law but _____ and _____ it.

15. Evangelism question for you all to ponder. From what we have discussed, does Christ really have a Mother? What does that really mean for you and your salvation?

+++++++The End+++++++