

# SCRIPTURE ALONE

## Sexagesima

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Old Testament Lesson; Isaiah 55:10-13

Epistle Lesson; Hebrews 4:9-13

Sermon Text; Luke 8:4-15

Recently, you have heard me say that when we come to faith, the Holy Spirit gets the credit. But, if we reject faith, it is our own fault. In catechism class, we have been talking about the Means of Grace, and the things the Holy Spirit uses to bring us to faith to believe in Jesus, as our Savior. We were talking about the three things God's Word tells us the Holy Spirit uses, those three Means of Grace. The Holy Spirit uses **Baptism**. He uses the **Lord's Supper** and He uses **God's Word** to bring us to faith and to strengthen us in our faith in Jesus, as our Savior. Today we are going to be focusing on the third of those three, focusing on God's Word as a Means of Grace and how we are saved by scripture alone.

Less than a week from now, the Winter Olympics are going to be starting. Many homes will be tuned in for the duration of the Olympics. So, I have a couple of questions for you today. Can you downhill ski, like Lindsey Vonn? I will answer that question for you. "No." Can you speed skate like Apollo Ohno? I will answer that question for you, too. The answer is, "no." Yesterday, here at Holy Cross, there was a basketball tournament. It got me thinking, "Can you palm a basketball, a full sized basketball?" I can't. My hands are too small. Maybe some of you can. Can you palm a

Bible, though? Can you hold a Bible in your hands? I will answer that question for you. “Yes you can.” Now, we don't come to faith, simply by holding a Bible in our hands, but we come to faith as those pages from Holy Scripture are opened and we read them with our own eyes, or as we hear and listen to them with our own ears. So, this morning, let's do this. Let's use our ears to listen to what God's Word says about the parable of the sower and the seed. In our parable for today, Jesus talks about how that seed falls on different kinds of ground. From an agricultural perspective, He talks about how that seed fell on four different kinds of ground - a hard path, rocky soil, among the thorns or the weeds, and eventually, on good soil. We know what that means, from an agricultural perspective, but what does that mean from a spiritual perspective? Jesus already told us for today that **the seed is the Word of God**. Let's look at what Jesus meant when He talked about that **seed falling on hard ground**. Really, He is talking about those people, or those people at those times, who **don't let the Word of God penetrate into their hearts**.

-Probably the greatest example of that in scripture is Pharaoh. Remember at the time of the Ten Plagues, when God was sending the plagues among the people of Egypt? Each time Pharaoh asked that those plagues would be taken away. As soon as they were taken away, what does the Bible say Pharaoh did? It says, “Pharaoh hardened his heart.” He did not want to believe what God was saying to him through Moses.

-Or, consider the Apostle Paul, before he was Paul, when he was Saul. Here was a very learned man, knowing everything the Old Testament scriptures had to say, and yet, what was he doing? He was persecuting those who believed in Jesus, as their Savior. At that point in his life, Saul had a hard heart, because he did not want to listen to what God's Word had to say.

-Consider at times the disciples of Jesus. Right after Jesus had

fed four thousand men with seven loaves of bread and a few fish, the disciples got into a boat with Jesus and began to argue with each other, because they only had one loaf of bread to eat. Jesus had to come to His disciples and listen to what He said. “Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes, but fail to see? Do you have ears, but fail to hear? And, don't you remember?” Jesus had just fed four thousand and they were concerned about if He would be able to feed them!

-Or, consider the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, on that very first Easter morning. As Jesus met up with them, and was walking with them, they began to tell Jesus, (who was a stranger to them, at that time), about what the women had seen. They had gone in the tomb and it was empty. The disciples had gone to the tomb and they had seen the same thing. Jesus had to come to them and say, “How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken. Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?”

-We, at times today can be like those who have hard hearts, when God's Word is read and or preached. The devil loves that. Satan loves it, when he can convince us, and our conscious, not to be troubled over our sin.

-Or the devil loves it, when he can convince us that we can get to heaven in any way. It does not matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere. In those ways, we are like the soil that was hard. The seed cannot penetrate.

Jesus also talked about how **seed falls among the rocks**. Again, from an agricultural perspective, a little soil over rock, that seed springs up quickly. There is not enough moisture there, so the roots cannot grow down. That plant withers.

What does that mean from a spiritual perspective?

-Well, consider people who go through adult instruction and class. Usually, at that time, there is a lot of desire and love to know

what it is that God's Word says. There is a lot of excitement at that time in an individual's life. And, yet, are there times, after somebody has finished going through an adult instruction class, when that excitement fades? Faith is not nurtured. And, that faith withers.

-Or, consider Confirmation. Across from the water fountain, in the school wing, there is a glass display case. There are sixteen Confirmation pictures that are in that glass display case. On one hand, I am very proud of all our students who go through Confirmation Class. And yet, as I have looked at those photos, I have wondered to myself, "What happened with the number of youth and those young adults who have gone through instruction, gone through Confirmation who are no longer here? Are they growing in their faith, or is their faith withering?"

-The same thing can happen to us, when we listen to God's Word in a very shallow sort of way. Yesterday I was walking through our Narthex, in between some of the basketball games. As I was walking through the Narthex, I noticed that some of our hymn books that are on the wooden tables in the back, are just completely covered in dust. I thought to myself, 'It's been awhile since someone has used those hymnbooks. It made me think about our Bibles. Your Bible at home, is it well used, or is it covered in dust? If it is currently covered in dust, is your heart like that soil that is rocky, where God's Word took root, but because there is not enough 'moisture' there, and not enough 'nutrients' there, your faith in Jesus is not able to grow?

Well, we need to hear encouragement from God's Word, and to hear what scripture says.

"I pray that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

And I pray that you,  
being rooted and established in love,  
may have power

together with all of the saints  
to grasp how wide and  
how long and  
how high and  
how deep is the love of Christ.”

Jesus also talked about **seed that fell among thorns, or weeds**. It grows up quickly, but the weeds take away those nutrients and that plant, again, begins to wither. Jesus talked about, how those **thorns are like worries**. Sometimes, in our lives, we are like 'worry worts', or maybe you have heard the phrase 'worry thorns'. Sometimes there are worries in this life that choke out our growing in our faith. One of the examples Jesus uses is money. Sometimes, money can be so consuming that it chokes out our faith. Paul uses the passage, “Some people eager for money have wandered from the faith.” Now, all of us, including pastors, worry, as we are reading or hearing God's Word. There may be circumstances in our lives that cause us to worry, while we are reading God's Word. Maybe, as you are sitting here for the sermon today, you are worried or concerned about who is going to win the Super Bowl. Maybe you are worried about an ailing parent. Maybe you are worried about finances, and how you are going to make ends meet, whether at home or here at church. Maybe you are worried because someone has recently passed away.

Let's use precious promises from God's Word to take away worry.

1 Peter 5:7

“Cast all your anxiety on Him  
He cares for you.”

Proverbs 37:5

“Commit your way to the Lord,  
trust in Him and He will do this.”

Matthew 6:33,

“Do not worry,

but seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness  
and all these things will be given to you as well.”

We now get to the good part, the good news of our parable for this morning. The good news is the **seed that falls on good soil.**

Remember what I said earlier about the work of the Holy Spirit? When we come to faith, the Holy Spirit gets the credit. Scripture says,

“No one can say Jesus is Lord,  
except by the Holy Spirit.”

**It is the seed of God's Word which is powerful and effective.** The seed of God's Word comes to us in two ways.

-First of all, it is the Law of God's Word that comes to us, first. The Law of God's Word shows us our sin. It tells us what we failed to do. It tells us what we have not done. That prepares the 'soil' of our hearts to be ready to hear the gospel of God's Word. It is the gospel of God's Word that points us to Jesus and shares with us that Jesus is our Savior. Jesus has completed everything that is needed for your salvation.

It is pretty awesome to consider the amazing love of God! **The amazing love of God!**

-The amazing love of God, our Father, that He was willing to sacrifice His Son for you.

-The amazing love of Jesus, our Savior, that He was willing to be that sacrifice, and that payment for our sin, so that your sins could be forgiven, so that you could have everlasting life with Him in Heaven.

-The amazing love of the Holy Spirit, that He works through baptism, the Lord's Supper, and through God's Word, not only to bring us to faith, but to strengthen us in our faith in Jesus, as our Savior.

Do you have ears? We all have ears, so let's listen to what God's Word says. Throughout the basketball season, this year, the coach

for the B Team, often says that. “Are you guys listening? Are you guys paying attention?” Let's not only hear the Word, but let's listen to it. Let's understand it. And let's know that faith comes from hearing the message. And the message is heard through the Word of Christ.

Amen