

The Twenty First Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 8:5-15

A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. (KJV)

The Holy Gospel is proclaimed in each Divine Liturgy. Ears listening to the Holy Gospel differ in reception. Each person at the Divine Liturgy listens with varying degrees of making the Gospel a permanent part of life.

The Gospel is read with the intention each person will take the Gospel to heart. The Gospel is proclaimed for each person to become more Christ-like. Lasting change takes time.

The Gospel describes the honest and good heart as bringing forth fruit with patience. Developing an honest and good heart takes time. The heart and mind must be cleansed of sinful thoughts.

An honest and good heart will reveal the dominant presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. An honest and good heart welcomes the Lord Jesus Christ as the primary occupant.

The heart is a battleground where good needs to conquer evil. For Christ to dominate in the heart, the Gospel will be heard and cherished with regularity. Christ is the power to overcome evil.

Christ destroyed death as the barrier to eternal life. Christ's Resurrection proved Christ destroys the limits of death. The heart filled with the Gospel brings forth fruit with patience.

Moment by moment, perilous temptations and inclinations must be rejected and expelled from the heart. Moment by moment throughout life, Christ of the Gospel needs to transform and purify the heart.

Regular use of the Jesus Prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me a sinner" is effective in purifying the heart. The regular use of the Jesus Prayer leads to the development of a good and honest heart.

Joy radiates when Christ dominates the heart. Constant prayer in the heart makes a decided difference. When the Gospel is firmly welcomed, improved differences occur in the person.

The church is not a social club. The church is where Christ comes alive in the heart. The church is where Christ is proclaimed and experienced. The church is where individuals become more Christ-like.

At Holy Baptism, the whole person is dedicated to Christ. Christ is professed as King and God at Holy Baptism. Each remaining moment of life is the opportunity to serve Christ as King and as God.

The condition of the heart dictates the way a person lives. The heart desirous of Christ welcomes the content of the Holy Gospel. Christ is the content of the Gospel.

Christ is the authentic food for the soul. Christ is the most cherished and desired Word. The serious believer never tires of listening to Christ. The serious believer seeks Christ regularly in the Gospel.

Seriously drawing near and loving Christ comes from the heart. The good and honest heart matures with patience. The serious believer is resolute in wanting Christ to fully occupy the heart.

The Jesus Prayer has cleansing effects on the heart. The Jesus Prayer brings change to the heart. Christ fills the heart when the believer practices the Jesus Prayer.

Jesus told one young man: “Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God:(Mt:10:17) The good and honest heart is the heart filled with God.

The good and honest heart requires the believer to desire Christ more than anything else. When the person experiences the joy in Christ, all else in life is insufficient.

The good and honest heart has the qualities of Christ. Compassion, forgiveness and love characterize the good and honest heart. Forgiveness and mercy come from the good and honest heart.

The Divine Liturgy is the best place to learn of the good and honest heart. The good and honest heart is fully at home in the Divine Liturgy. Christ is everywhere present at the Divine Liturgy.

Thank God for the renewal possible as a result of the Divine Liturgy. Thank God for making good and honest hearts possible. Christ is the constant hope for good and honest hearts in each person.

The Twenty First Sunday after Pentecost. Venerable Joannicius the Great. Holy Hieromartyr Nicander, Bishop of Myra. November 4th 17, 2024.

From the Archives. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.

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