Take heed how you hear the Word of God and the Sower - Fr. Herman Homily October 11, 2026

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit >> Amen

This weekend we hosted a Deacon's retreat and during the retreat we talked about the book of Luke in the book of Acts and particularly the story related to St. Stephen the first martyr, first deacon. Today we're turning particularly to the Gospel according to St. Luke. And the title of today's message is, "Take heed how you hear the Word of God and the Sower." In the Gospel according to Luke 8:5-15, Jesus tells the parable of a sower who goes out to sew his seed. The seed falls upon different kinds of ground. Some falls along the path, some upon the rock, some among thorns and some upon good soil. But Jesus does not leave his disciples to determine for themselves what this parable means. He explains it plainly. The seed is the Word of God. That declaration gives us the center of the parable. The question is, what happens when the Word is heard? Some hear and lose it. Some hear and receive it for a time. Some hear and allow it to be choked. Others here hold it fast and bear fruit with endurance.

This morning we will therefore follow **three** movements in the Words of Jesus. **First**, the sower sends out the Word of God. **Second**, hearing the Word does not by itself guarantee that the Word will be retained. **Third**, those who truly hear are those who hold fast the Word and bear fruit with endurance. The warning of Jesus is therefore directed to everyone who hears scripture. Take heed then how you hear. The sower sends out the Word of God. Jesus begins simply, "A sower went out to sew his seed." The seed falls everywhere. Notes it falls along the path, upon the rock, among thorns, and upon good soil. The sewer does not reserve the seed only for the ground that will eventually bear fruit. The seed is scattered throughout the field. When Jesus explains the parable, he identifies the seed directly. The Word of God is the seed. The center of the parable is therefore not something hidden within us. Something comes to us from the outside. From outside of ourselves does the Word come. The Word is spoken. The Word is heard and the Word demands a response. This is why Jesus concludes the parable by crying out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." The Greek verb ακούω (akoúo) to hear is very important. We have the Word acoustics from it. And you can hear many things in life, right? But you may not be listening.

Hearing is not incidental here to the parable. It governs the explanation. Again and again, Jesus describes people who hear the Word. The seed goes forth because the Word goes forth. And wherever that Word is proclaimed, the **hearer** is placed under its claim. You may ignore it, but as the saying goes, you can't unhear it. This changes how we understand our place before scripture. We do not come to the Word as judges deciding

whether it deserves our approval. We are the ones being addressed. The Word comes first.

Our responsibility begins with hearing appropriately. This is especially important in the church where familiarity can become its own danger. We may hear scripture read repeatedly. We may know the prayers. We may recognizes recognize the passages before they're finished. But familiarity with the sound of scripture is not necessarily the hearing that Jesus commands. His command remains. He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Then Jesus immediately warns us why that command is necessary. Everyone in the parable, everyone encounters the same seed, but not everyone retains what has been heard. Indeed, the Word can be heard and lost. Jesus describes **three** ways in which the Word can be heard without reaching its intended fruit. The **first** are those along the path. Jesus says the ones along the path are those who have heard. Then the devil comes and takes away the Word from their hearts. Notice that they have heard. The problem is not that the Word was never spoken to them. The Word is heard and then taken away. The **second** are those upon the rock. Jesus again says that they hear the Word and receive it with joy yet they have no root. They believe for a while but in a time of testing they fall away again. Hearing has taken place. Even joyful reception has taken place. Yet the Word does not remain. The **third** are those among the thorns. They too hear, but as they go on their way, the Word is choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and their fruit does not mature. Three soils, three different failures, but all three have encountered the same Word.

Jesus therefore destroys the assumption that simply being present when scripture is proclaimed is enough. One can hear and lose the Word. One can hear and receive it gladly but have no root. One can hear and then permit other voices and concerns to choke what has been heard. This warning belongs first to those who hear the Word of God regularly. It is easy to assume that because we attend services, hear the Gospel, read scripture, teach, preach, or serve at the altar the Word necessarily remains with us. Jesus allows no such assumption. The question is not merely did you hear the reading. The question is what happened to the Word after it was heard? Was it taken away? Did it disappear when testing came? Was it choked by competing concerns? Do we not hear in the liturgy, “Lay aside all earthly cares” because there are voices going through our heads to distract us. Voices to turn us away from the Word that we have heard. Do not allow them to have their way. The danger is not that God has failed to speak. The danger is that the Word can be heard and still lost. But Jesus does not end with the lost seed. The **final soil** shows what hearing looks like when the Word is retained. Because there are those in fact who hear the Word and hold fast the Word. Jesus describes the good soil as those who hearing the Word hold it fast in an honest and good heart and bear fruit with patience. **Everything begins with hearing**. But now something different happens. They hold fast to the Word just like the Virgin Mary did in the earlier part of the Gospel of Luke. She heard the Word of God and held it fast. It took effort and she did it. The Greek verb

κατακο means to hold firmly, retain, keep in one's possession because it's very possible that it can be taken from you. If you had a million dollars, you would be guarding it with your life. Well, this is much more important than a million dollars because you take no penny with you when you leave this earth.

The Word is not merely heard and then replaced by another voice. It is retained. Notice Jesus then says, "These hearers bear fruit with patience." The Word translated patience υπομονή (ypomoní) means to be underneath the weight of what you've been given. And you bear it. You endure it. You don't enjoy it. You do like the Virgin Mary did. Even if it means disgrace or embarrassment or possible shame. We must be enduring and steadfast in the reception. Fruit does not appear through momentary enthusiasm. We have to stick with it. It comes because the Word is heard, retained and endured. Jesus does not command his disciples to manufacture fruit independently of the seed. The seed will bear fruit. You don't have to work at that. You have to simply retain it, maintain it, hold it fast, guard it. It does what it does automatically. αυτομάτως (atomátos) is the Greek Word. The fruit comes from the seed received and retained. The Word produces what it was sent to produce when the hearer holds it fast. This gives the servants of the church whether deacons or priests or hierarchs or people who do menial tasks in the church, it doesn't matter all servants are equalized when it comes to the Word of God, and they have a clear responsibility before carrying the Word to others.

We must hear it and hold it fast.

The deacon or any servant within the church cannot serve a Word he does not hear. The priest cannot replace it with his own opinions. Nor can the teacher substitute competing voices. Our task is not to improve upon the Word but to hear, retain, obey, and faithfully hand it on. This requires υπομονή (ypomoní), endurance, patience. When obedience becomes difficult or other concerns threaten to displace what we have heard, we stick with the Word regardless of what the external circumstances seem to be telling us. Faithful hearing is demonstrated not by momentary enthusiasm. But by the fruit of holding fast to the Word.

Jesus brings us back to the hearer's responsibility, does he not? The seed has been sown. The Word has been spoken. Will we allow it to be taken away, abandoned, or choked? Or will we hold fast and bear fruit with endurance? Well, Jesus has shown us what happens when the Word is sown. The sower sends out the seed. And Jesus tells us plainly, "The seed is the Word of God." He tells us that hearing the Word of God does not guarantee that it will remain with us. It can be taken away from us. It can be abandoned in the time of temptation and testing or choked by the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life and all of those other things that are more important to be doing. And finally, the faithful who hear bear the Word with patience and endurance. And the fruit comes naturally out of the seed. We don't have to force it. We just have to be good soil.

So the question before us is not simply whether we have heard scripture. You heard it this morning. We have heard it. In fact, the question is what happens to the Word after we hear it? Do we allow another voice to take its place? Do we abandon it when obedience becomes difficult and it can become **very** difficult? Do the concerns of this life choke it? Or do we hold fast to what has been spoken allowing the seed to remain and bear its fruit? Jesus therefore places the responsibility upon the hearer. **Take heed then how you hear**. The sower has gone out. The seed has been sown. The Word of God has been spoken. Let us hear it. Hold it fast and bear its fruit with endurance.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit >> Amen

Help us, save us, have mercy upon us, and keep us, oh God, by thy grace

Link to Sermon - https://youtu.be/cIiuWfvEmnM?t=4993