

St. Peter Lutheran Church
February 8, 2026
Sexagesima
Luke 8:4-15

What alone will produce a harvest on the Last Day to be gathered into heaven? The Word of God. The Word of God is the seed that produces the miraculous crop, without which a harvest is impossible. Any farmer knows that only seed produces a crop. If you sow anything other than seed, you will have no crop. If you plant jelly beans instead of seed, you will have no crop. If you plant tuna fish sandwiches or thimbles, you will have no crop. Only seed brings forth a crop. And in terms of the Church—in terms of souls being saved for eternal life—only God’s Word will do this—nothing else.

Therefore, you must not desire for anything to come from this pulpit except the Word of God. If you are looking for cute stories about my life or my family’s life, you should be sorely disappointed every time. If you are looking for anecdotal advice or psychological babble, begin your grumbling now. If you are looking for entertainment, too bad.

What is going on here is far too important to yield to itching ears and to give people what they want to hear. What is going on here is that God’s Word is sounding forth which shall not return to Him void. It will accomplish what He pleases. It will prosper in the thing for which He sent it.

The parable teaches the church about her activity of preaching the Gospel and about how that activity will go. The sower goes out to sow his seed. This begins with Christ himself, who proclaims the kingdom come, and continues with his apostles, with his disciples, with all who bring the good news of His salvation to the earth. And the sower sows his seed everywhere, indiscriminately, on all types of soil, even to the ends of the earth. So the Church is not to be concerned with demographic analysis to determine its sphere of influence—the Word is to go everywhere.

As the Church sows the seed of God’s Word, we can expect certain results to ensue. Some will hear God’s Word and won’t care at all. They will be like the seed that **fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it.** In other words, as Jesus explains, **the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.** These people will be entirely unaffected by the preaching of God’s Word, they will receive no benefit whatsoever. They will have found preaching to be nothing more than noise. They will have no use for Church so long as they do not have ears to hear.

Some will receive the Word with joy, but without any root, they will only believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. They are like seed that **fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture.** Some will go through catechesis, start out excited about the faith, and then quickly fizzle out and their church attendance will bear

testimony to that fact. We'll wonder how we could have held on to them, but they will be gone. The trials of this world will win, and these people will fall away.

Other times, the seed will fall **among thorns, and the thorns** will spring up with it and choke it. These are the ones who, **when they have heard** the Word of God, **go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasure of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.** The flesh gets the best of them—their bellies, their pocketbooks, or anything else they are trying desperately to fill. They are choked out, and there is no fruit brought to maturity. It is a wasted crop. This sad case can catch the Church off guard. Whereas the ones without root might surprise us soon after hearing the Word, the ones that are choked up by the flesh might happen at any time and at great surprise. This might be a slow and undetected death, and people who have been in church a long time surprise us when this happens. Or, they might never leave the fellowship at all, though whatever faith they once had is long-dead and fruitless and they sit in the pew as dead wood.

These three scenarios are reality—they are part and parcel for what the Church will experience as she sows the seed of God's Word. It is disappointing oftentimes, even heartbreaking. We sometimes blame one another for these happenings. Sometimes we even are tempted to try something other than the seed of God's Word, but this would be folly and unfaithfulness. The sower must sow the seed.

And despite all these tragic circumstances, there is, in the Church, a continual miracle occurring, one that makes all the disappointment worth it—there are those who have been given ears to hear by God. This is the good ground, upon which when God's Word falls, it springs up, and yields a crop a hundredfold. These are the ones who, **having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit in patience.** The paradigm for the good soil is Jesus himself, whose heart is noble and good, who heard the Word of God from His Father in heaven, and was obedient in all things, whose will was one with the Father, who set aside his glory to bring the kingdom to us, to be born in human likeness, to preach the Gospel to the cities, to heal the sick, to raise the dead, to make the blind see and the deaf hear, to take the sin of this world as His own burden, to take it and carry it to His cross, to die for sin, and to rise again to set us free. He in us is the mystery of the kingdom of God. We keep the word of God and bear fruit with patience because we are in Him and He preserves us by His Spirit in the life and ministry of the Church.

God gave us the ears to hear. He made us fertile soil by His grace through the working of His Spirit. You have **been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.** To us it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God.

Therefore, we sow the seed, everywhere to the ends of the earth, that the sword of division may continue passing through all Israel as was prophesied of Jesus in the temple. The results belong to God. He works faith when we are where he wishes in those who hear the Gospel. But we try to replace the Word of God with anything else, there will be no results, and what we have will be taken away. Clinging to the Word, proclaiming that Word, believing that Word—this is what

brings forth the miraculous harvest of souls saved from sin and death by Jesus and destined for everlasting life.

For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Amen.