

The Four Responses

Luke 8:4-15

Sexagesima, February 24, 2019

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

There are some people from whom the devil takes the Word of God.

Such people would include the majority of people who lived under Soviet Communism. Under Soviet Communism the Scriptures were outlawed. The government closed churches. Preachers were given other vocations. The government repurposed churches into swimming pools and other public facilities. Under these circumstances the Word of God was removed from the people. The only people who had the Word of God were those to whom the Word of God was smuggled. The reason that the devil took the Word of God from these people was so that they would not be saved. The devil took advantage of the fact that the Holy Spirit desires to deal with us in no other way than through the Word of God so the devil took the Word of God away knowing that the Holy Spirit would depart with it and vast numbers of people were not saved.

This is an example of the seed that was sown along the path and the birds came and devoured it. It is a dramatic example, but examples need not be so dramatic for the devil is shrewd and cunning.

There are ways that the devil takes away the Word of God which are not so obvious. Under Soviet Communism he physically took the word away from people, but in our own land there are people from whom the devil takes the word without taking away their Bibles or their preachers. In Western Civilization the devil has sown the idea that the Bible is not God's Word, but rather an ordinary book representing what ancient people believed about God. Under this notion the Bible is no longer the Word of God which reveals His will to us, but rather an historical document to be studied in order to determine what the ancients believed about God. Under this assumption many people in the United States and in other western nations operate under the delusion that the Bible contradicts itself and that it has no authority. There are people under this influence who devote their lives to studying the Bible, but never once consider it the Word of God because they believe that their assumption about the Bible is more important than what the Bible actually says. In this way even though the devil has not physically removed the Bible, he has effectively taken the Word of God from them so that they will not believe and be saved.

This is an example of the seed that was sown along the path and the birds came and devoured it. It is not the only example of the devil taking the Word of God away

from someone, but it is an example so that you may know about what the Lord is speaking when He tells His parable of the sower.

There are some people who receive the Word of God with joy initially, but then a time of testing comes along and since they have not root they quickly fall away.

A dramatic example of this was the ancient persecutions that Christians faced. A man would hear the Word of God and receive it with joy. He would undergo catechesis from a local Christian presbyter (we call them pastors) and get himself baptized and admitted to the Sacrament of the Altar. He would attend Divine Service with his local congregation. And then something would happen. A new law would be issued from the local governor's office indicating that anyone confessing the name of Christ would be imprisoned or killed or sometimes it was a lesser thing like expelling anyone who confessed the name of Christ from the marketplace or from the guilds. Once faced with this kind of persecution, the loss of life or business, the Christian with no root in himself falls away and renounces Christ either publically or through his actions. That is to say he quits attending the Divine Service so that he might retain his membership in the guilds and do business in the marketplace or to save his life.

That is a dramatic example from ancient times. Contemporary examples are not so dramatic. It is harder to identify persecution in today's day and age. But that does not mean that we do not have times of testing. There are times of testing. There are times when a position that you take based upon the Word of God is met with ridicule. In some cases it is faced with legal action and loss of business, but in most cases it is simple ridicule. Someone calls you a name because of the stand that you take based upon the Word of God. People who say that they believe in Jesus also fail to support you in your stand on the Word of God because they do not know the Word of God either. Or people who claim to believe in Jesus may join in ridiculing you because they do not know the Word of God and have simply embraced the prevailing opinion of the times.

This is not the same thing as being fed to the lions or being forced out of business although I get the impression that some would like to do so, but it is nevertheless a time of testing. And while I understand there are hot button political issues that meet the description that I have just described, I have also met with testing on what the Word of God says about the Sacrament of the Altar. Thus it can be anything and it will be anything.

A person with no root is a person who confesses that Jesus is His Lord and Savior, but then does not spend time in the Word of God and devote himself to it.

Without such devotion to the Word of God a time of testing will cause such a person to fall away from Christ and be lost.

These are some examples of the seed that was sown among the rocks.

There are some people who believe in Jesus. They hear the Word of God and like the person who was the seed sown among the rocks, they undergo catechesis and get themselves baptized. They are admitted to the Sacrament of the Altar. These people also fall away, but they do not fall away because of testing or persecution, they fall away because of the anxieties and riches and pleasures of life.

This is more common in our own day and age.

While facebook keeps telling me or at least implying to me that mass persecutions are about to break out against the Christians, I lead a pretty comfortable life. The problem that we face nowadays is the fact that wealth and pleasure and the anxieties of life are more important to us than Jesus Christ and His salvation. Our own loss of pleasure is more important to us than the pain that our Lord endured on the cross for our salvation. We are more willing to give up the Divine Service and the Word of God so that we do not have to tolerate some kind of inconvenience.

This is how sporting events prevail over the Divine Service or some other competition in which our children engage. We are unwilling to give up the pleasure of seeing our children compete and do well in whatever competition it may be than to have them at Divine Service to receive the gift of God's Word for their salvation. When our children are older we would rather not undergo the uncomfortable, but necessary conversation, needed to return them to the Divine Service because the conversation makes us uncomfortable. We value our comfort over the salvation of our children. We are unwilling to bring them the Word of God outside the Divine Service for the exact same reason.

But what does this show except that we do not believe the Word of God ourselves. If we really knew that the Word of God was the Gospel of our salvation, then we would make sure that the whole world knew about it including and especially our children whether it made us uncomfortable or not. And make no mistake we are not concerned for our children's comfort. We are concerned about our own comfort. We do not want to be uncomfortable by making them uncomfortable and so we value our pleasure and our anxiety over the Word of God and what it says.

We value the pleasure of fornication at will over the Word of God. And we will gladly give up the Word of God in our younger years in order to engage in our fornication and not have to deal with the hypocrisy of being a fornicator while at the same time coming to Divine Service. And then we get married and have children and

we suddenly come back because we look more righteous now than we did when we were younger.

It is this type of phenomena that shows that the Word of God is being choked in the lives of such people and it is not fruitful.

These are some examples of the seed that sown among the thorns.

And there are some people who hear the Word of God and actually believe it. They actually believe what Jesus their Lord tells them. They actually believe that their sins are forgiven. They actually believe that what the Lord says is sin is sin and that such sin is what causes our death. They actually believe that the death of Jesus atones for that sin. They actually believe that Jesus rose from the dead and that his death conquers their death and gives them everlasting life.

Because they believe this, they devote themselves to everything that the Word of God says. They make sure that they read the Bible and are applying it in their daily lives. They make sure that they forgive as they have been forgiven. They make sure that their life yields the fruit of good works that are pleasing to God. They know what is pleasing to Him and they do it. They know the difference between what God says is right and what the world says is right and they go with God.

Even though it may not seem like much in the eyes of the world or even in the eyes of their fellow Christians God knows the fruit that such people bear. He knows they are bearing a hundredfold even when no one else does.

This is the seed that was sown in good soil.

I have given examples of each kind of seed about which our Lord speaks in the parable. These are not the only examples of each kind of seed, but I give you examples so that you may have something to go on when you apply this parable as you live your life.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.