



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This weekend, we have the famous parable of the sower. It is an invitation to look at ourselves to see how we receive the Word of God (the seed).

There are some who reject the word outright – it is snatched from their hearts. You know those types of people who might mock anything to do with faith, or are so immersed in the culture of the world that to accept God's word would mean to reject their choice of lifestyle. Not ready to change their whole way of thinking and living, they have little use for the word of God. We also must look and see if there are parts of our lives that reject God's word. Do we allow Him to speak to us in those areas with which we are comfortable, but go against His word? When Christ speaks to us through His Body – the Church – that sexual relations are only meant for the self-giving of a husband and wife, do we accept or reject His word? When the Body of Christ reminds us that every act of intercourse must be open to life, do we reject God's word? God is inviting us to accept His whole word, not just the parts we like, or with which we are comfortable. As the saying goes, if I only accept the teachings I agree with, I'm not following God; I'm following myself.

The second image Jesus uses is the seed sown on rocky ground. The word is received immediately, but there are no roots, and when tribulation comes, we fall away. Because God's word is Truth, it draws our intellects to Him. Yet, there are times that it becomes difficult to stand by the Truth. While the persecutions at this time in the United States do not lead to martyrdom, there are very real struggles associated with being faithful to God's word. When we have to choose to stand with the truth that God made us male and female – not a multiplicity of genders – do we back down and reject God's word? When people cancel us or reject us – calling us "haters" – for believing what God has revealed through the Church, are we ready to throw in the towel? It is so much *easier* to become a relativist in a relativistic culture. When holding to the truth becomes difficult, do we submit to the tyranny of relativism (as Pope Benedict has dubbed it)?

The third image is that of the thorns. Here, the word of God grows in the heart of the believer, but it doesn't bear fruit because it is choked by worldly anxieties and the lure of riches. When I am surrounded by the things of the world – especially media (movies, TV, YouTube, social media) – I end up having a distaste for spiritual things. The more I watch YouTube, the harder it is to enter into deep prayer. As I read this parable of Jesus, it makes sense – my spiritual life is being choked! When I step away from these things – the cares of the world, the lure of the pleasures of earthly things – the closer I am able to get to God.

The final image Jesus uses is that of the good ground which receives the seed – and how it bears much fruit. This parable is an invitation to us to examine our "ground." Are we too hardened to receive His word? Are there parts of our lives that because of fear or worry need to be cultivated so we can surrender more to the Good News God is speaking to us? May we be more open to His word, and the hard work of cultivating the ground, and removing rocks and weeds from the soil of our hearts so that we can bear fruit a hundred, or sixty or thirty-fold!