2026-11-22: 2nd Sunday of Hathor - Wayside Soil

Background

Parable of the Sower

This is the season for planting "Seeds, the herbs, the plants of the field"

- Mentioned in all three synoptics (Matthew, Mark and Luke)
- First parable Christ tells
- Because it is needed for how the REST of His teaching will be accepted

Brief about the four kinds of ground

- Example of Tithing

Wayside

Today I want to focus on the first group - the seed that fell by the wayside.

> "And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them... When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside." (Matthew 13:4, 19)
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> "some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it... And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts." (Mark 4:4, 15)
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> "And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it... Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." (Luke 8:5, 12)

The birds devour the seed

- The devil takes away the word from their hearts

Immediately

- St Mark, in his gospel, says that the birds came and "immediately" ate the seed
  - If you ever went to the beach and tried to throw up some seeds or bread or popcorn or something you see how the birds IMMEDIATELY flock down and take it away
  - This is how the devil works
- Maybe I heard the word of God in the Liturgy today - maybe from the readings, from the gospel, from the sermon or from the liturgy. How long will I keep this word with me?
  - Sometimes, I don't even make it to the Aghapy Hall before letting the devil take away the word from me
  - Sometimes, even in the Aghapy Hall, we sit with people and have unedifying conversations, offend each other and cause each other to sin.
  - I want to tell you that sometimes it's even before the Aghapy Hall - maybe even in the church during the liturgy. I turn to the person next to me and start talking to her
- The last thing that Abouna says is "Go in peace, may the peace of the Lord be with you"
  - How far do I carry this peace?
  - Hopefully, this peace at least makes it to my car, or to my home!
  - Maybe on Sunday, the day of the Lord, I go and call someone and check on them because I missed them in the liturgy. Or I visit someone who is sick and give him some orban from the Liturgy.
  - But sometimes, the peace doesn't even make it to the car.

How the Bird Takes the Seed

1. Familiarity
   - Sometimes, the devil tries to take the Word of God from me by convincing me that I already know the message
     - "I've heard this one before" (it comes every year)
     - Sunday School or Youth Meeting "We have this lesson every year"
     - "I already know this"
   - Actually, it's counter-intuitive because if a message is being repeated, that probably means it's MORE important!
   - Two Concerns:
     - Hearing is not the same as listening; maybe I heard it before but I didn't listen
     - Even if the message hasn't changed, maybe I have changed... maybe my circumstances are different; maybe my heart is ready to listen; maybe I can be a good ground this year!
     - But if the devil convinces me from the beginning that I already know this... I won't even have the chance.
   - **Example: Matthew 2 - The Chief Priests and Scribes in the time of Herod**
     - When Herod the king heard *this,* he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.
       And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.
       So they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet...” (Matthew 2:3-6)
     - The chief priests and the scribes knew where Christ was going to be born. But they did not go to see Him. They knew the message. They heard it before. They

memorized it. But they did not act on it at all.
- **Solution: Speak, Lord, your servant hears**
  - Samuel heard the voice of the Lord come to him three times, but when he said those words, he was able to listen to the word of the Lord.

2. Does Not Understand it
   - Sometimes, the devil tries to take the Word of God from me by ignorance or lack of understanding.
     - St Matthew mentions this in the same gospel, when the Lord is explaining the parable.
     - "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart." (Matthew 13:19)
   - Not Understanding is NOT a sin
     - It is impossible for us to perfectly understand anything (especially pertaining to God). But I need to ask questions and seek guidance.
   - **Example: John 6 - Those who walked away after the Eucharist**
     - When the Lord told them about His Body and Blood in John 6
       - "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him." (John 6:53-56)
       - "Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard *this,* said, “This is a hard saying; who can understand it?... From that *time* many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more." (John 6:60, 66)
       - They didn't understand... but instead of pursuing the truth, asking questions, seeking answers... they just walked away. They are the soil that is by the wayside.
   - **Solution: "What does this parable mean?" (Luke 8:9)**
     - But the disciples did something else. When they didn't understand, they went to the Lord and said "Explain to us this parable" and because of that, we have this explanation in all three of the Gospels about the Parable.

3. Focused on the Messenger
   - Sometimes, the devil will take the word of God from me by shifting my focus to the one who is speaking the word of God to me.
     - Someone may come and have many comments about how long the sermon was, or how it should have been in Arabic, or where Abouna was standing, or maybe some of the points in the sermon itself, but did not receive the message that the Lord wanted to deliver to him that day.
     - He is so busy inspecting the sower that he didn't realize the birds were eating the seed
   - **Example: Matthew 13 - "Is this not the carpenter's son?"**
     - This happened with Christ in Nazareth.
     - He went to the synagogue and taught there and they were astonished by the teaching, but what did they say?

        - "Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?" So they were offended at Him." (Matthew 13:54-57)
    - **Solution: "He who receives you receives Me" (Matthew 10:40)**
        - When the Lord sent the disciples to serve, He told them "He who receives you, receives Me."
        - Actually, the same thing now - if I am focused on the messenger and not "receiving him" and ignoring the message, then the devil is taking the word of God from me

4. "This is for Someone Else"
    - I hope my husband/wife/friend/kids hears this
    - **Example: King David "You are the man"**
    - **Solution: Lord, is it I?**
        - When the Lord revealed to them that He would be betrayed, all the disciples were extremely sorrowful and began to say to Him, "Lord, is it I?" - when they heard the word He told them, they each examined themself.

5. Disagree with the Message
    - Disagrees with my own practice or my own belief
    - When the Pharisees in John 8 said "We have never been in bondage to anyone" - like no, you don't see yourself. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Rome! In either case, Christ was talking about being a slave of sin.
    - **Example: Jeremiah 36**
        - Jehoiakim the son of Josiah was king
        - Jeremiah wrote a scroll that the king of Babylon would invade and destroy Judah unless the people repented. He gave it to his disciple, Baruch.
        - When Baruch the Prophet took Jeremiah's scroll and went to the Temple and he read it. Then he went to the Princes and read it. But then, when the scroll was read in front of the king, the king cut it with a knife and threw it into fire.
        - He didn't agree with its message.
        - Of course, whether or not he agreed had no bearing on the Truth. So what was written in the scroll came to pass shortly after that.
    - **Solution: "Not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39)**
        - Here, we can learn from the Lord's example and recite these words whenever I disagree with the message coming to me from the Word of God: "Not as I will, but as You will"

6. Distracted/Priorities
    - I am too busy
        - I don't have time to read the Bible
        - I don't have time to come to Liturgy
        - I don't have time to come to Vespers
        - The devil is snatching the word of God, before I even have a chance to hear it

- Maybe I do read the Bible or come to Vespers or come to Liturgy - I am physically present, but am I really present?
  - Used to be "looking at the watch"
  - Now "looking at the phone"
- Invested in a show, a game, a movie series
  - This is a bird that doesn't stop pecking
- **Example: The Preoccupied Disciple (Matthew 8:21-22)**
  - "A disciple
- **Solution: "Seek first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33)**

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