

Sexagesima (2026)

Just as a opener and perhaps to get a chuckle . . . In the early days of St. Luke's, we had a young man . . . around 13 or 14 . . . serving as sexton. ‘

His job was to set up the chairs and other appointments for services. At the time, in the early ‘80s’, we were meeting in the Blue Ridge City Hall . . . so that was an important job.

He was excited when I told him that the Sunday we were observing that day was Sexagesima. From then on, he called it “sex Sunday”!

Call it “sex Sunday” if you like, this Latin name in fact refers to the approximate number of days to Easter – 60.

All three Sundays in the Pre-Lenten season help us to make the transition from the

exuberance of Christmas and Epiphany to the more sombre season of Lent.

Some of you may have walked the approach trail to the Appalachian Trail. Eight miles in length and challenging in difficulty, it begins at Amicalola Falls and leads to Springer Mountain, the actual beginning of the A.T.

It prepares the thru-hiker for what is to follow. In the same way the Pre-Lenten season made up of Septuagesima, Sexagesima and Quinquagesima prepares the faithful for the journey to the cross.

With that introduction, I want to focus this morning on today's Gospel, a passage, I dare say, which will be familiar to most of you.

It begins with the words: **“A sower went out to sow his seed . . .”**

If you grew up on a farm, you can perhaps visualise someone throwing out seed. I can.

In the early spring, I can remember how the cool, freshly ploughed earth felt between your toes as you walked barefoot between furrows at seed time.

Has any anyone else had that experience?

The Parable of the Sower, as it is commonly known, might better be called the ‘parable of the soils’ as Jesus highlights four types of ground:

- **The hard wayside.** This was the path where people walked. Seed that fell there never came up.
- **Rocky soil.** Here the soil was thin, lying on a stony shelf. Not a promising place for seed to land.
- **Thorney, weed-infested soil.** If you have ever tried to grow a garden, you

know this soil all too well. Get out your hoe!

- And the **good ground**, that which is pliable, rich in nutrients.

I don't think I need to spend too much time on these four soil types. Jesus has already preached that sermon.

They represent the conditions of the human heart and can be found whenever, wherever the Gospel is announced right down to this present day.

Some hear to salvation -- the good ground scenario -- while others hear superficially in varying degrees. I think we all get that.

With that thought in mind, I urge you, as you prepare for worship each Sunday, to pray that God the Holy Spirit will till the soil of the hearts of those on the periphery of faith in preparation for hearing the Gospel.

At the same time, I urge you to pray that God the Holy Spirit will do the same work in the hearts of those who are already believers . . . stir them to more faithful service.

In the words of hymn writer Mary Brown:

*It may not be on the mountain's height
Or over the stormy sea,
It may not be at the battle's front
My Lord will have need of me;
But if by a still, small voice He calls
To paths I do not know,
I'll answer, dear Lord, with my hand
 in Thine,
I'll go where You want me to go.*

*I'll go where you want me to go,
 dear Lord
Over mountain or plain or sea
I'll say what you want me to say,
 dear Lord
I'll be what you want me to be.*

So, as you prepare for worship, pray for believers and unbelievers alike. Pray that the Holy Spirit will come and take control.

And, of course, pray for yourself that you may hear the Word aright and be challenged and changed by it.

I have mentioned four types of soil, but what about **the seed**? It is the key to understanding this parable.

Without this key one may take away a message other than the one Jesus intended. Here are some examples:

- A farmer may say to himself, “**This parable is telling me that I have to be more careful with my farming operation if I want to get a good return.**”

- A politician: **It is instructing me to begin a farm education program to help farmers**

learn better methods . . . to put more extension agents in the field.”

· A newspaper man: **“The big story here is the large crow population is threatening the local farming community.”**

· A salesman: **“The parable is encouraging me to let farmers know about a new agricultural product that repels crows and thus enhance crop yield.”**

None of these suppositions are correct. Again, the key that unlocks the meaning of this parable is: **The seed is word of God.**

With that knowledge all pieces of the parable fall into place, but what is the “Word of God”? ///

The Word found in the Scriptures, yes, but also and perhaps more significantly, that Word standing there before Jesus’ first hearers. Jesus

is the Word of the Father. He is the good seed and the One who must be followed.

But there is still another thing we should consider as we hear this parable. Bringing its message down to today: **What kind of seed am I sowing? What kind of seed is this church sowing?**

Imagine what would happen if a farmer sowed what appeared to be seed but was in fact little rocks.

No matter how carefully those little rocks were sown, no matter how much they were watered and fertilized, there would be no growth, no harvest.

That is so spiritually speaking as well.

The seven churches St. John the Divine addresses in Revelation come to mind. These were real churches in Asia Minor, modern-day

Turkey. The sad thing is that for the most part these churches are no more. What happened? ///

I think it would be fair to say that they ceased to sow the good seed.

The same is true in many churches across this land today. You drive by handsome buildings, buildings from which the Gospel once sounded forth. Now they are empty, dead or almost dead.

What happened? In some cases, people moved to the suburbs. In others there was a fight and one group split off to form another church, leaving too few people with too much building.

But in many cases, the good seed stopped being sown.

A few years ago, a person who became a part of this church told me that the minister at

his former church said from the pulpit: “Jesus was not the Son of God.”

This church had a reputation for being alive. The lights were on, there were cars in the parking lot, everyone was busy, yet it was a dead church.

What keeps a church alive? /// The Word of God, which is ultimately Jesus Himself.

What about this church? What kind of seed are we sowing? Is it the good seed? ///

I believe it is. The cross is being lifted up. Jesus is being announced by Word and Sacrament. Service in Christ’s name is happening throughout the week in the community.

But what will this church look like 30, 40, 50 years from now? Remembering those churches in Revelation:

Will it be the loveless church as was the case in Ephesus?

Will it be doctrinally compromised church as in Pergamum?

Will it be the morally challenged church as in Thyatira?

Will it be the spiritually dead church at Sardis?

Will it be the lukewarm church of Laodicea?

I pray it will be none of these, rather a faithful, loving church ablaze with for the Word of God . . . a church sowing good seed.

Please join me in praying and working for such a church as we head towards Lent, Good Friday and Easter.

As I close, let me say that today's parable, while highlighting some of the challenges of proclaiming the Good News, nevertheless, ends on a note of great hope.

In the end, there is a bountiful harvest. Many hear and receive the word with joy.

In light of our Lord's message, let us go forth into our mission field with great confidence.

It's not so much, "We shall overcome," but God shall overcome . . . and somehow in the end our work in the present will count.

Happy *Sexagesima* . . . or whatever name you wish to call it!