

Possible Prayer of Church for Sexagesima Sunday * February 8th 2026

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs. [Possible brief silence]

Remember, LORD, Your promise to be a Rock of Refuge for Your Baptized children. Be gracious to us. Create in us humble and contrite hearts, that we might always cry out to You for mercy. Fill us with Your love. Grant us renewal by Your Holy Spirit, that we may always abide in Jesus Christ, our Savior, beholding His glory in His Holy Word and Sacraments and being made well by the same. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Remember, LORD, our Synod president; our circuit visitor; our pastor and all pastors. Make Your face shine on them, that, through their faithful service, the eyes of those blind to Your mercies may be opened and see the salvation they have in Jesus Christ, Your Son, our LORD. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Remember, LORD, our nation and its leaders. Guide them in the direction You would have them go, that peace and prosperity, truth and justice, religion and piety may dwell in our land. Remember also those who serve in our armed forces, that they would serve with integrity and honor. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Remember, LORD, the widows and the orphans, the lonely and downtrodden, the poor and destitute, and our brothers and sisters in Christ who are shut-in and unable to attend Divine Service with us. Be a mighty fortress for them, surrounding them with Your compassion and care. Fill us with loving and generous hearts to be Your instruments of mercy on their behalf, and send Your pastors to bring Christ to them wherever they are. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Remember, LORD, those who are sick, hospitalized, in treatment, undergoing surgery or recovering *[especially Faith & Our Savior Prayers]* ... and all those we each keep in our hearts in personal prayer *[possible brief silence]*. Comfort them with Your presence, sustain their faith through Your gracious promises, and bring healing to them as You will and know to be best. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Remember, LORD, Your promise to fill the wedding banquet of Your Son and His Bride, the Church, with guests clad in white robes. For those who have gone before us and now rest from their labors, we give You thanks and praise. Bring us, with them, to the day of our Lord's glorious return, that we may all receive the eternal inheritance You have prepared for us. *LORD, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Into Your Hands, O LORD, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our LORD, **Amen.**

SEXAGESIMA~60 Luke 8:4-15 LET THE WORD HAVE FREE COURSE 2.8.26 F.OS.L

BIBLICAL ILLITERATE/S Pollster George Gallup Jr. has long referred to America as a "Nation of Biblical Illiterates." **Only four in ten Americans** know that Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount. A majority of citizens **cannot** name the four Gospels of the New Testament. **Only three in ten teenagers** know why Easter is celebrated. **Two-thirds of Americans** believe there are few, if any, absolute principles to direct human behavior. A 2000 poll by the Barna Research Group suggests that religious illiteracy has increased. For example, **three out of four Americans** [and **nearly half** of "born-again" Christians] believe the Bible teaches that *"God helps those who help themselves."* George Barna argues that self-reliance is not only not scriptural, but that it contradicts revelation. Only God determines a person's destiny, the pollster notes. To believe otherwise "exposes our false theological cornerstone, i.e. that we are the center of things, that it is up to us to determine our destiny, and that God is merely our assistant ..."

BORN-AGAIN.S... A similar number of born-again Christians **deny the existence** of the Holy Spirit and Satan. **One in five** denies Jesus' physical Resurrection and believes he was a sinner.

DEVIL, HELL & UFOs Earlier surveys of mainline Protestants revealed that **barely half** of Lutherans, Methodists, and Presbyterians believe in the devil, but **56 percent** of Lutherans and **49 percent** of Methodists believe in UFOs. **One-third** of Methodists and Presbyterians have faith in astrology. While **nearly three-fourths** of all Americans believe in hell, **hardly any** believe it to be their likely destination in eternity.

MISSIONARIES TO U.S. Finally, former Secretary of Education William Bennett concludes that "We have become the kind of society that civilized countries used to send missionaries to." [David Yount, Beggaring Belief, 2000 Scripps Howard News Service. September 04, 2000.]

Sola SCRIPTURA In one of the Collects of the church we pray that God's *"Word may not be bound but have free course and be preached to the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people."* Today's Holy Gospel is our Lord's own teaching as to how the Word of God does indeed have free course, finally producing a hundred-fold harvest. In this Parable Jesus is giving **comfort both to preachers who proclaim His Word and hearers who receive that Word. Preaching is not in vain** because it is through preaching that God plants the Gospel in our hearts. And hearing the Gospel is not futile, for it is through hearing this Gospel that God creates faith. *"Faith comes by hearing,"* says the **Apostle Paul**, *"and hearing by the Word of God."*

EFFECTIVE WORD Now it is clear from our Lord's own exposition of the Parable that **the Seed is the Word of God**. Today's Parable along with the Old Testament Reading and the Epistle shows us that God's Word is **powerful**. God's Word carries His own **authority**. Just as the rain and the snow fall from the clouds causing the earth to bring forth

vegetation, so the Word from God's Mouth is an efficacious Word; it accomplishes the very purposes of God Himself. Listen again to the Old Testament Reading where God says: *"So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."* In other words, **God's Word is effective**. It does what God wills it to do. At creation God spoke saying, *"Let there be light,"* and there was light. God's Word is packed with His own power. The Letter to the **Hebrews** describes it as *"living & powerful-sharper than any two-edged sword."*

POWERFUL WORD **God's Word alone has the power to convert people** from unbelief to faith and bring them from death to life. It is only through preaching God's Word that the church is built up and grows. Slick programs designed to meet the so-called "felt needs" of a certain audience may draw a large number of people, but only God's Word creates believers in Jesus Christ.

CURII ALIS? **But why do some who hear this Word believe, while others who also hear it reject it in unbelief?** Human reason might answer that some people are by nature fertile ground, well-suited to receive the Word of God, while others are more hard-hearted, rocky ground unsuited for the things of the Spirit. Such an interpretation overlooks the fact that all of us are by nature resistant to the Word of God, for we are all children of Adam and as such are equally sinful and corrupt, dead in trespasses and sin. Others might try to **fix the blame on God**, arguing that perhaps the quality of the seed varies or that God does not allow His Word to take root in some. Such reasoning leads to the **erroneous doctrine** that God predestines some to damnation and hell. On this side of eternity no fully satisfying answer can be given to the question, *"Why do some believe and not others."* But we do know this, that it is **God's good pleasure in Christ to save sinners**. And this Salvation, won by our Lord on the Cross, is bestowed on us **through His Word**. His Word alone has the power to give Salvation to those who hear it. That's why Jesus says, *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."*

4 SCENARIOS: In today's Parable our LORD provides **four "case histories"** of how the Word of God is heard. **Three of the four end in failure**. The Parable does not seem to be very optimistic about the success of seed-sowing. But the focus is not on the three scenarios where there is no fruit but on **the one scene which ends with a harvest**. The language of Harvest points to the Last Day when God will gather His Crop into His Heavenly Kingdom. In spite of all the impediments and obstacles to God's Word, there **will be a Harvest**. Some will hear and hold fast to the Word in patient endurance to the End. **Now the success of the Word of the Lord is most often hidden from our eyes**. But because the Word which we preach is God's Word, it will achieve the purpose for which He sent it.

1. WAYSIDE So our LORD's Parable is aimed at **how we are to hear His Word**. In the first scene the seed is trampled down on the well-worn path. It never impregnates the ground. **Instead it is plucked up by hungry birds**. Jesus tells us that this illustrates how Satan comes and *"takes away the Word out of their hearts, lest they believe and be saved."* You see, **God's Seed is not planted in neutral territory**. The Prince of this world wants to rob you of the implanted Word which is able to save your souls. Where God's Word is being preached **there is a battle going on**. This is not a war of flesh and blood, but a spiritual conflict. **Satan wants to separate you from the Triune God forever**. The only way he can achieve that goal is to **separate you from the Word of God**. We know his deceitful tricks. If he cannot keep you away from the place where God's Word is being preached, he will try to remove that Word from your heart. He will try to convince you that the Life and Salvation which God promises you in His Word **is not really for you**. **Satan will do everything in his power to intercept the Word between your ear and your heart**.

2. ROCKY Then Jesus paints a **second picture**. There are those who receive the seed of God's Word. It even germinates and begins to grow. But, alas, it withers and dies because it has no root to tap moisture from the soil. **A seed which is planted but not watered will soon die. So it is with faith**. Faith which is not continually nourished and enlivened by the Word of God is not able to withstand temptation. There may be an initial burst of enthusiasm but without the moisture of the daily application of our Baptism, the ongoing hearing of God's Word, and regular feasting on His Body and Blood in the Holy Supper, faith wilts away and ultimately dies.

3. WEEDS **Thirdly**, there is the seed that **falls among the briars**. This seed sprouts and grows up. But finally the life is choked out of the new plant by thorns which entangle the plant. Jesus says that this scene represents those whose faith is overcome by *"the cares, riches, and pleasures of life."* In short, these are those who are **possessed by their possessions**. These are those who are too occupied with other things - **careers, relationships, recreation, money** - that they just don't have any time for God's Word. Attendance at the Divine Service comes only if it fits into my schedule. The "One Thing Needful" is exchanged for other things and finally faith is perverted and dies.

4. LOAM **(Fourth)** But then there is the seed which falls on **the good ground**, grows up and yields a hundred-fold harvest. Our Lord says this final scenario is that of those *"who having heard the Word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience."* A bit later on in Luke's Gospel Jesus says, *"Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep."* That is to say, blessed are those who cling to God's Word in life and death, refusing to let go of the salvation won by the Blood of Jesus Christ which that Word delivers to us. **"He who has ears to hear, let him hear." IJ'N, Amen. SDG**