

INSPIRED WORD
January 31, 2018

SCRIPTURE / INSPIRED TEACHING / EXHORTATION

I'm going to let the Master introduce this, from Matthew 13, the parable of the sower. You've heard it a ba-jillion times but let's listen to it again and just pause, let it sink in. **Matthew 13:3-9**: *A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on the rocky ground where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep and when the sun rose, it was scorched and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns and the thorns grew up and choked it. But some seed fell on rich soil and it produced fruit, a hundred- or sixty- or thirty-fold. Whoever has ears ought to hear.* What is this talking about? A good soil, one that allows the seed to grow? Who is the sower? The Master is. Who is the soil? What sort of soil is it that the seed is falling into? This is really striking me as something as far as resolutions because in today's day and age, what do people do? What's the biggest focus of the New Year or the beginning of anything? What do I gather? More! More money, more fame, more health, more muscle with all that exercise equipment. More. What does the Lord think? Well, He scatters what's not of Him. So how do we gather? What do we gather? What do we do to help the bad soil? I don't have very complicated, sophisticated notes for my presentation and I made it very small so I wouldn't talk too long because I would like you to listen to the Lord more than me. Let's see if I can stick to this. So to prepare the soil, do we gather more of anything? Or do we reduce? What about these words from **John 3:30**? *He must increase, but I must decrease.* What in me should decrease? Would that be a better fertilizer for the soil? And since I'm so focused on the Master this evening, what did He do? What did He model for us? Before His public ministry, He went to the desert. What did He do there? Did He need to go to the desert? What did He teach us through that experience? Was it about purging? Was it about giving Himself in love to the Father in complete love, no matter what it took? Yeah. So after those 40 days of giving Himself over completely, what did He have to say? That's **Luke 4:18-19**, words of the Master again. *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year acceptable to the Lord."* To proclaim liberty to captives. What does He need to liberate you from? What are the extra things that you have that you're attached to, don't really need? I think Jesus' senses sharpened in the desert. His heart sharpened to hear the Father so much better. What in us needs to be sharpened? We are a charismatic community. So many of us, sometimes at least, would say, "I'm nothing much. I'm afraid; I'm not that strong; I'm not that wise; I'm not..." this or that. Is it really about us? Or is it about us opening ourselves so that the Lord can act? So let's see how He acts through people who are humble versus proud. I have a few examples that should make it

clear. Actually, God seems to love bringing His glory and grace out of completely impossible circumstances of just weak and marginalized people. What's that about? How about Abraham? Completely purged, right? Sent away from his homeland, from Babylon, into who knows where because God said so. God said He would give him a son. Abraham is 100 – still nothing; his wife is barren - pretty impossible circumstances. And yet what comes out of it? Isaac. Soon as he comes out, God has another idea. "I want to purge this man a little more. See if he can give me all he has, even this son whom he waited for". Isaac purged and God acted mightily. What about Moses? Did he purge in the desert? Yeah, he was a shepherd after he was raised with Pharaoh's household. He became nothing much, right? Being with sheep, a kind of boring, lowly life - that's what made him ready. God was ready for him when he was not expecting it, but he was disposed because he was pretty well purged by then. He stuttered; he was completely unfit. God loved it because God's glory shines through people who don't have it – because God does. And the scriptures go on and on. There's Jeremiah, a mighty prophet who was much too young to be a prophet. Elizabeth, Mary, Hannah - too old, barren, or too young, a virgin. God changed all of it. Three impossible women, three impossible circumstances. How about Gideon? Remember that story (**Judges 7**)? When he was fighting the Midianites, there were hundreds and thousands of them. So Gideon, being sent by God to fight them, chooses ten thousand men. God says, "Oh, that's too many. My glory's not going to show if you put that much strength into it. It's too many. So everybody who's afraid, go home. Reduce." God kept reducing and reducing until there were 300. Pretty impossible against hundreds and thousands. That's when God acts. He purges, prepares the soil, and He acts. So what do we purge this year? Let it be our resolution. Do we have anything to purge at all? Do we have any chains or attachments to drop? What obstacles do we have this year for God to act in us mightily for our good and His glory, for the glory of the Lord? Are you going to let Him act through you mightily? So now that that's out, let's keep track of what we decide to purge. Everyone has a book to write in starting today and we'll stick with the list you come up with until Easter. Let's see what God has to say – how He can heal, redeem, purify, remove anything that you are willing to give over. If we cannot give it over, He cannot heal it. He wants to. So before we start writing anything in there, let's remind ourselves why we are doing this. To seek the face of the Lord, right? To remove anything that's between us and Him, anything that He might inspire us today. And He will keep doing that if we ask Him. Ask your guardian angel – he knows what's between you and God. What is weakening your prayer for people or just your personal life? What is weakening your meditation? What is weakening your gratefulness? What is weakening your love, wisdom? So some things you might want to write: What is your predominate sin (or two or three) that gets in the way? If you're not sure, ask the Lord. Unforgiveness – that's another block. Who do I need to forgive that I'm struggling to forgive? Is there anybody at all, now or from childhood? A teacher when I was 6-years-old who humbled me in front of people, a friend, parents, spouse, somebody at work - whom do I need to forgive? Is it extra hard to forgive somebody? Put that down. What about emotional wounds, something I keep struggling with, my hurts? Turn it over to the Lord; He will heal it. What about

attachments to stuff or even people? Saints are telling us if there's anything that I can't imagine myself being without, I'm attached. That goes into your book. What else are my blocks or weaknesses in my relationship with the Lord? And if my weakness is that I don't see what it is, write it down. The Lord will show you. He says, "If you seek me, you will find me. If you seek me with all your heart..." (**Jeremiah 29:13**). Then seek Him will all our hearts. And if all the heart is in it, then anything that's in the way of it must go. We are too weak and little to take care of it; God can take care of anything. You doubt Him? Try Him. Let's take a bit of silence to listen. Ask the Holy Spirit what is it He wants you to write down, to keep in your prayer. What do we need to turn over? As long as we are disposed to the Lord healing, He will bring up more. You have to start somewhere. Write at least three. And as we write, let's pray over it the way the psalmist taught us to pray for things we need. David spent his share of time crying and crying for things, for safety, for salvation, for life. And as he was crying to God, he was praising and thanking at the same time in anticipation. Anticipate. Thank the Lord. He can move the mountains; He can even move you out of your own way. Let Him. Let's bring these books next week and the week after and the week after until Pentecost and let's see what the Lord will do with each of us. He will grow mighty plants out of little seeds if we let Him. And if you're struggling with any of this and don't know what to write down, make a move. We'll have prayer teams at the end, so if you need a little push to release, open yourself to the Wisdom Incarnate, the Truth Incarnate, ask and you shall be given. Let us pray with you.

SCRIPTURE / EXHORTATION

And in the spirit of that thanksgiving, let's read the words on the front of the book because that's really the prayer. By ourselves we can do nothing. However, we're not asked to do it by ourselves. So together we say, "*I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me*" (**Philippians 4:13**). And if you get stuck during this meditation time, anytime in these next weeks, go back to the front cover and focus on that. And maybe it's the "I" can do all things – that I have the capability, God has given me that. Or I can do all "things" – anything is not too great for the Lord. "Through Christ" – it's not me here; it's Christ Who does this, Who strengthens me, not my strength but His strength. Just a fall back if you get stuck, and even if you don't.

WORD OF WISDOM

Which of us has not turned away at some point in our life? Which of us have not gone on the wrong path, yet that did not stop the Lord from coming after us, did it? That didn't stop Him from seeking us out. That didn't stop Him from coming and lifting us up. That didn't stop Him from taking us out of the mud and washing us off. That didn't stop Him – the fact that we turned from Him, the fact that we stumbled. That didn't stop the love. And Lord Jesus, what amazing grace that You loved us from the start and that you loved us through it all, and that you love us now in the midst of where we are. We praise You, Jesus. We thank You, Jesus.

We bow our hearts before You. You are Savior but also Savior Who loves us with a love beyond description. O Jesus, thank You. O Jesus, thank You. Thank You, Lord. Glory to You.

PRAYER

Give us the grace, O God, to hunger and thirst for You. Give us the grace, O God, to draw close. Give us the grace, O God, to seek Your face before all else. Touch our hearts, Lord. Create a hunger in us, Lord, a hunger that won't be satisfied except by You. Help us to respond to Your call, O Lord, Your holy grace. Let us thirst for You, Jesus. Let Your grace come, O Lord. Give us that desire in our hearts. Our souls cry out for You, God. O Jesus, You are love and mercy itself.

SCRIPTURE / PRAYER

Hebrews 12:18-24: *For you have not come to that which could be touched and a blazing fire and gloomy darkness, and a storm and a trumpet blast and a voice speaking words such as those who heard begged that no message be further addressed to them, for they could not bear to hear the command, "If even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." Indeed, so fearful was the spectacle that Moses said, "I am terrified and trembling." No, you have approached Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem and countless angels in festal gathering, and the assembly of the first-born enrolled in heaven, and God the judge of all, and the spirits of the just made perfect, and Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and the sprinkled blood that speaks more eloquently than that of Abel.* O Jesus, we thank You for Your salvation and sanctification. O Jesus, You Who opened the doors to the Father, we don't fear, Lord, because You have opened those doors. We're the children of the Father, sons and daughters. We are not afraid, no! We walk with confidence into Your love. Thank You, Jesus, thank You, Jesus, thank You, Jesus. Glory to You, Jesus. Holy, holy, holy. Not out of fear, Lord, but out of love. Holy, holy, holy.

SCRIPTURE

Psalms 84:5-12: *Blessed is the man whose strength is in you, whose heart is set on pilgrimage. As they pass through the valley of Baca, they make it a spring; the rain also covers it with pools. They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion. O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah. O God, behold our shield and look upon the face of your anointed! For a day in your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory. No good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man who trusts in you!* O Father, we just praise and exalt and magnify Your holy name, for You alone are worthy, worthy, worthy. Worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb, worthy is the holy risen Lamb of God. Worthy, worthy are You; You alone are worthy. You alone are worthy, worthy of all honor,

worthy of all glory, and worthy of all praise. Worthy, worthy, worthy – the holy risen Lamb of God. We praise and exalt and magnify Your holy name.

CONFIRMATION

We had that Psalm also before the prayer meeting. To see You, Lord, to see You.

SHARING / SCRIPTURE

As we were singing the chorus to that song, I was just struck by, in a way, how passive it is. It's like, "God, give us clean hands, give us pure hearts, give it to us." And I just kept thinking that sometimes it's our responsibility to say, "I give You clean hands; I give You a pure heart; I don't lift my soul to another" – an action, a choice. And while we have our weaknesses, our strength is in our choices. And tonight as we focused on things that block us from God, let's turn that to saying "I choose to not let that block me from God; I choose to open my heart and give Him clean hands and a pure spirit that seeks His face in an active, very purposeful way, that He can meet us on the road." The son, in the parable of the prodigal son (**Luke 15:11-32**), had to turn from his sin and make the decision that "I'm going to suck it up and go back to Dad because that's where it was right and this is not right. That's where it was right. And I'm going to humble myself and say I screwed up, and I'm coming back, Father." And it was only when he turned around and went back that he was able to see the Father running out to meet him from a long way off. The Father ran and held him in His arms. But he had to take his part of it and get going on the road to meet Him out there. As we start this whole Lenten process, let's not be afraid to suck up our pride and get back on the right road, because as C.S. Lewis says, "When you're on the wrong path, the one who turns back first is the farthest ahead."

SCRIPTURE

When the Lord puts a desire in our hearts, when we surrender, it's His will; it's as good as His promise. So listen to the word of **Ezekiel 36:23-30**: *...the nations shall know that I am the Lord, says the Lord God, when in their sight I prove my holiness through you. I will sprinkle clean water upon you to cleanse you from all your impurities, and from all your idols, I will cleanse you. I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you, taking from your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts. I will put my spirit within you, and make you live by my statutes, careful to observe my decrees. And you shall live in the land I gave your fathers. You shall be my people and I will be your God; and I will save you from all your impurities; and I will order the grain to be abundant; and I will not send famine against you. I will increase the fruit on your trees and the crops in your fields.*

PROPHECY

Come, my beloved, come. Come, you who are old; come, you who are young. Come, you who are strong; come, you who are weak. Come, you who are sure; come, you who doubt. Come, you who are ready; come, you who would say a minute more, my Lord. Come, my beloved,

come. Turn away from the old ways and come with me. The times to tremble are gone. The times to rejoice are here. Come, my beloved, come. Fear not that which ails you, but rather say, "I trust." Fear not the roadblocks, but say rather, "I see a new path." Come, my beloved. Turn not away; say not "I am not worthy". I say to you – you are worthy because I love you. Come, my beloved. Hear these words that I speak to each and every one of you. Come to me. Come, my beloved, I wait for you. Let nothing keep you from me. Come and rejoice; come and be happy. Come and see your new life. Come, my beloved, come.

PRAYER / EXHORTATION

O Lord, You beckon. O Lord, You call us. And Lord, help us now to respond to Your word. You know, you heard that call to come. Let us just respond to that word by some movement, by maybe stepping forward, maybe moving your body, but in some way say "Yes, Lord, yes. I come; I hear You. I walk with You; I walk into Your love." Maybe you want to step forward; maybe you want to stand, but it's a response, you know. And Lord, I step forward into Your love, Lord.

CONFIRMATION

I affirm that, those words "Do not be afraid." Walk into the love of Jesus.

SCRIPTURE / SHARING

Jesus, while He was being crucified, said, "Forgive them, Father, they don't know what they're doing" (**Luke 23:34**). Could there be more love? Could there be any more love? You can't quantify it, there's so much. God loves us so much.

IMAGE

Just a minute ago I saw the hands of Jesus outstretched with the nail holes in His hands and His arms just opened wide. And the sense there is... He says, "I am your holiness. Come to me."

CONFIRMATION / SHARING

Before the prophetic word was spoken, I had some of those same words but it was in relation to the book that Katerina gave us. And I was thinking no matter if you're young or if you're old or if you're young in your faith or if you're old in your faith... those were the same words that were spoken – young and old. Writing in these books, we can draw closer to God and listen to what He has to say to us and then write it down. And I was thinking about that – that I need to get up and say that what we are doing, this writing in the journals, has united this whole group here because everybody, for a few minutes, we were all on the same page – literally – writing in our books. And that unity in this group doesn't happen all that often. You know, some are singing, some are praying, some are thinking, some are... I don't know, whatever. But for a few minutes tonight we all were on the same page – writing and having Katerina lead us

through that. So I just thought that was really powerful and then that prophetic word, I confirm that because I was thinking that.

SHARING / CONFIRMATION

The other day after we had the vigil candlelight mass here, I had the opportunity to help clean up the candles and I went up there on the altar and these words came to me. It's titled "I AM": "I am what you yearn for. You are all that I need. Come follow Me and your life will be changed forever. I will transform you into the beautiful being that you were meant to be. Not what the world or society says you should be but what God Almighty created you to be. My light will shine so brightly and beautifully through you that the people of the world will see that I AM all that they need. PS: I Love you just as you are. You do not need to be perfect, for it is when you are weak and broken that My name is glorified. Jesus, Lamb of God." Again, those words came to me up there on the altar. It was very moving. I wrote to Deacon Chuck asking if this was possible. But anyway, it was titled "I AM" and Deacon Chuck said "I AM" so many times and somebody else said "I AM" so many times so I read it to you.

PRAYER

Lord, we thank You for that confirmation.

SCRIPTURE / PRAYER

Katerina began this night reading from the parable of the sower, and I think with all that's been said, this sums it up at the very end when Jesus explains the parable to His disciples. He says this (**Matthew 13:23**): *But as for that seed that fell on the good soil, these are the ones who when they hear the word hold it fast in an honest and good heart and bear fruit with patient endurance.* And Lord, I just pray and I thank You that You have gathered people who want to be the good soil and who will hold that word fast in honest and good hearts, and bear fruit with patient endurance.