

## 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Luke - Sunday of the 7<sup>th</sup> Council

31. St Paul, the 'chosen vessel' (Acts 9:15) who spoke 'In Christ' (2 Cor. 2:17), out of his great experience of invisible noetic warfare wrote to the Ephesians: 'We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against demonic principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in the celestial regions' (Eph. 6:12). And the Apostle Peter says: 'Be watchful, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Stand against him, steadfast in faith' (1 Pet. 5:8). And our Lord Jesus Christ, speaking of the various attitudes of those who hear the words of the Gospel, says: 'Then comes the devil, and snatches the word out of their hearts' - that is to say, he steals it by inducing them to forget it - 'lest they should believe and be saved' (Luke 8:12). And again Paul says: 'For with the inward man I delight in the law of God; but I see another law ... warring against the law of my intellect, and bringing me into captivity' (Rom. 7:22-23). They said these things to instruct and enlighten us about what we fail to perceive. [V3] 28 St Philotheos of Sinai Forty Texts on Watchfulness

43. The illuminative stage pertains to those who as a result of their struggles have attained the first level of *dispassion*. It is characterized by the spiritual knowledge of created beings, the contemplation of their inner essences and communion in the Holy Spirit. It involves the intellect's purification by divine fire, the noetic opening of the eyes of the heart, and the birth of the Logos accompanied by sublime intellections of spiritual knowledge. Its final goal is the elucidation of the nature of created things by the Logos of Wisdom, insight into divine and human affairs, and the revelation of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven (cf. Luke 8 : 10). He who has reached this point through the inner activity of the intellect rides, like another Elijah (cf. 2 Kgs. 2:11), in a chariot of fire drawn by the *quaternity* of the virtues; and while still living he is raised to the noetic realm and traverses the heavens, since he has risen above the lowliness of the body. [V4] 151 Nikitas Stithatos On Spiritual Knowledge, Love and the Perfection of Living: One Hundred Texts

46. The Spirit is light, life and peace. If consequently you are illumined by the Spirit your own life is imbued with peace and serenity. Because of this you are filled with the spiritual knowledge of created beings and the wisdom of the Logos; you are granted the intellect of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 2:16); and you come to know the mysteries of God's kingdom (cf. Luke 8:10). Thus you penetrate into the depths of the Divine and daily from an untroubled and illumined heart you utter words of life for the benefit of others; for you yourself are full of benediction, since you have within you Goodness itself that utters things new and old (cf. Matt. 13:52). [V4] 153 Nikitas Stithatos On Spiritual Knowledge, Love and the Perfection of Living: One Hundred Texts

Let us now look at the parable from the beginning. "A sower went out to sow his seed" (Luke 8:5). ... Anyone who sows crops every year is sowing perishable seed, which will not sprout unless it dies. Obviously, therefore, he will harvest and reap perishable things, temporary sustenance for the flesh that will soon come to nothing. Through this parable we shall teach you, however, what spiritual and imperishable seeds are, when it is time to sow them, who sows them, and what type of land is able to receive them, so that we may not toil merely in the hope of the harvest which nourishes us for a short

time, but may do everything in the hope of that harvest which will provide us with eternal life. "A sower", it says, "went out to sow his seed" (Luke 8:5). Who is he? The Lord Himself, who though the psalmist foretold concerning Himself, "I will open my mouth in parable" (Ps. 78:2Lxx, Matt. 13:35). But whence did he come out, who is everywhere present? Whither did He come, who is absent from nowhere? Again he said of Himself, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world" (John 16:28). Without being separated from the Father's bosom He who is in the world and by whom the world was made (John 1:10), came out and entered the world. He who fills heaven and earth came down from heaven to earth. Consequently, the coming forth of the only-begotten son of God, and His descent from heaven, represent nothing other than His manifestation in the flesh and His self-emptying, from the unutterable exaltation of divinity down to human nature at the other extreme.

He came out in this way "to sow his seed". What seed is this? The word of instruction, the words of eternal life, the commandments of immortality. The promise of restoration to life, and the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. These all belong to Him, for He said of Himself, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63); and Peter told Him, "Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). Such seed is His alone and He alone ceaselessly sows it, showing in this way that He is God over all (Rom. 9:5). Every teacher, evangelist and preacher of godliness and pious living also sows the words of life, the word of evangelical and heavenly teaching, but once he has served God's will in his generation he departs, nor did he exist previously. Moreover, the word of salvation which he sows by teaching is not his own but belongs to God, who assists him and "gives utterance at the opening of his mouth" (Eph. 6:19).

Before all else, brethren, I beseech you, let us hear with understanding that the Lord did not say that He went out to plough the human fields, or to break up the ground two or three times, dig up the roots of the weeds and smooth out the clods of earth, that is to say, to prepare our hearts for cultivation, but that He went out immediately to sow. Why? Because this preliminary work on our souls prior to sowing ought to be done by us. That is why the Forerunner of the gospel of grace, anticipating this fact, says with a loud voice, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Matt. 3:3), and "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2). Our preparation and the starting point of repentance is blaming ourselves, confession, and abstention from evil. He also issued a warning to those who had not made themselves ready in this way to bear fruits worthy of repentance (*cf.* Matt. 3:8, Luke 3:8). "Every tree which bringeth not forth fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matt. 3:10). The sentence God passes on unrepentant sinners is that they be cut off, that once they have been torn away from this present life and the life to come, they be despatched, also to unquenchable hell-fire.

St. Gregory Palamas Homily 47 On the Parable of the Sower