



My Beloved Ones,

Reflecting on the unfortunate conflicts in the world—whether we are speaking of the continuing war in Ukraine, or the newest tragedy in the Middle East—specific verse from both this Sunday’s Epistle & Gospel readings seem especially appropriate.

Paul began his letter to Titus encouraging the faithful not to become involved in “...*controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels over the law, for they are unprofitable and futile*” (Titus 3:9). However, after instructing Titus in where he will be traveling on his coming missionary journey, St. Paul leaves him with a comforting thought.

“And let our people learn to apply themselves to good deeds, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not to be unfruitful” (Titus 3:14). Now more than ever, it seems that we are surrounded by “cases of

urgent need”, and some of them—especially the war in the Middle East—are so complicated, sometimes they are difficult to even discuss without arousing passion, on one side or another.

This Sunday’s Gospel of the Parable of the Sower is one of Christ’s simplest and clearest parables. Even a child understands how the different kinds of soil reflect the ways in which human beings hear and receive God’s Word into their hearts. This year, I would like to focus on a specific phrase our Lord uses to describe the good soil that receives the Seed: “...*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*” (Luke 8:15).

We are so used to thinking about the qualities of the bad soil—focusing on worldly cares and pleasures—that we rejoice when we hear of the good soil, and so miss what I believe is a key phrase: these people “...*bear fruit with patient endurance*”. Our Lord does not lie to us and say that those who hold the word will have no problems or difficulties, but instead, that they will be able to endure the tragedies and trials of this life, with goodness, honesty, and patience.

I ask that every one of us prays to our Lord God and Savior, that our world might receive true peace, and true justice for all people. Until that time when God’s Holy Spirit may uplift the burdens of all men’s hearts & truly enlighten them, may we also take the opportunity to look within ourselves, so that we may be able to patiently endure the world’s difficulties, until that day, when all can truly experience, as St. Paul says, “...*the peace of God, which passes all understanding*” (Philippians 4:7).

+ALEXIOS

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