

## Saint\_Thomas\_on\_the\_Gospel\_for\_Sexagesima\_Sunday

*And when a very great multitude was gathered together, and hastened out of the cities unto him, he spoke by a similitude. The sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And other some fell upon a rock: and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And other some fell among thorns, and the thorns growing up with it, choked it. And other some fell upon good ground; and being sprung up, yielded fruit a hundredfold. Saying these things, he cried out: He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And his disciples asked him what this parable might be. To whom he said: To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to the rest in parables, that seeing they may not see, and hearing may not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. And they by the way side are they that hear; then the devil cometh, and taketh the word out of their heart, lest believing they should be saved. Now they upon the rock, are they who when they hear, receive the word with joy: and these have no roots; for they believe for a while, and in time of temptation, they fall away. And that which fell among thorns, are they who have heard, and going their way, are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit. But that on the good ground, are they who in a good and perfect heart, hearing the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience. (St. Luke 8: 4-15)*

THEOPHYL. That which David had foretold in the person of Christ, I will open my mouth in parables, the Lord here fulfill; as it is said, And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spoke by a parable. But the Lord speaks by a parable, first indeed that He may make His hearers more attentive. For men were accustomed to exercise their minds on dark sayings, and to despise what was plain; and next, that the unworthy might not receive what was spoken mystically.

ORIGEN; And therefore it is significantly said, When much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city. For not many but few there are who walk the strait road, and find the way which leads to life. Hence Matthew says, that He taught without the house by parables, but within the house explained the parable to His disciples.

EUSEBIUS; Now Christ most fitly puts forth His first parable to the multitude not only of those who then stood by, but of those also who were to come after them, inducing them to listen to His words, saying, A sower went out to sow his seed.

THEOPHYL; The sower we can conceive to be none other but the Son of God, Who going forth from His Father's bosom, whither no creature had attained, came into the world that He might bear witness to the truth.

CHRYS, Now His going, Who is every where, was not local, but through the vale of the flesh He approached us. But Christ fitly denominates His advent, His going forth. For we were aliens from God, and cast out as criminals, and rebels to the king, but he who wishes

to reconcile man, going out to them, speaks to them without, until having become meet for the royal presence, He brings them within; so also did Christ.

THEOPHYL. But He went out now, not to destroy the husbandmen, or to burn up the earth, but He went out to sow. For oftimes the husbandman who sows, goes out for some other cause, not only to sow.

EUSEBIUS; Some went out from the heavenly country and descended among men, not however to sow, for they were not sowers, but ministering Spirits sent forth to minister. Moses also and the prophets after him did not plant in men the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but by keeping back the foolish from the error of iniquity, and the worship of idols, they tilled as it were the souls of men, and brought them into cultivation. But the only Sower of all, the Word of God, went out to sow the new seed of the Gospel, that is, the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

THEOPHYL. But the Son of God never ceases to sow in our hearts, for not only when teaching, but creating, He sows good seed in our hearts.

TIT. BOST. But He went out to sow His seed, He receives not the word as borrowed, for He is by nature the Word of the living God. The seed is not then of Paul, or of John, but they have it because they have received it. Christ has His own seed, drawing forth His teaching from His own nature. Hence also the Jews said, How knows this man letters, having never learned?

EUSEBIUS; He teaches therefore that there are two classes of those who received the seed; the first, of those who have been made worthy of the heavenly calling, but fall from grace through carelessness and sloth; but the second, of those who multiply the seed bearing good fruit. But according to Matthew he makes three divisions in each class. For those who corrupt the seed have not all the same manner of destruction, and those who bear fruit from it do not receive an equal abundance. He wisely sets forth the cases of those who lose the seed. For some though they have not sinned, have lost the good seed implanted in their hearts, through its having been withdrawn from their thoughts and memory by evil spirits, and devils who fly through the air; or deceitful and cunning men, whom He calls the birds of the air. Hence it follows, And as he sowed, some fell by the way side.

THEOPHYL. He said not that the sower threw some on the way side, but that it fell by the way side. For he who sows taught the right word, but the word falls in different ways upon the hearers, so that some of them are called the way side: and it was trodden down, and the birds of the air devoured it.

CYRIL; For every way side is in some measure dry and uncultivated, because it is trodden down by all men, and no seed gains moisture on it. So the divine warning reaches not the unteachable heart, that it should bring forth the praise of virtue. These then are the ways frequented by unclean spirits. There are again some who bear faith about them, as if it consisted in the nakedness of words; their faith is without root, of whom it is added, And some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

THEOPHYL; The rock, he says, is the hard and unsubdued heart. Now the moisture at the root of the seed is the same as what is called in another parable, the oil to trim the lamps of the virgins, that is, love and steadfastness in virtue.

EUSEBIUS; There are also some who through covetousness, the desire of pleasure and worldly cares, which indeed Christ calls thorns, suffer the seed which has been sown in them to be choked.

CHRYS. For as the thorns do not let the seed grow up, but when it has been sown choke it by thickening round it, so the cares of this present life permit not the seed to bear fruit. But in things of sense the husbandman must be reprov'd who would sow amid thorns on a rock and the way side, for it is impossible that the rocks should become earth, the way not be a way, the thorns not be thorns. But in rational things it is otherwise. For it is possible that the rock should be converted into a fruitful soil, the way not be trodden down, the thorns dispersed.

CYRIL; Now the rich and fruitful ground is the honest and good hearts which receive deeply the seeds of the word, and retain them and cherish them. And whatever is added to this, And some fell upon good ground and springing up, brought forth fruit a hundred-fold. For when the divine word is poured into a soul free from all anxieties, then it strikes root deep, and sends forth as it were the ear, and in its due season comes to perfection.

THEOPHYL; For by fruit a hundred-fold, he means perfect fruit. For the number ten is always taken to imply perfection, because in ten precepts is contained the keeping, or the observance of the law. But the number ten multiplied by itself amounts to a hundred; hence by a hundred very great perfection is signified.

CYRIL; But what the meaning of the parable is, let us hear from him who made it, as it follows, And when he had said these things, he cried, He that has ears to hear, let him hear.

BASIL; Hearing has reference to the understanding. By this then our Lord stirs us up to listen attentively to the meaning of those things which are spoken.

THEOPHYL; For as often as the admonition occurs either in the Gospel or the Revelation of St. John, it signifies that there is a mystical meaning in what is said, and we must inquire more closely into it. Hence the disciples who were ignorant ask our Savior, for it follows, And his disciples asked him, &c. But let no one suppose that as soon as the parable was finished His disciples asked Him, but, as Mark says, When he was alone they asked him.

ORIGEN; Now a parable is a narration of an action as done, yet not done according to the letter, though it might have been, representing certain things by means of others which are given in the parable. An enigma is a continued story of things which are spoken of as done, and yet have not been done, nor are possible to be done, but contains a concealed meaning, as that which is mentioned in the Book of Judges, that the trees went forth to anoint a king over them. But it was not literally a fact as is said, A sower went out to sow, like those facts related in history, yet it might have been so.

EUSEBIUS; But our Lord told them the reason why He spoke to the multitudes in parables, as follows, And he said, to you it is given to know the mysteries of God.

GREG. NAZ. When you hear this you must not entertain the notion of different natures, as certain heretics do, who think that some men indeed are of a perishing nature, others of a saving nature, but that some are so constituted that their will leads them to better or worse. But add to the words, To you it is given, if willing and truly worthy.

THEOPHYL. But to those who are unworthy of such mysteries, they are obscurely spoken. Hence it follows, But to the rest in parables, that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. For they think they see, but see not, and hear indeed, but do not understand. For this reason Christ hides this from them, lest they should beget a greater prejudice against them, if after they had known the mysteries of Christ, they despised them. For he who understands and afterwards despises, shall be more severely punished.

THEOPHYL; Rightly then do they hear in parables, who having closed the senses of their heart, care not to know the truth, forgetful of what the Lord told them. He that has ears to hear, let him hear.

GREG. But our Lord condescended to explain what He said, that we might know how to seek for explanation- in those things which He is unwilling to explain through Himself. For it follows, Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

EUSEB. Now He says, that there are three reasons why men destroy the seed implanted in their hearts. For some destroy the seed that is hid in them by lightly giving heed to those that wish to deceive, of whom He adds, Those by the way side are they that hear: there comes the devil, and takes away the word out of their hearts.

THEOPHYL; Who in truth deign to receive the word which they hear with no faith, with no understanding at least with no attempt to test the value of it.

EUSEB. But some there are who having not received the word in any depth of heart, are soon overcome when adversity assails them, of whom it is added, They on the rock are they which when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

CYRIL; For when they enter the Church they gladly wait on the divine mysteries, but with infirmity of purpose. But when they leave the Church they forget the sacred discipline, and as long as Christians are undisturbed, their faith is lasting; but when persecution harasses, their heart fails them, for their faith was without root.

GREG. Many men propose to begin a good work, but as soon as they have become annoyed by adversity or temptation, they abandon what they had begun. The rocky ground then had no moisture to carry on to constancy fruit which it had put forth.

EUSEB. But some choke the seed which has been deposited in them with riches and vain delights, as if with choking thorns, of whom it is added, And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches of this life, &c.

GREG. It is wonderful that the Lord has represented riches as thorns, for these prick, while those delight, and yet they are thorns, for they lacerate the mind by the prickings of their thoughts, and whenever they entice to see they draw blood, as if inflicting a wound. But there are two things which He joins to riches, cares and pleasures, for they oppress the

mind by anxiety and unnerve it by luxuries, but they choke the seed, for they strangle the throat of the heart with vexatious thoughts, and while they let not a good desire enter the heart, they close up as it were the passage of the vital breath.

EUSEB. Now these things were foretold by our Savior according to His foreknowledge, and that their case is so, experience testifies. For in no wise do men fall away from the truth of divine worship, but according to some of the causes before mentioned by Him.

CHRYS. And to sum up many things in a few words. Some indeed as careless hearers, some as weak, but others as the very slaves of pleasure and worldly things, hold aloof from what is good. The order of the way side, the rock, and the thorns is well, for we have first need of recollection and caution, next of fortitude, and then of contempt of things present. He therefore places the good ground in opposition to the way, the rock, and the thorns. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, &c. For they who are on the way side keep not the word, but the devil takes away their seed. But they who are on the rock sustain not patiently the assaults of temptation through weakness. But they who are among thorns bear no fruit, but are choked.

GREG. The good ground then bears fruit through patience, for nothing we do is good unless we endure patiently our closest evils. They therefore bear fruit through patience, who when they bear strifes humbly, are after the scourge received with joy to a heavenly rest.

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St. Thomas Aquinas,  
Catena Aurea (Golden Chain),  
Parallel Gospel of Matthew 13:1-23

*The same day Jesus going out of the house, sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered unto him, so that he went up into a boat and sat: and all the multitude stood on the shore. And he spoke to them many things in parables, saying: Behold the sower went forth to sow. And whilst he soweth some fell by the way side, and the birds of the air came and ate them up. And other some fell upon stony ground, where they had not much earth: and they sprung up immediately, because they had no deepness of earth. And when the sun was up they were scorched: and because they had not root, they withered away. And others fell among thorns: and the thorns grew up and choked them. And others fell upon good ground: and they brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, and some thirtyfold. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And his disciples came and said to him: Why speakest thou to them in parables? Who answered and said to them: Because to you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven: but to them it is not given. For he that hath, to him shall be given, and he shall abound: but he that hath not, from him shall be taken away that also which he hath. Therefore do I speak to them in*

*parables: because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And the prophecy of Isaias is fulfilled in them, who saith: By hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand: and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive. For the heart of this people is grown gross, and with their ears they have been dull of hearing, and their eyes they have shut: lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear. For, amen, I say to you, many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them, and to hear the things that you hear and have not heard them. Hear you therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, there cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart: this is he that received the seed by the way side. And he that received the seed upon stony ground, is he that heareth the word, and immediately receiveth it with joy. Yet hath he not root in himself, but is only for a time: and when there ariseth tribulation and persecution because of the word, he is presently scandalized. And he that received the seed among thorns, is he that heareth the word, and the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choketh up the word, and he becometh fruitless. But he that received the seed upon good ground, is he that heareth the word, and understandeth, and beareth fruit, and yieldeth the one an hundredfold, and another sixty, and another thirty.*

Chrys.: When He had rebuked him that told Him of His mother and His brethren, He then did according to their request; He departed out of the house, having first corrected His brethren for their weak desire of vainglory; He then paid the honour due to His mother, as it is said, “The same day Jesus going out of the house, sat by the sea side”

Aug., De Cons. Ev., ii, 41: By the words, “The same day,” he sufficiently shews that these things either followed immediately upon what had gone before, or that many things could not have intervened; unless indeed ‘day’ here after the Scripture manner signifies a period.

Raban.: For not only the Lord’s words and actions, but His journeyings also, and the places in which He works His mighty works and preaches, are full of heavenly sacraments.

After the discourse held in the house, wherein with wicked blasphemy He had been said to have a demon, He went out and taught by the sea, to signify that having left Judaea because of their sinful unbelief, He would pass to the salvation of the Gentiles. For the hearts of the Gentiles, long proud and unbelieving, are rightly likened to the swelling and bitter waves of the sea. And who knows not that Judaea was by faith the house of the Lord.

Jerome: For it must be considered, that the multitude could not enter into the house to Jesus, nor be there where the Apostles heard mysteries; therefore the Lord in mercy to them departed out of the house, and sat near the sea of this world, that great numbers might be gathered to Him, and that they might hear on the sea shore what they were not

worthy to hear within; “And great multitudes were gathered unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat down, and all the people stood on the shore.”

Chrys.: The Evangelist did not relate this without a purpose, but that he might shew the Lord’s will therein, who desired so to place the people that He should have none behind Him, but all should be before His face.

Hilary: There is moreover a reason in the subject of His discourse why the Lord should sit in the ship, and the multitude stand on the shore. For He was about to speak in parables, and by this action signifies that they who were without the Church could have no understanding of the Divine Word.

The ship offers a type of the Church, within which the word of life is placed, and is preached to those without, and who as being barren sand cannot understand it.

Jerome: Jesus is in the midst of the waves; He is beaten to and fro by the waves, and, secure in His majesty, causes His vessel to come nigh the land, that the people not being in danger, not being surrounded by temptations which they could not endure, might stand on the shore with a firm step, to hear what was said.

Raban.: Or, that He went into a ship and sat on the sea, signifies that Christ by faith should enter into the hearts of the Gentiles, and should gather together the Church in the sea, that is in the midst of the nations that spake against Him. And the crowd that stood on the sea shore, neither in the ship nor in the sea, offers a figure of those that receive the word of God, and are by faith separated from the sea, that is from the reprobate, but are not yet imbued with heavenly mysteries.

It follows; “And he spake many things unto them in parables.”

Chrys.: He had not done thus on the mount; He had not framed His discourse by parables. For there were the multitudes only, and a mixed crowd; but here the Scribes and Pharisees. But He speaks in parables not for this reason only, but to make His sayings plainer, and fix them more fully in the memory, by bringing things before the eyes.

Jerome: And it is to be noted, that He spake not all things to them in parables, but “many things,” for had He spoken all things in parables, the people would have departed without benefit. He mingles things plain with things dark, that by those things which they understand they may be incited to get knowledge of the things they understand not.

The multitude also is not of one opinion, but of divers wills in divers matters, whence He speaks to them in many parables, that each according to their several dispositions may receive some portion of His teaching.

Chrys.: He first sets forth a parable to make His hearers more attentive; and because He was about to speak enigmatically, He attracts the attention by this first parable, saying, “Behold, a sower went forth to sow his seed.”

Jerome: By this sower is typified the Son of God, who sows among the people the word of the Father.

Chrys.: Whence then went out He who is every where present, and how went He out! Not in place; but by His incarnation being brought nearer to us by the garb of the flesh. Forasmuch as we because of our sins could not enter in unto Him, He therefore came forth to us.

Raban.: Or, He went forth, when having left Judaea, He passed by the Apostles to the Gentiles.

Jerome: Or, He was within while He was yet in the house, and spake sacraments to His disciples. He went therefore forth from the house, that He might sow seed among the multitudes.

Chrys.: When you hear the words, “the sower went out to sow,” do not suppose that is a tautology. For the sower goes out oftentimes for other ends; as, to break up the ground, to pluck up noxious weeds, to root up thorns, or perform any other species of industry, but this man went forth to sow.

What then becomes of that seed? Three parts of it perish, and one is preserved; but not all in the same manner, but with a certain difference, as it follows, “And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside.”

Jerome: This parable Valentinus lays hold of to establish his heresy, bringing in three different natures; the spiritual, the natural or the animal, and the earthly. But there are here four named, one by the wayside, one stony, one thorny, and a fourth the good ground.

Chrys.: Next, how is it according to reason to sow seed among thorns, or on stony ground, or by the wayside? Indeed in the material seed and soil of this world it would not be reasonable; for it is impossible that rock should become soil, or that the way should not be the way, or that thorns should not be thorns.

But with minds and doctrines it is otherwise; there it is possible that the rock be made rich soil, that the way should be no more trodden upon, and that the thorns should be extirpated. That the most part of the seed then perished, came not of him that sowed, but of the soil that received it, that is the mind. For He that sowed put no difference between rich and poor, wise or foolish, but spoke to all alike; filling up his own part, though foreseeing all things that should come to pass, so that He might say, “What ought I to have done that I have not done? [Isa 5:4]

He does not pronounce sentence upon them openly and say, this the indolent received and have lost it, this the rich and have choked it, this the careless and have lost it, because He would not harshly reprove them, that He might not alienate them altogether.

By this parable also He instructs His disciples, that though the greater part of those that heard them were such as perished, yet that they should not therefore be remiss; for the Lord Himself who foresaw all things, did not on this account desist from sowing.

Jerome: Note that this is the first parable that has been given with its interpretation, and we must beware where the Lord expounds His own teaching that we do not presume to understand any thing either more or less, or any way otherwise than as so expounded by Him.

Raban.: But those things which He silently left to our understanding, should be shortly noticed. The wayside is the mind trodden and hardened by the continual passage of evil thoughts; the rock, the hardness of the self-willed mind; the good soil, the gentleness of the obedient mind; the sun, the heat of a raging persecution. The depth of soil, is the honesty of a mind trained by heavenly discipline. But in thus expounding them we should add, that the same things are not always put in one and the same allegorical signification.



Jerome: And we are excited to the understanding of His words, by the advice which follows, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

Remig.: These care to hear, are ears of the mind, to understand namely and do those things which are commanded.

Gloss., ap. Anselm: The disciples understanding that the things which were spoken by the Lord to the people were obscure, desired to hint to Him that He should not speak in parables to them. “And his disciples came to him, and said, Why speakest thou to them in parables?”

Chrys., Hom. xiv: Wherein it is worthy admiration, that the disciples who desire to learn of Him, know when they ought to ask Him, for they do not this before the multitude. This Matthew declares, when he says, “And they came to him;” and Mark more expressly says, that “they came to him when he was alone.” [Mark 4:10]

Jerome: We must enquire how they could come to Him at that time when Jesus was sitting in the ship; we may understand that they had at the first entered into the ship, and standing there, made this enquiry of Him.

Remig.: The Evangelist therefore says, came to him, to express that they eagerly enquired of Him; or they might indeed approach Him bodily, though the space between them was small.

Chrys.: And observe moreover their goodness, how great their thought for others, that they enquire about what concerns others, before what relates to themselves. For they say not, ‘Why speakest thou to us in parables?’ but ‘to them.’ “And he answered and said unto them, Because it is given to you to know the mystery of the kingdom of heaven.”

Remig.: To you, I say, who adhere to Me, and believe in Me. By the mystery of the kingdom of heaven, He intends the Gospel doctrine. “To them,” that is, to them that are without, and who would not believe on Him, the Scribes namely and Pharisees, and to the rest who continue in unbelief, it is not given. Let us then, with the disciples, come unto the Lord with a pure heart, that He may think us worthy to interpret to us the evangelic teaching; according to that, “They who draw near to his feet, shall receive of his doctrine.” [Deut 33:3]

Chrys.: In saying this, He does not imply any necessity or fate, but shews at once, that they, to whom it is not given, are the cause of all their own miseries, and yet that the knowledge of the Divine mysteries is the gift of God, and a grace given from above. Yet this does not destroy free will, as is manifest from what follows; for to prevent that either these should despair, or those be remiss, when they hear that “to you it is given,” He shews that the beginning of all lays with ourselves, and then He adds, “For whoso hath, to him shall be given, and he shall abound; and whoso hath not, from him shall be taken what he hath.” As much as to say, Whoso has the desire and the zeal, to him shall be given all those things which are of God; but whoso lacketh these, and does not contribute that part that pertains to him, to him neither are the things which are of God given, but even those things that he hath are taken from him; not because God takes them away, but because he hath made himself unworthy of those that he has. Wherefore we also, if we see any hearkening carelessly, and having exhorted him to attend, he do not heed us, let us be

silent; for should we persevere in urging him, his slothfulness will be the more charged against him.

But him that is zealous to learn, we draw onwards, pouring forth many things. And He well said according to another Evangelist, "That which he seemeth to have;" [Luke 8:18] for, in truth, he has not even that he has.

Remig.: He that has a desire to read, shall have given to him power to understand, and whoso has not desire to read, that understanding which by the bounty of nature he seems to have, even that shall be taken from him. Or, whoso has charity, to him shall be given the other virtues also; and from him who has not charity, the other virtues likewise shall be taken away, for without charity there can be nothing good.

Jerome: Or, To the Apostles who believe in Christ there is given, but from the Jews who believed not on the Son of God there is taken away, even whatever good they might seem to have by nature. For they cannot understand any thing with wisdom, seeing they have not the head of wisdom.

Hilary: For the Jews not having faith, have lost also the Law which they had; and Gospel faith has the perfect gift, inasmuch as if received it enriches with new fruit, if rejected it subtracts from the riches of ancient possession.

Chrys.: But that what He had said might be made more manifest He adds, "Therefore speak I unto them in parables, because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand." Had this been a natural blindness, He ought to have opened their eyes; but forasmuch as it is voluntary, therefore He said not simply, 'They see not,' but, "Seeing they see not." For they had seen the demons going out, and they said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebub;" they heard that He drew all men to God and they say, "This man is not of God." [John 9:16]

Therefore because they spake the very contrary to what they saw and heard, to see and to hear is taken from them; for they profit nothing, but rather fall under judgment. For this reason He spake to them at first not in parables, but with much clearness; but because they perverted all they saw and heard, He now speaks in parables.

Remig.: And it should be noted, that not only what He spake, but also what He did, were parables, that is, signs of things spiritual, which He clearly shews when He says, "That seeing they may not see;" but words are heard and not seen.

Jerome: This He says of those who were standing on the shore, and separated from Jesus, and who because of the dashing of the waves, heard not distinctly what was said.

Chrys.: And that they should not say, He slanders us as an enemy, He brings forward the Prophet declaring the same opinion, as it follows, "That there might be fulfilled in them the prophecy of Isaiah, who said, With the hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see and shall not behold." [Isa 6:9]

Gloss., non occ.: That is; With the hearing ye shall hear words, but shall not understand the hidden meaning of those words; seeing ye shall see My flesh indeed, but shall not discern the divinity.

Chrys.: This He said because they had taken away their own sight and hearing, shutting their eyes, and hardening their hearts. For not only did they not hear at all, but they heard

obtusely, as it follows, “For the heart of this people is grown gross, and with their ears they have been dull of hearing.”

Raban.: The heart of the Jews is made gross with the grossness of wickedness, and through the abundance of their sins they hear hardly the Lord’s words, because they have received them ungratefully.

Jerome: And that we should not suppose that this grossness of the heart and heaviness of the ears is of nature, and not of choice, He adds the fruit of their own wilfulness, “and their eyes they have shut.”

Chrys.: Herein He points out how extreme their wickedness, how determined their aversion. Again to draw them towards Him, He adds, “And be converted, and I should heal them;” which shews that if they would be converted, they should be healed. As if one should say, If he would ask me I would immediately forgive him, this would point out how he might be reconciled; so here when He says, “Lest they should be converted and I should heal them,” He shews that it was possible they should be converted, and having done penitence should be saved.

Aug., Quaest. in Matt., q. 14: Otherwise; “They have shut their eyes lest they should see with their eyes,” that is, themselves were the cause that God shut their eyes. For another Evangelist says, “He hath blinded their eyes.” But is this to the end that they should never see? Or that they should not see so much as this, that becoming discontent with their own blindness and bewailing themselves, should so be humbled, and moved to confession of their sins and pious seeking after God. For Mark thus expresses the same thing, “Lest they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.” From which we learn, that by their sins they deserved not to understand; and that yet this was allowed them in mercy that they should confess their sins, and should turn, and so merit to be forgiven.

But when John relating this expresses it thus, “Therefore they could not believe because Elias said again, He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them,” [John 12:39] this seems to be opposed to this interpretation, and to compel us to take what is here said, “Lest they should see with their eyes,” not as though they might come to see after this fashion, but that they should never see at all; for he says it plainly, “That they should not see with their eyes.” And that he says, “Therefore they could not believe,” sufficiently shews that the blindness was not indicted, to the end that moved thereby, and grieving that they understood not, they should be converted through penitence; for that they could not, unless they had first believed, and by believing had been converted, and by conversion had been healed, and having been healed understood; but it rather shews that they were therefore blinded that they should not believe. For he speaks most clearly, “Therefore they could not believe.”

But if it be so, who would not rise up in defense of the Jews, and pronounce them to be free from all blame for their unbelief? For, “Therefore they could not believe, because he hath blinded their eyes.” But because we must rather believe God to be without fault, we are driven to confess that by some other sins they had thus deserved to be blinded, and that

indeed this blinding prevented them from believing; for the words of John are these, "They could not believe, because that Elias said again, He hath blinded their eyes."

It is in vain then to endeavour to understand it that they were therefore blinded that they should be converted; seeing they could not be converted because they believed not; and they could not believe because they were blinded. Or perhaps we should not say amiss thus -- that some of the Jews were capable of being healed, but that being puffed up with so great swelling pride, it was good for them at first that they should not believe, that they might understand the Lord speaking in parables, which if they did not understand they would not believe; and thus not believing on Him, they together with the rest who were past hope crucified Him; and at length after His resurrection, they were converted, when humbled by the guilt of His death they loved Him the more because of the heavy guilt which had been forgiven them; for their so great pride needed such an humiliation to overcome it.

This might indeed be thought an inconsistent explanation, did we not plainly read in the Acts of the Apostles [margin note: Acts 2:37] that thus it was. This then that John says, "Therefore they could not believe, because he hath blinded their eyes that they should not see," is not repugnant to our holding that they were therefore blinded that they should be converted; that is to say, that the Lord's meaning was therefore purposely clothed in the obscurities of parables, that after His resurrection they might turn them to wisdom with a more healthy penitence. For by reason of the darkness of His discourse, they being blinded did not understand the Lord's sayings, and not understanding them, they did not believe on Him, and not believing on Him they crucified Him; thus after His resurrection, terrified by the miracles that were wrought in His name, they had the greater compunction for their great sin, and were more prostrated in penitence; and accordingly after indulgence granted they turned to obedience with a more ardent affection. Notwithstanding, some there were to whom this blinding profited not to conversion.

Remig.: In all the clauses the word 'not' must be understood; thus; That they should not see with their eyes, and should not hear with their ears, and should not understand with their heart, and should not be converted, and I should heal them.

Gloss., ap. Anselm: So then the eyes of them that see, and will not believe, are miserable, but your eyes are blessed; whence it follows, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear."

Jerome: If we had not read above that invitation to his hearers to understand, when the Saviour said, "He that hath ears to hear let him hear," we might here suppose that the eyes and ears which are now blessed are those of the body. But I think that those eyes are blessed which can discern Christ's sacraments, and those ears of which Isaiah speaks, "The Lord hath given me an ear." [Isa 50:4]

Gloss. ord.: The mind is called an eye, because it is intently directed upon what is set before it to understand it; and an ear, because it learns from the teaching of another.

Hilary: Or, He is speaking of the blessedness of the Apostolic times, to whose eyes and ears it was permitted to see and to hear the salvation of God, many Prophets and just men having desired to see and to hear that which was destined to be in the fulness of times;

whence it follows; “Verily I say unto you, that many Prophets and just men have desired to see the things that ye see, and to hear the things that ye hear, and have not heard them.”

Jerome: This place seems to be contradicted by what is said elsewhere. “Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad.” [John 8:56]

Raban.: Also Isaiah and Micah, and many other Prophets, saw the glory of the Lord; and were thence called ‘seers.’

Jerome: But He said not, ‘The Prophets and the just men,’ but “many;” for out of the whole number, it may be that some saw, and others saw not. But as this is a perilous interpretation, that we should seem to be making a distinction between the merits of the saints, at least as far as the degree of their faith in Christ, therefore we may suppose that Abraham saw in enigma, and not in substance. But ye have truly present with you, and hold, your Lord, enquiring of Him at your will, and eating with Him. [margin note: convescimini]

Chrys.: These things then which the Apostles saw and heard, are such as His presence, His voice, His teaching. And in this He sets them before not the evil only, but even before the good, pronouncing them more blessed than even the righteous men of old. For they saw not only what the Jews saw not, but also what the righteous men and Prophets desired to see, and had not seen.

For they had beheld these things only by faith, but these by sight, and even yet more clearly. You see how He identifies the Old Testament with the New, for had the Prophets been the servants of any strange or hostile Deity, they would not have desired to see Christ.

Gloss., ap. Anselm: He had said above, that it was not given to Jews to know the kingdom of God, but to the Apostles, and therefore He now concludes, saying, “Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower, ye to whom are committed the mysteries of heaven.”

Aug., De Gen. ad lit., viii, 4: It is certain that the Lord spoke the things which the Evangelist has recorded; but what the Lord spake was a parable, in which it is never required that the things contained should have actually taken place.

Gloss, ap. Anselm: He proceeds then expounding the parable; “Every man who hears the word of the kingdom,” that is, My preaching which avails to the acquiring the kingdom of heaven, “and understandeth it not;” how he understands it not, is explained by, “for the evil one” -- that is the Devil -- “cometh and taketh away that which is sown in his heart;” every such man is “that which is sown by the way side.” And note that which is sown, is taken in different senses; for the seed is that which is sown, and the field is that which is sown, both of which are found here. For where He says “carrieth away that which is sown,” we must understand it of the seed; that which follows, “is sown by the way side,” is to be understood not of the seed, but of the place of the seed, that is, of the man, who is as it were the field sown by the seed of the Divine word.

Remig.: In these words the Lord explains what the seed is, to wit, the word of the kingdom, that is of the Gospel teaching. For there are some that receive the word of the Lord with no devotion of heart, and so that seed of God’s word which is sown in their heart, is by demons straightway carried off, as it were the seed dropped by the way side. It

follows, "That which is sown upon the rock, is he that heareth the word, &c." For the seed or word of God, which is sown in the rock, that is, in the hard and untamed heart, can bring forth no fruit, inasmuch as its hardness is great, and its desire of heavenly things small; and because of this great hardness, it has no root in itself.

Jerome: Note that which is said, "is straightway offended." There is then some difference between him who, by many tribulations and torments, is driven to deny Christ, and him who at the first persecution is offended, and falls away, of which He proceeds to speak, "That which is sown among thorns." To me He seems here to express figuratively that which was said literally to Adam; "Amidst briers and thorns thou shalt eat they bread," [Gen 3:18] that he that has given himself up to the delights and the cares of this world, eats heavenly bread and the true food among thorns.

Raban.: Rightly are they called thorns, because they lacerate the soul by the prickings of thought, and do not suffer it to bring forth the spiritual fruit of virtue.

Jerome: And it is elegantly added, "The deceitfulness of riches choke the word;" for riches are treacherous, promising one thing and doing another. The tenure of them is slippery as they are borne hither and thither, and with uncertain step forsake those that have them, or revive those that have them not. Whence the Lord asserts, that rich men hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven, because their riches choke the word of God, and relax the strength of their virtues.

Remig.: And it should be known, that in these three sorts of bad soil are comprehended all who can hear the word of God, and yet have not strength to bring it forth unto salvation. The Gentiles are excepted, who were not worthy even to hear it.

It follows, "That which is sown on the good ground." The good ground is the faithful conscience of the elect, or the spirit of the saints which receives the word of God with joy and desire and devotion of heart, and manfully retains it amid prosperous and adverse circumstances, and brings it forth in fruit; as it follows, "And brings forth fruit, some a hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold."

Jerome: And it is to be noted, that as in the bad ground there were three degrees of difference, to wit, that by the way side, the stony, and the thorny ground; so in the good soil there is a three-fold difference, the hundred-fold, the sixty-fold, and the thirty-fold. And in this as in that, not the substance but the will is changed, and the hearts as well of the unbelieving as the believing receive seed; as in the first case He said, "Then cometh the wicked one, and carrieth off that which is sown in the heart;" and in the second and third case of the bad soil He said, "This is he that heareth the word." So also in the exposition of the good soil, "This is he that heareth the word." Therefore we ought first to hear, then to understand, and after understanding to bring forth the fruits of teaching, either an hundred-fold, or sixty, or thirty.

Aug., City of God, book xxi, ch. 27: Some think that this is to be understood as though the saints according to the degree of their merits delivered some thirty, some sixty, some an hundred persons; and this they usually suppose will happen on the day of judgment, not after the judgment. But when this opinion was observed to encourage men in promising themselves impunity, because that by this means all might attain to deliverance, it was

answered, that men ought the rather to live well, that each might be found among those who were to intercede for the liberation of others, lest these should be found to be so few that they should soon have exhausted the number allotted to them, and thus there would remain many unrescued from torment, among whom might be found all such as in most vain rashness had promised themselves to reap the fruits of others.

Remig.: The thirty-fold then is borne of him who teaches faith in the Holy Trinity; the sixty-fold of him who enforces the perfection of good works; (for in the number six this world was completed with all its equipments;) [margin note: Gen 2:1] while he bears the hundred-fold who promises eternal life. For the number one hundred passes from the left hand to the right; and by the left hand the present life is denoted, by the right hand the life to come.

Otherwise, the seed of the word of God brings forth fruit thirty-fold when it begets good thoughts, sixty-fold when good speech, and an hundred-fold when it brings to the fruit of good works.

Aug., Quæst Ev., i, 9: Otherwise; There is fruit an hundred-fold of the martyrs because of their satiety of life or contempt of death; a sixty-fold fruit of virgins, because they rest not warring against the use of the flesh; for retirement is allowed to those of sixty years' age after service in war or in public business; and there is a thirty-fold fruit of the wedded, because theirs is the age of warfare, and their struggle is the more arduous, that they should not be vanquished by their lusts.

Or otherwise; We must struggle with our love of temporal goods that reason may be master; it should either be so overcome and subject to us, that when it begins to rise it may be easily repressed, or so extinguished that it never arises in us at all. Whence it comes to pass, that death itself is despised for truth's sake, by some with brave endurance, by others with content, and by others with gladness -- which three degrees are the three degrees of fruits of the earth -- thirty-fold, sixty-fold, and an hundred-fold.

And in one of these degrees must one be found at the time of his death, if any desires to depart well out of this life.

Jerome, vid. Cyp. Tr. iv. 12: The hundred-fold fruit is to be ascribed to virgins, the sixty-fold to widows and continent persons, the thirty-fold to chaste wedlock.

Jerome, Hieron. Ep. 48, 2: For the joining together of the hands, as it were in the soft embrace of a kiss, represents husband and wife. The sixty-fold refers to widows, who as being set in narrow circumstances and affliction are denoted by the depression of the finger; for by how much greater is the difficulty of abstaining from the allurements of pleasure once known, so much greater is the reward. The hundredth number passes from the left to the right, and by its turning round with the same fingers, not on the same hand, it expresses the crown of virginity. [ed. note: ~ This alludes to the method of notation by the fingers described by Bede (with reference to this passage of S. Jerome,) in his treatise 'De Indigitatione,' vol i. 131. The expression, 'atque suos jam dextra computat annos,' Juv. will occur immediately to the classical reader.]

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