

Notes from the Sunday Sermon of October 16, 2022:

The Sower and Seeds: The Power of a Little, Consistent Redirection

Scriptures: 2 Cor 9:6-11 / Luke 8:5-15

<https://www.oca.org/readings/daily/2022/10/16>

1) NASA hopes to save the world from being hit by an asteroid, not by destroying it in advance, but by redirecting its path: recently it had a successful - "Double Asteroid Redirection or Planetary Defense Test."

2) For us, as well - a simple "redirection" of our daily intentions can have saving consequences and allow the seeds of God's word and His grace to blossom.

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Over the years there are many who have worried that our planet could be hit by an asteroid that would cause significant damage. Movies and legitimate scientific experts have wondered what would be the best response. One option is that the object must be destroyed by some kind of bomb. NASA over the past year sent a spaceship to the asteroid Dimorphos, which is around 7 million miles away and orbits a larger asteroid, Didymos. Its goal was to crash into Dimorphos, not for the purpose of its destruction, but to distort the path of its orbit around Didymos. This event, called - NASA's "Double Asteroid Redirection Test" took place several weeks ago and all indications are that it was successful. Some have raised the question, "Has NASA Saved the Earth?"

Yesterday's Sermon sought to explore how this example of "redirection" can be applied to the parable of the Sower and the Seeds presented in the Gospel (Luke 8:5-15).

In explaining the parable Jesus stated that the seed was always consistent - it was the word of God. What determined the growth, however, was the conditions of the soil - some fell by the wayside, on rock, among thorns, and finally on good ground. In applying these examples to the human heart, Jesus concluded that: "the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience."

What sort of efforts at "redirection" might help develop hearts that can be receptive to God's word, His seed and "bear fruit with patience"?

The following examples were presented:

1) **LET'S REDIRECT OUR TIME:** We think of each day beginning in the morning or of the main liturgical service being on Sunday. But in terms of Biblical time as expressed in the opening of Genesis and still practiced by the Jewish community and Orthodox Christians - the day begins in the evening.

Every day at least in monasteries and in many seminaries includes the service of Vespers which both affirms the end of one period of time and anticipates the new day.

The Service on Saturday evening marks both the beginning of the themes for Sunday, but also introduces the liturgical use of the Psalms.

We sing sections of Psalm 1 every Saturday evening. Here's the text which both reminds us of the spiritual value of growing vegetation, but also of the sense of being on a path or a way:

1
Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
2
but his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law he meditates day and night.
3
He is like a tree
planted by streams of water,
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.
4
The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff which the wind drives away.
5
Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
6
for the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

The Vespers Service – In looking back at the events of the day – prepares us for the evening and seeks to introduce us to a time of rest. Here's a priestly prayer that summarizes these themes:

O great and most high God, who alone have immortality, and dwell in unapproachable light; who have made all creation in wisdom; who have divided the light from the darkness, and have appointed the sun to rule the day, the moon and stars also to rule the night; who have granted to us sinners at this present hour to come before Your presence with confession, and to offer to You our evening sacrifice of praise: O Lord, who loves mankind, let our prayer arise before You as incense and accept it as a sweet fragrance; and grant that we may pass the present evening and coming night in peace. Fill us with the armor of light. Deliver us from the terror of the night, and from everything that moves in the darkness; and grant that the sleep, which You have appointed for the response of our weakness, may be free from every imagination of the Devil.

Let's look carefully at the end of each day - reviewing what has happened, giving thanks for the good that we have experienced and asking God for peaceful rest, but also – if needed – redirecting our actions in the ways that could make a difference as we move ahead.

2) LET'S REDIRECT OUR SMALL INTENTIONS: When I was homebound this summer while recovering from COVID, I sat under a large butterfly bush in my backyard. My wife suggested that in my "spare" time it would be useful for me to "deadhead" the faded and dried blooms, pinching or cutting them off, just above the first set of full, healthy leaves. This space effort allowed for a tremendous new crop of blooms to develop and grow.

The wide range of care needed to maintain a garden or flowers can be applied to our spiritual lives. We need to remove the faded and useless activities which take up our time (I realized recently that I'm using my cell phone in various ways for over 5 hours a day!). But the soil of our hearts also needs to be maintained by proper nourishment and the plants need care, as well as water and the availability of the sun. What are the small, daily sources of nourishment that we provide our inner and physical lives?

None of these things are overwhelming on their own, but they take intentional and daily activity, and sometimes gradual, but consistent changes in behavior.

3) LET'S REDIRECT OUR ATTENTION: The NASA scientists are worried about asteroids that may be heading towards the earth over the next years, decades, and even centuries and they can fairly accurately predict – based on scientific methods – their paths.

As part of today's Sermon our church school children will be planting paper white narcissus bulbs during their class. We look forward them coming to bloom in time for our Christmas floral decorations.

In our lives, however, we're of God's words will bloom years, or perhaps we'll never. Let's consider the movement ourselves for whenever the come.

CONCLUSION: The human or destroy. But whether it's an intentions, sometimes a the difference.

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never quite sure when the seeds within us – it make take days, quite see it fully in our lifetime. and path of our lives, preparing opportunities and challenges will

tendency often is either to avoid oncoming asteroid or human simple redirection can make all of

Note: Here's a link for more information on NASA's "Double Asteroid Redirection Test" –

<https://www.npr.org/2022/09/26/1124340144/nasa-dart-shove-asteroid-first-test-planetary-defense>