



**Orthodox Mission of the
Entrance of the Theotokos
into the Temple**

**306 W. Main Street
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***Thorns and Thistles*
October 31, 2021**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

A Sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell along the path, and was trodden under foot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns grew with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold." As he said this, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Luke 8:5-8

The parable of the Sower and the Seed in St. Luke's Gospel has been preserved with a great deal of more detail and interpretation than in its counterpart in St. Matthew's Gospel. St. Luke recounts our Lord's parable with an emphasis on the dangers that we face in our acceptance of the Life-Giving Word of God. As St. Matthew recounted this parable Jesus concluded it with a strong word of encouragement: Even though it may seem as if the seed cannot and will not take root, nevertheless, it will sprout forth with a harvest of a hundred-fold! St. Luke, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of care in our reception of that Word, lest we allow the thorns and thistles to choke it out from taking root within us. In his commentary on this parable, St. Theophan draws an analogy between the dangers of the thorns and thistles and that of a man who is infected with carbon monoxide poisoning. One who is out of his mind due to CO₂ poisoning, cannot discern the truth, poisoned as he is by the influence of the hurtful gas. In such a way, the thistles that prevent the seed of the Divine Word of God from growing within us poison us as well. St. Theophan mentions "false teaching" and "the cares of the world" as primary dangers.

“False teaching” is all around us. The public media, television, movies, and most especially the Internet are purveyors of false teaching. So much of what we see or hear from those sources inspire us to put our attention on things or issues other than God. We have become the kind of people that were horrifyingly described in the novel “Brave New World,” a people that are entirely consumed by their own consumption, driven by greed and poisoned by the hypersexual culture all around us. So very much of the media pulls us away with the false teaching that everything other than God is of supreme importance.

The “cares of the world” are also mentioned by St. Theophan as poisonous to our reception of the Word. Certainly, that is easy to understand, is it not? We are once again consumed by the desire to pursue our own comfort, or to see to the comfort of our families. We pursue sports and entertainments, but stay home from church, many times giving only a passing consideration to our Lord’s call to follow Him, not just on a Sunday morning, but every day, every moment of our lives.

How do we overcome the danger of these thistles and weeds? St. Theophan says, we should put them out of our mind: “Do not listen to these ravings or read them; and, when they are unintentionally heard or read, throw them out of your head ... and they will scatter like smoke.”

The parable of the Sower and the Seed was indeed a parable of encouragement as Jesus told it to His disciples; in spite of the dangers, the Word will take root, and blossom forth a hundredfold. But St. Luke would have us hear the warning as well. Beware the danger of false teachers and worldly cares; they can pull us away from the Word taking root in our hearts. Let us look to Christ, Brothers and Sisters, and beseech Him to send us the Grace of the Holy Spirit, so that we turn a deaf ear to the false teachings that come to us through the Internet and other media and let us put aside our desires and cares to receive that which alone can fulfill our most ardent desires: the Word of God, the promise of eternal salvation through the forgiveness of sins!

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