



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

306 W. Main Street Emmitsburg,
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Good Soil
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Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

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 8:8)

The news during the past several weeks has been horrific. The war in Ukraine rages on with people on every side getting killed, blown up, displaced. Innocent young people are gunned down at a music festival by terrorists, and in response their government invades and kills more innocent people in Gaza. The body count is now up to 18 in Maine where a disturbed gunman only a day ago slaughters people, mostly young people, for no reason. "When will it end," we ask. "Where is God," we wonder. "How can He permit so many innocent people to suffer when they have just been going about their lives?"

There is a whole branch of theology called "theodicy" which attempts to explain how these realities can exist in light of faith that proclaims that God is in control and that He is merciful. Complicated explanations are unnecessary. We are Orthodox Christians, and the explanation is

clear, simple and based on the revelation of Holy Scripture and the explanation of the Holy Fathers of old. The explanation is this: God does not cause suffering; He does not inflict pain and death on anyone at any time. But He permits it. He permits it until He comes again to raise the dead and to bring in the glory of His Kingdom. He permits it as an aid, a cure, for our own self-centeredness and sin; He permits it to teach us that we need Him, and that without Him, life in this fallen world is little better than hell.

Today in our Gospel lesson we heard St. Luke's account of our Lord's familiar parable of the Sower and the Seed. A man goes out to sow seed, scattering it here and there. Some falls on rock, some on dry ground, some in cracks or among the thorns. But some falls on good soil and thrives. It bears fruit a hundred fold, which means 100 times 100 percent. It is truly remarkable, and in its original simple version as Jesus would have told it, it was meant as a clear word of encouragement and support for those like the 12 and 70 who went out preach that their work would not be in vain. Although it sometimes looks like our work in the Church as His disciples is pointless as the world slips away deeper into sin and violence, nevertheless it is not. God's revelation through Jesus Christ is that He continues to bless and to make the Word prosper.

But only if it is received by those who are ready to hear it and respond. The seed only thrives in good soil – soil that has been worked and treated and made ready to receive it. This is why God permits suffering in this world – to help us turn ourselves away from our entertainments and accomplishments and storehouses of wealth – to see our need for Him. This is why it is nearly impossible for someone who is consumed by the acquisition of wealth to enter the Kingdom. To have everything apart from God is to have nothing. But God in His wisdom wants us to know that, and He therefore allows us to experience our need for Him. To be human is to experience and to see all manner of suffering, to witness all manner of dying, and to see violence, all manner of disease and all manner of injustice.

God permits is It is permitted so that we understand that without Him, without God, we are nothing, and that there is no hope for us. This is why so many of the Holy Fathers tells us that suffering, strange though it is to say, is often a blessing. It helps us to see clearly our need for the One Who will someday make all things new, and to live in the meantime as did He, to bring new life, hope and comfort to those who suffer until He comes again.

To Him be all honor and glory forever! Amen.

Fr. Elias

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