

# Lesson 1:

## What is a parable?

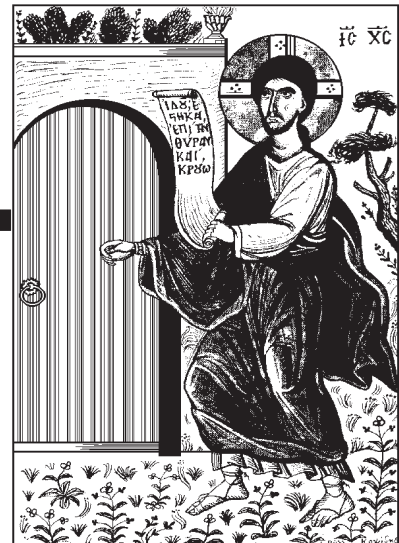
In the next few days we will explore several of the parables that our Lord used to teach us about the Kingdom of God. We will examine how each parable can change us, and help us to grow in our faith. But today, let us discover what a parable is, and why Jesus used them to teach many truths about God, the Kingdom, the Church, and His love for us.



### Jesus Teaches

A parable is a specific type of story that has two meanings. One meaning is the surface meaning; the plot of the story. It is what's really happening to the characters. The second meaning is a deeper, and often spiritual meaning. The spiritual meaning can be found if we understand the symbolic meanings of certain aspects of the story. If we are not careful and pay very close attention, we may miss the second meaning of the story altogether.

A parable contains symbols. A symbol is like a word map. The Cross as a symbol, is a



good example of this concept. When we think of the Cross, our mind begins to pull together a series of stories, ideas, memories, and feelings. All of our memories of Jesus being crucified, buried and resurrected come flooding through our mind. One thought leads to another, and another, and so on. Like a road map, the symbol directs our thoughts. We are able to bring to mind as much detail as we know, and have time to think about. In the parables, everyday items and situations are symbols for heavenly things.

A parable is also a little like a riddle. A riddle is a word puzzle. It sets our mind to work out the answer to a set of clues. The answer is often funny or surprising.

Riddles are not readily understood by all people. A person needs to have attained some knowledge of the subject of the riddle in order to analyze the clues, and understand the answer. In the case of the parables, the "answer" is intended to lead our mind, our heart and our passions (i.e.: our spirit) into the Kingdom of God.

**"Parables challenge the hearer and call for faith to perceive the mysteries of the Kingdom."**

Here is what the Orthodox Study Bible says regarding the parables and their use by our Lord: "Parables challenge the hearer and call for faith to perceive the mysteries of the Kingdom." This means that we have to use our heart more than our mind to understand the good news of the parables. Parables lift our spirit so that we desire above all else to follow our Lord's teaching. And we are led by the Holy Spirit to use our whole being, body and spirit to "see with spiritual eyes, and hear with spiritual ears" and to put that which we have heard and seen into action.

## Why parables?

Here is Jesus' own explanation of why He taught the multitudes using parables, as recorded by St. Matthew:

**Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to him who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which says:**

**"You shall indeed hear but never understand, and you shall indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes have closed, lest they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn for me to heal them."**

Isaiah 6:9-10



## Jesus Teaches

Parables have been around for a long time! Jesus was not the first one to use parables to teach important lessons to His followers. The Jews and other ancient peoples used parables to teach and explain important truths. It was a method of teaching that was familiar to the people. This is why Jesus chose to use parables to teach the people about the Kingdom of Heaven, God, and Himself. In His parables, He used settings and themes that were common to everyday life. Activities like farming, baking bread, praying in the temple, or the marriage feast.

Jesus knew that teaching in this way was easy for anyone who wanted to learn to understand. If their hearts and minds were open to the teaching, they could understand, but if they had hard and closed hearts, they could hear His words, but not understand anything beyond the plot of the story. Understanding God's plan through the parables was a choice for the hearer. It marked a new beginning for some, and remaining in spiritual darkness for others. In this way, Jesus did not force anyone to hear and act on His words, instead, He invited everyone!

The disciples came to Jesus after he had taught the people using the parable of the Sower and the seed. They asked him why he spoke to them using parables. He explains that the disciples were given understanding of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven because they had already made their choice to follow him. They had repented, and believed; they

had dropped everything and followed Jesus. This faith allowed them to hear with spiritual ears and see with spiritual eyes. They were spiritually mature enough to understand the true message of the parable. The people, who as a group were not all the same. Some were ready to hear, while others were not. This is why Jesus says they were not given understanding of the mysteries of the kingdom until they turned to God to be healed. Jesus is not withholding the truth from anyone; rather He freely gives it to all. But only those with faith can truly perceive the Kingdom of God.

Another reason why Jesus taught using parables was to protect His spiritual message from distortion. By clothing the message in a story, He could preserve the purity of the teaching throughout the ages. A list of facts, or a set of laws could be distorted, or changed through time. A story with a familiar situation remains unchanged within the human memory.



## Heart Check

### Activity time!

**Play the Telephone game to discover how messages are transmitted from person to person. Then answer the following questions.**

1. Which message came through with the least changes?
2. Which message was the most changed?
3. It was expected that the story version would survive better than the list of rules. What does this teach us about how Jesus' parable message was preserved?

## Preparing the Soil

When we start a garden, we usually begin by setting aside a place for our garden. A place where the new plants will thrive. Next we begin digging in the area in which we intend to plant. Slowly working the soil, breaking up clumps, throwing out the rocks, removing roots from grass or weeds that we find, and adding organic matter to fertilize it. This part of the process takes time, and a lot of effort, but it is the only way to ensure that the seeds we plant will have a chance to grow healthy and strong.

Our prayer life is the same. We begin by setting aside some time each day for prayer. We should pick a time that we will have few, or better no distractions. And we begin. In prayer, we will start by working the soil of our heart, softening the hard parts, removing obstacles that keep us from loving our neighbor, and adding the sacraments of repentance, confession, and forgiveness. Soon, our hearts, like that soil will be ready for seed, and it will be a fit place for the Holy Spirit to dwell and grow in us.

**Here is your first “Yeah Boy” challenge of the week: Make a plan to set aside 10 minutes each day to pray. It can be anytime that you can regularly be free from distraction. Most of the time this is in the morning, when you wake, or just before bedtime. What time is best for you?**



## Lesson 2:

# The Sower & the seed

What kind of soil are you?

Here is the parable of the Sower and the seed as recorded by St. Matthew:

“Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: “Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

Here is Jesus’ explanation of the parable of the Sower and the seed as recorded by St. Luke:

“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have not root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with



cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. But 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.”



## Jesus Teaches

After Jesus tells the people the parable, he explains its meaning to His Disciples. He tells them that He is the sower and the seed is the word of God. All of the types of soil are like all of us. When we are hard hearted, or not growing in our faith, or more interested in having fun, then we are like the soil that doesn’t grow good crops! When we turn our life to God, pray, and love one another, then we grow! We will find that we want to learn more about our faith, and that we want to pray more. Now our life is like the soil that grew many good crops.



## Heart Check

Show how our hearts can be like the 4 different soil types mentioned in the parable.

## The Wayside

When are we like the wayside? Draw a picture showing a time when your heart was like the hard ground.

I can soften my heart and change it into good soil by \_\_\_\_\_

## Thorny Soil

When are we choked by thorns? Draw a picture showing a time when your heart was being choked by thorns.

I can grow stronger than the thorns in the world by \_\_\_\_\_

## The Rocky Soil

When are we like the rocky soil? Draw a picture showing a time when your spiritual roots were

I can grow spiritual roots that will help me stand up to temptations by: \_\_\_\_\_

## Good Soil

When are we like the good soil? Draw a picture showing a time when your heart was like the good ground.

When I have a soft heart I can grow spiritual fruit by \_\_\_\_\_



## Heart Check

**Make a soil wheel. A soil wheel is a fun way to remember the parable of the Sower and the Seed. Follow the directions below to assemble your soil wheel.**

### Directions

Cut out each of the two circles on the two pages handed to you by your counselor. Carefully cut out the window in the smaller circle by first making a fold in the center of the square and then clip through the fold. Then you can cut out the square. Place the smaller circle on top of the larger circle, making sure to align the centers. Push a brass fastener through the two circles at the center, and bend the two halves of the fastener to secure. Write the type of soil described in the window on the outer edge of the larger circle above the window. The types of soil are: **The Wayside, The Rocky Soil, The Thorny Soil, The Good Soil**

## Sowing Good Seeds

One of the ways that we can sow good seeds in our own life is to get into the habit of reading the Bible every day. The Bible is a big collection of books, some of which are challenging to read. The Church has several plans (called a lectionary) for reading it in small bites each day.

Another good seed to plant in our heart is to pray either morning or evening prayers each day. The Orthodox Study Bible has an order for morning and evening prayer, as well as a lectionary in it.

**Here is your “Yeah Boy!” challenge for today: make a plan to read the daily Bible reading each day for the rest of the summer!!**

·THE SOWER OF GOOD SEEDS·



# Lesson 3:

## The Wheat & the Tares

### Two of a Kind?

Here is the parable of the Wheat and the Tares as recorded by St. Matthew:

Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. 'Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."

Jesus explains the parable of the Wheat and the Tares. As recorded by St. Matthew:

He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawless-

ness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire.

There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"



## Jesus Teaches

Jesus explains that the field is our heart. He has planted good seed there. Our parents, Godparents, family, Sunday school teachers, and parish Priest all work to nurture the tender plants that have sprouted from the seeds Jesus planted. We have a job to do, too. We need to keep a watch over our hearts for tares! Real tares are weeds that look a lot like wheat plants when they are young. But when the tares grow up, they can take up so much room, water, and nourishment that they choke out the good wheat plants. Tares that grow in our hearts are passions such as anger or jealousy. They are actions like disobedience, or laziness. They are thoughts such as selfishness, or unforgiveness.



When we are angry, selfish, unforgiving, or disobedient, we are allowing the tares to take over our heart! And our behavior can have an effect on those around us. If we are angry, for example, our actions and words can draw others into that same angry mood, or worse, some innocent bystander may be injured. Selfishness deprives us of building true friendships. It is almost impossible to get to know someone who always thinks of himself first. Being unforgiving can lead others into sin! Refusing to forgive someone who is repentant, and is trying to apologize, may lead that person out of repentance and back into anger! Disobedience often leads to injury--maybe not the first time, and maybe not the first person to disregard the rule, but sooner or later someone gets hurt. Disobedience by one person, is usually followed by two, then three, and so on. Once someone disobeys a rule, others are lead into disobedience. If we choose this way, we are turning away from God, and toward the evil one, because we are allowing the bad seeds that the evil one sows to sprout and bear bad fruit.

The good news is that God is patient with us. He gives us a whole lifetime to grow wheat in our hearts, and get rid of the tares.. While we are still growing, we learn to control our anger, selfishness, disobedience, and we learn to replace them with peace, love, patience, joy, kindness, and forgiveness. Soon, the wheat in our hearts is very strong, and the tares are being choked out!

In fact, the wheat that grows in our hearts affects those around us, just as the tares had done. Any time we are patient, forgiving, loving, or kind toward someone else,

that is the wheat in our hearts bursting through. We are bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives. By these actions, we can greatly influence others--even the children of the wicked one! This is why, in the story of the wheat and the tares, Jesus tells the servants not to pull up the tares (who are children of the evil one, and have a heart full of tares). Leave them until the harvest, because by that time, they may become wheat.



## Heart Check

**Answer the following questions with your Christian Ed group.**

1. Who are the children of God? How do you know?
2. Who are the children of the evil one? How do you know?
3. Who sows good seed? Where does He sow it?
4. Who sows bad seed? Where does he sow it?
5. How do you get rid of bad seed?
6. How do you make the good seed grow?
7. How can the children of God influence the children of the evil one?
8. In what ways is God patient with us?

## Make a bookmark.

Choose one of the designs to glue on to the wooden bookmark. Color or decorate the bookmark, as you wish. Don't forget to write your name and cabin # on the back!

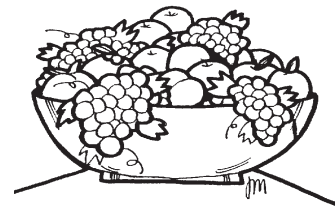




# Tending our field

Once the good seeds of praying and reading scripture are planted in our hearts, we will still need to be watchful, so that the devil will not sow tares while we are unaware. An unguarded heart is open to being sown with tares such as pride, greed, envy, anger, confusion, doubt, and laziness. St. Paul says that we should pray without ceasing. This is a great way to be watchful, because tares can't be sown in a heart that is praying! The Jesus Prayer is a great way to learn to pray always. You can learn to say it in the rhythm of your breathing. You can say it while counting the knots on your prayer rope. Another way to pray always, is to memorize small prayers, hymns or psalms. Then at any time you can pray them from memory! You can pray these prayers on behalf of others, for your personal needs, or simply to the Glory of God!

## The Jesus Prayer *Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner.*



Psalm 1 summarizes the parables of the Sower and the Seed, and the Wheat and the Tares. This psalm is quite familiar to us, because we hear it chanted at Great Vespers each week. Meditation on the psalms is an excellent way to relieve stress, dispel fear, avoid temptation, and to draw closer to God.

***This is your “Yeah Boy!” challenge of the day: Make a plan to memorize the Jesus prayer, and these six verses with your Christian Ed group and with your cabin during the rest of the week. Then, when times are tough, call these prayers to mind, and be watchful!***

### Psalms 1:1-6

1. Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
2. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night.
3. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.
4. The ungodly are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind drives away.
5. Therefore the ungodly shall 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 ungodly shall perish.

# Lesson 4:

## The Mustard Seed & The Leaven

How big is your faith?

Here is the parable of The Mustard seed:

Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

Here is the parable of The Leaven:

Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."

**COOL  
FACT**

Some sources say that the Mustard plant in Palestine can grow to a height of 10 feet and is a favorite roosting place for small birds.



## Jesus Teaches

Did you ever hear the phrase "good things come in small packages"? The phrase means that we should not judge the worth of something by its size and shape. For example, would you rather have a large box containing sand, or a small one containing a hundred dollars? In today's parables, Jesus teaches about the spread of Christianity, and how it works inside our hearts to change us, and make us like Him.

The Mustard seed is very small, but from it grows a very large plant. In Palestine, it can grow to 10 feet tall, and birds make their nest in it. Christianity started out very small, too. It was just a small group of people in a small country. They followed the teachings of a carpenter's son—not a famous philosopher or rabbi. But today, every continent on earth is home to Christianity, and Jesus' name is known far and wide, while some of the philosophers and rabbis that were so famous, are forgotten today. This is the power of God!

The Mustard seed is also like the miracle of the Resurrection. A seed is like the tomb. We plant seeds in the ground, just like we bury the dead. The seed lays in the ground for a time, dead to our eyes. One day, it springs up out of the ground-alive! Just like Jesus was alive after being in the tomb for three days. The seed, like the teachings of Jesus starts out small, but when it dies, and is buried, the plant that grows and bears fruit is huge! And today, millions of people have heard of Jesus. The amount of fruit that His one seed has borne is tremendous, and there is much, much more fruit to come. Jesus' plant is the Orthodox faith, and it will continue to grow and flourish until He comes again.

The birds that take refuge in the mustard plant are like all of the people in the Churches around the world. They find their rest, comfort and nourishment in the branches of the mustard plant. In the same way, we find rest, comfort, and nourishment within our Mother, the Church.

## The Leaven

The second parable, that of the leaven, explains how the Gospel message works to change us from inside out. In the parable, it is Jesus who places the leaven into the human heart. It is He who can transform the human soul! The leaven inside of us is the Holy Spirit. In the parable, the flour is our heart. When the Saints speak of the heart, they are not talking about the great pump that

circulates our blood. Instead they are talking about the part of us that is deep inside of us wherein the Holy Spirit dwells. This is our spirit, and it is not in any one place in our body, but is everywhere within it. Our earthly body is both flesh and spirit. And we cannot separate the two. In heaven, we will have a body just like the one that Jesus had after his resurrection! We will not be like the angels which are only spirit.



In the parable of the leaven, there are three measures of flour which will make up the dough. Our heart is governed by three powers: the appetite, the passions, and the intellect. The appetite of our heart is what makes us do the things we do; it governs our choices. The passion of our heart is what makes us feel the things we do; it governs the way we relate to ourselves, others, and God. The intellect is what makes us think the things that we do, but it is a part of our spirit, and not our brain, which is part of our body. The intellect governs our thoughts.

Just as the flour that makes a good dough must be fresh and clean, our hearts must be kept clean and pure for the Holy Spirit, because He is God. The only way to keep our hearts clean and pure is to practice the three spiritual exercises that Jesus taught us: fasting, prayer, and giving alms. When we fast from certain foods as well as the amount, with our bodies, our appetite for things that are not good for us will become less. When we pray, we learn to control our mind-to keep it focused on God. Prayer strengthens the mind to avoid thoughts, doubts and

worries that are unhealthy for us. The more we pray, the better able to withstand these temptations and assaults by the evil one. When we give alms, (which can be money, items, or our time) to those who need us, we learn to love our neighbor, and desire his well being. We find that our selfish desire for our own comfort, will diminish. Jesus taught us to do all three of these things together, not just one, apart from the others. That is why sometimes when we fast, we become hungrier for the foods we have given up. But, if we pray and give alms along with the fasting, we will find that it all works together for our good. The more we practice these exercises, the healthier our heart becomes. And like the leaven, the more Holy Spirit will grow inside of us. There is no limit to how much the Holy Spirit can grow in our hearts.



## Heart Check

**Answer the following questions with your Christian Ed group.**

1. How does the mustard seed tell the story of Jesus' resurrection?
2. How does the story of the mustard seed tell of the spread of Christianity?
3. What is so amazing about how and where Christianity started?
4. How is the mustard plant like the Church?
5. In the parable of the Leaven, who is it that places leaven in the human heart?
6. Who is it that dwells in the human heart?

7. What are the three powers of the human heart?

8. How do fasting, prayer, and alms giving change us from inside out?

## Make a cross necklace or wall hanging.

Color your cross anyway you like. When you are finished, glue some mustard seeds in the center, to remind you how small they are! Write a prayer or Bible verse on your cross. Don't forget to write your name and cabin # on the back!

## Nurturing the Crop

Now you know why we fast, pray, and give alms. We do these things first of all because Jesus teaches us to do them. He shows us how to give alms (Matt 6:1-4), how to pray (Matt 6:5-15), and how to fast (Matt 6:16-18), and he teaches that these three things are directly related to our uprightness to God. These are spiritual exercises, or medicines for our souls and our bodies. When we faithfully practice fasting, prayer and the giving of alms, we are being healed. They are a gift from God to us!

**Here is your Yeah Boy! challenge for today. Make a plan to joyfully keep the weekly fasts that the Church prescribes by fasting, praying and giving of yourself to those who need you. Make a list of ways you can accomplish this goal!**

# Lesson 5: The Treasure, The Pearl of Great Price & The Net

Where is your treasure?



Here are the parables of the Treasure buried in the field, The Pearl of great price, and The Net as recorded by St. Matthew:

**Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.**

**Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.**

**Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.**



## Jesus Teaches

Most of the time, Jesus used parables to teach the great multitudes that came to hear him speak. We learned on Monday why He used parables to teach them. Today, we will explore three parables that Jesus used to teach His disciples in a private discussion. The disciples had come to Jesus after He had sent the multitudes away. They asked Him to explain the parable He told about the Wheat and the Tares. Jesus added the three parables of The Treasure hidden in the field, The Pearl of great price, and The Net, to His discussion with them.

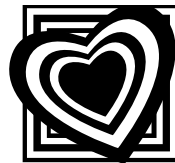
Jesus knew the hearts of His disciples. He knew they were eager to learn everything that He taught them. He was getting them ready to take over the job of teaching people about God, and His Kingdom. He knew they were mature spiritually, and that they could understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, as well as the hard lessons about the day of Judgement. That is why He chose to tell them these three parables.

The first two parables are about finding, appreciating, and holding on to the Kingdom of God. Our Orthodox Faith is the Treasure buried in the field and the Pearl of great price. Some of the Fathers taught that these two parables describe the way we come to the Faith, and make it our own. They said that the parable of the Treasure describes those of us who have been Orthodox our whole lives. We know our Faith, because we have learned it from our families, and other Orthodox. When we discover the treasure for ourselves, we immediately do whatever it takes to keep the treasure and pass it on. Those of us who converted to Orthodoxy were looking for the Truth, and that is how we found the Faith, the Pearl of great price. And when we found it, we immediately did whatever it took to obtain it. So, both parables describe a personal journey to learn and obtain the Faith. It is a picture of the Body of Christ. It is the Orthodox Church!

In the parable of The Net, we learn about the day of Judgement, when Jesus will return. In the parable, the net is the Word of God that is preached all over the world. The sea in the parable represents the world. The net is cast out into the sea and brings up fish of all kinds. Good and bad. Just like the real world. The Word is preached everywhere, and all kinds of people hear it. Some people hear it, and listen attentively with spiritual ears. They believe what they hear, and they act on it! They change their life in order to grow closer to God everyday. They are trying to truly live the Faith. Other people hear the same Word, but they don't listen very well with spiritual ears. They believe what they hear, but go on living their life as before, they make no change in their lives, they don't make an effort to grow closer to God. They are just going through the motions of living the Faith; living it as it suits them.

St. Gregory Palamas teaches us that we

don't have to be perfect to be counted as good fish, but we do have to be trying to grow closer to God. St. John Chrysostom teaches that the good fish are those who believed, and worked each day to live the Faith. The bad fish are those who believed, but never tried to live the Faith. The parable of The Net is a hard teaching. It is what will happen. One day Jesus will return, and He will bring His angels with Him. They will be sent out to separate those who will live in the Kingdom with God forever (the good fish), and those who will be cast into the fiery furnace (the bad fish).



## Heart Check

**Answer the following questions with your Christian Ed group.**

1. How do the parables of the Treasure and the Pearl teach about our individual journey. How do they teach about our life in the Body of Christ?
2. Why did Jesus only teach these parables to His disciples?
3. What does the net represent? What does the sea represent?
4. What is the difference between a good fish and a bad fish?
5. What does St. Gregory Palamas say about being good fish?
6. What does it mean to "go through the motions of living the Faith"?
7. How is the parable of the Net a "wake-up call" to us? How is it hopeful?

**Fold a treasure box. Cut out the treasure box and fold the sides and lid to form a box.**

# Bearing Good Fruit

Our garden is planted, and up are sprouting the seedlings of renewed faith. We have had a week of prayer, study, worship, communion, and fellowship. All of these have helped us to prepare our hearts to grow in the Faith! Now it is time to go back into our homes, parishes, and communities.

St. Maximos, the Confessor said that “Theology without action (praxis) is the theology of demons.” He means that just learning about the Faith is not good enough, we have to **LIVE** it! This means that we really do pray each day. That we really do read our Bible each day. That we really do try to avoid temptations, prayerfully, with God’s help. That we really do keep the fasts as well as the feasts during the year. And yes, that we really do give of ourselves to others, especially those who need our help.

Orthodoxy teaches that we are made in the image and likeness of God. We all possess the

image, a small seed of God, because God, Himself gave it to us, it is always there, no matter how far we stray from the Truth. The likeness is up to us. It is our striving to live the life, and become through grace true sons and daughters of the Most High. Some of the Fathers call it perfection, others,

theosis, but whatever the name, this is the Holy work to which we have been called. The more we work in the garden of our hearts, the more abundant will be the harvest. And the more we will resemble the seed (image), which is Christ.

**“Theology without action (praxis) is the theology of demons.”**

St. Maximos, the Confessor

**Here is your last “Yeah Boy!” challenge for the week. Make a plan to get involved at Church--and stay involved! Give back to your parish family some of what you have learned this week. Make a list of ways you can accomplish this goal.**

