

The Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sunday, July 16, 2017

Gospel - Matthew 13:1-23

On that day, Jesus went out of the house
and sat down by the sea.
Such large crowds gathered around him
that he got into a boat and sat down,
and the whole crowd stood along the shore.
And he spoke to them at length in parables, saying:
"A sower went out to sow.

And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path,
and birds came and ate it up.
Some fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil.
It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep,
and when the sun rose it was scorched,
and it withered for lack of roots.
Some seed fell among thorns,
and the thorns grew up and choked it.
But some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit,
a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold.
Whoever has ears ought to hear."

The disciples approached him and said,
"Why do you speak to them in parables?"
He said to them in reply,
"Because knowledge of the mysteries
of the kingdom of heaven
has been granted to you,
but to them it has not been granted.
To anyone who has,
more will be given and he will grow rich;
from anyone who has not,
even what he has will be taken away.
This is why I speak to them in parables, because
*they look but do not see
and hear but do not listen or understand.*
Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in them, which says:
*You shall indeed hear but not understand,
you shall indeed look but never see.
Gross is the heart of this people,*

*they will hardly hear with their ears,
they have closed their eyes,
lest they see with their eyes
and hear with their ears
and understand with their hearts and be converted,
and I heal them.*

"But blessed are your eyes, because they see,
and your ears, because they hear.
Amen, I say to you,
many prophets and righteous people
longed to see what you see but did not see it,
and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

"Hear then the parable of the sower.
The seed sown on the path is the one
who hears the word of the kingdom
without understanding it,
and the evil one comes and steals away
what was sown in his heart.
The seed sown on rocky ground
is the one who hears the word
and receives it at once with joy.
But he has no root and lasts only for a time.
When some tribulation or persecution comes
because of the word,
he immediately falls away.
The seed sown among thorns
is the one who hears the word,
but then worldly anxiety and the lure of riches
choke the word
and it bears no fruit.
But the seed sown on rich soil
is the one who hears the word and understands it,
who indeed bears fruit
and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold

First Reading - Isaiah 55:10-11

Thus says the LORD:
Just as from the heavens
the rain and snow come down
and do not return there
till they have watered the earth,
making it fertile and fruitful,
giving seed to the one who sows

and bread to the one who eats,
so shall my word be
that goes forth from my mouth;
my word shall not return to me void,
but shall do my will,
achieving the end for which I sent it.

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Open the Eyes of My Heart Lord

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord
 Open the eyes of my heart
 I want to see You
 I want to see You

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord
 Open the eyes of my heart
 I want to see You
 I want to see You

To see You high and lifted up
 Shinin' in the light of Your glory
 Pour out Your power and love
 As we sing holy, holy, holy

Paul Baloche, Arr. By Brian Fife, Text and music © 1997



Psalm 65

*The seed that falls on good ground
 will yield a fruitful harvest.*

You have visited the land and watered it;
 greatly have you enriched it.
 God's watercourses are filled; you have prepared the grain.

Thus have you prepared the land:
 drenching its furrows, breaking up its clods,
 Softening it with showers, blessing its yield.

You have crowned the year with your bounty,
 and your paths overflow with a rich harvest;
 The untilled meadows overflow with it,
 and rejoicing clothes the hills.

The fields are garmented with flocks
 and the valleys blanketed with grain.
 They shout and sing for joy.

“Ground Rules” for Small Group Faith Sharing

Maintain confidentiality – “Whatever happens in small group stays in small group.”

Judgment-free zone – You don’t have to agree with everyone, but you have to have respect for everyone.

No “shut downs” or “put downs” – See Christ in one another, BE Christ to one another.

Don’t be a “discussion hog” – Be sure that everyone that wants to gets a chance to share.

Leave room for the Spirit – Silence is OK! Not everyone has to share.

Practice active listening – Avoid interrupting, fidgeting, criticizing, lecturing, or thinking of what you’re going to say while another person is speaking.

Questions are a guide - You do not have to answer all of them or go in order.

Be open – God is doing amazing things!

Questions for Reflection on the Gospel

1. What word, image, or phrase stands out to you from the Gospel?
2. What do the different types of soil in the Gospel represent?
3. What kind of “soil” are you? What is it in you that limits God’s Word bearing fruit in your life? What prevents you from being “good” soil?
4. How can you cultivate your mind, spirit, and whole being to receive the Word, as seed falling on fertile ground?
5. How do recognize when God’s Word takes root in your life? What are the fruits the Word has yielded in your own life? In the world?
6. In the first reading, Isaiah describes God’s Word as precipitation. What imagery would you use to describe God’s Word in your life?
7. According to Pope Francis, what do we do about receiving the “seed” if we know our soil or field is a place filled with stones and thorns?

Words from our Holy Father

A field is a place for sowing seeds. ... When we accept the word of God, then we are the Field of Faith! Please, let Christ and his word enter your life; let the seed of the Word of God enter, let it blossom, and let it grow. God will take care of everything, but let him work in you and bring about this growth.

... In silence, let us all look into our hearts and each one of us tell Jesus that we want to receive the seed of his Word. Say to him: Jesus, look upon the stones, the thorns, and the weeds that I have, but look also upon this small piece of ground that I offer to you so that the seed may enter my heart. In silence, let us allow the seed of Jesus to enter our hearts. ... Allow it to grow, and God will nurture it.

-Pope Francis, Prayer Vigil with Young People, #1,
 Rio de Janeiro, July 27 2013

Petitions

Our response: “Word of God, dwell in us.”

Closing Prayer

God, living Word who came to dwell among your people, open us to hear you Word. May our encounter with you in the Word be food for our souls. Plant your Word deep in our being that we might be encouraged, instructed, and formed to be your people. You have revealed yourself to us in the Word. Let us deepen our knowing that the Word might become a seed planted in fertile soil, yielding a rich and abundant harvest in us - food for a hungry world. Amen.