

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Lectionary: 103

Reading 1 [IS 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.

Responsorial Psalm [PS 65:10, 11, 12-13, 14](#) - R. (Lk 8:8) The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest.

Reading 2 [ROM 8:18-23](#)

Brothers and sisters: I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us. For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God; for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now; and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

Gospel [MT 13:1-9](#)

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."

Today's readings remind us that the soul, like soil, must be good if we expect good things to grow from it.

In today's First Reading we're taught that God's word comes down like the rain to nourish the earth and help good things grow. We also know from the Gospel of John that, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

Isaiah reminds us today that if God's Word, Christ in our lives, have been less than effective / fulfilled, it isn't the Lord's fault; it's ours, collectively and individually. As Chesterton said, "The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried."

In today's Second Reading Paul reminds us that it was original sin and its consequences that messed up the designs of creation itself by diverting it from its purpose. Sin can have no other primary result than to frustrate God's will. But, he also reminds us that the Word, that is the Son of God, was made incarnate and came among us to give us what we need to overcome this slavery to sin that corrupts and disfigures all of creation, to show us how to follow God's plan for a glorious harvest once again and help creation achieve its purpose.

In today's Gospel the Lord explains the obstacles to the Word of God bearing good fruit. In this parable he invites us to see the difference between hearing something and listening, between looking at something and seeing it. Just as farmers till the soil we have to be active in letting the Word of God bear fruit in our life by cultivating the soil of our soul.

Parables present something from daily life but are also doorways to other spiritual and divine "knowledge of the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven." It's not enough to look at the door: it must be opened to discover what lies beyond. That requires an effort in faith to listen and to see, an effort to open our hearts and open that door into the greater world Our Lord wants to reveal to us. When we see the Word

of God in this way, we see something from which we can draw profound truths regarding ourselves, our world, and Our Lord, not just once, but constantly.

Chapter 8 of St Paul's Letter to the Romans he writes: "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us." What God has in store for those who follow him faithfully, is indescribably greater and longer-lasting than the worst possible sufferings of this life! As long as we are united to God's grace, as long as we are striving to live in friendship with Christ through prayer, the sacraments, and the pursuit of virtue, there is absolutely nothing in this world that should weaken our confidence in God. His message could really be summed up in two words: limitless hope.

This is clearly a message of hope for communities which may at times be discouraged by the meagre results of their evangelization efforts. Although original and personal sin have wreaked havoc in creation and has frustrated the will of God for creation and for each of us individually, we are assured of the end of the story, and end that inspires our hope... "The word that goes from my mouth does not return to me empty, without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it was sent to do." As with Jesus himself, so with us today we need to be reminded that God's plans will not be forever frustrated or fail, that the Kingdom will be established. The Cross of Christ's victory ensures the end. "Listen, anyone who has ears!"

In the long run, the work of God will not be made fruitless or fail, either by threats from society or from within the Christian community. God's plan as a whole will succeed but it is up to me to be part of that plan. I personally can say No or Not yet or Yes, but... I can, like many of the people that Jesus knew, resist the radical change that conversion entails. But, the will of God is that all of you give yourselves completely to God, just as God has given himself completely for you. What matters for me as I hear this Scripture is to be aware that I, as this individual, can refuse to provide the fertile patch of soil for God's Word to take deep root.

Some of the seed falls in rich, nutritious soil. This soil is like the "one who hears and understands [the Word of God]", this is the one "who yields a harvest" of abundance. Today's readings remind us that the soul, like soil, must be good if we expect good things to grow from it.