

## Parable of the Sower

A - 15th Sunday of Ordinary Time - July 12, 2020

Let me give you a little bit of liturgical trivia.

Every three years we read through the gospels of Mathew, Mark and Luke.

John's gospel is interspersed throughout the three years.

We are presently in year "A," reading through the gospel of Matthew.

The second reading is usually taken from one of Paul's letters and contains a teaching.

The first reading is taken from the Old Testament and is based on the theme of the gospel—  
in this case—how we listen to the word of God, when it is spoken to us.

In the gospel Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea.

I heard a very interesting interpretation of this line this past week.

When we read this line we think Jesus simply stepped out of a house.

A house where there were disciples—those who had already heard and believed.

Historically this is probably true.

But it can also be interpreted spiritually;

to mean that Jesus stepped out of his home—heaven—and came to earth and began to speak.

To reveal to us the great love of the father...

to those who have not yet heard, and have not yet come to believe.

I would like you to keep this image, of Jesus stepping out of heaven, in mind, as I go through my homily.

First, great crowds came to hear him reveal to us the great love of the Father.

The first thing Jesus said, even before he started speaking was LISTEN.

In the first reading Isaiah tells us that

“Just as the rain comes down from heaven,

and does not return until it has watered the earth...bringing forth life....

my words shall come down from heaven,

and will not return until it has accomplished its purpose.

We all know that Jesus is the Word of God come down from heaven.

So if we want to hear about the great love our God has for us--we have to LISTEN.

Second, we need to shut up so we can hear what God wants to say to us.

When I was in Melfort I was teaching a confirmation class

on the different titles of the Holy Spirit.

I had gone through all my material—

however, the moms signaled from the kitchen ...

...10 more minutes before the snack is ready.

Well I didn't have 10 minutes of material,

so I sent the grade nine students into the church to reflect on the titles of the Holy Spirit

and focus on the one that spoke to them.

I kept the church darkened and absolutely quiet.

More than ½ came back saying, “That was the first time, in their whole lives,

they remember being absolutely quiet, for any length of time.

I have since reflected on that moment and thought...

how many of us never become still enough to hear God speaking to us.

Meaning how many of us really LISTEN to what God is saying to us.

We are too busy: 1) Listening to music, friends, the news, to hear God.

2) We are too busy telling God what he should, or should not be doing,  
to hear what he is saying to us.

3) We so focused and what WE want to do,  
that we are not even listening what God wants us to do.

When the disciples ask Jesus why he speaks in parables, he says,

“it is because “Seeing they do not perceive and listening they do not understand.”

They do not understand because they are not LISTENING.

If the Word of God is going to effect a change...before it returns to God...we need to listen to it.

And by listening, I mean really listening.

Listening does not just meaning hearing the words that are being spoken.

Listening means hearing the message that is being communicated, and acting on those words.

I would go so far as to say,

“If your attitude, or your actions, do not change,  
after you have listened to the Word of God,  
then you have not heard the message that is being revealed.”

Remember what Isaiah said,

“It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish what I propose.”

If nothing changes...you may have heard the words, but dismissed the meaning.

Which really means, “Not your will be done, but my will!”

When Jesus says, “Let anyone with ears listen,”

he is saying, “The parable is over, but the struggle to understand has begun.”

The struggle to understand has to begin with humility.

I say this because the parable of the sower describes different types of soil  
on which the seed is scattered...

which really describes the different ways people respond to the “Word of God.”

My bet is that when we look around at the people in our lives

we can easily categorize the people into: 1) Path people,  
2) Rocky ground people, or 3) Thorny people.

And we might even add a few of our own categories.

4) Marshy people--who get drowned out  
or 5) Sandy people--who cannot hold the word or even a thought.

And conversely we would categorize ourselves as “Good soil people.”

When we categorize everyone else a “Poor Soil” people,  
and categorize ourselves as “Good Soil” people...

well let's just say there is not a lot of humility there.

In the parable, the seed is always sown, but its ongoing life is in continual peril.

1) The evil one may immediately steal it away.

2) Or the word will be received enthusiastically,  
but it will not be pondered and acted upon  
and will not develop roots to be able to withstand trials.

3) Or the Word of God will find itself in unfavorable competition  
with the cares and wealth of the world.

None of these will produce any fruit.

However, when the word and soil come together completely and effectively,  
the result is an abundance and excellence beyond imagination.

I like what one author noted.

This parable does not describe different people. It describes each of us individually.

There are times when we allow the evil one to snatch away the Word of God.

There are times when we are enthusiastic about our faith,  
and there are times when we do not persevere.

And there are times when we pursue the cares of the world, rather than the will of God.

But there are other times—when it all comes together-- and we bear abundant fruit.

If we are going to allow the Word of God to “accomplish that which God purposes.”

We need to open not only our ears to actually hear it,

but also our minds and hearts—to allow it to take root and affect a change in our lives.