

Lord, Open My Heart to Your Word

The Gospel for this Sunday contains one of Jesus' most well-known parables: The Parable of the Sower. (Matt. 13: 1-23) He speaks of the person sowing seeds. Some fell on the path and were eaten by the birds. Some fell on rocky ground and, though the seeds sprouted, they quickly withered because there was no soil and they had no roots. Some seeds fell among thorns and the thorns grew up and choked the plants. But some fell on good soil and brought forth plenty of grain.

Jesus offers a clear and simple explanation of this parable for the benefit of His listeners. The seeds are the Word of God. The seeds falling on the path are like the Word of God that falls on the ears of someone who does not understand them and the devil snatches the Word out of the heart of the listener. The seeds falling on rocky ground are like the Word of God received by someone enthusiastically. But the Word is lost because the person lacks the perseverance to continue to follow the Word when difficulties arise.

The seeds falling among thorns are like someone receiving the Word but who allows the ways of the world to distract him from following the Word. The Word of God is choked by worldly considerations and produces no harvest. But the seeds falling on good soil are like the Word being received by someone who understands it and is willing to follow it. This person produces much fruit.

Jesus is saying that the Word of God is distributed to everyone but the amount of the harvest produced by each of us depends on the disposition of our minds and hearts as we listen to the Word. If we are in a hurry, if we lack fortitude and perseverance, if we are more concerned with the lure of worldly wealth and pleasure, then our hearts will not be disposed to understand the Word of God and act on it for the good of the world.

Consider, for a moment, a connoisseur of fine wines or whiskeys. The connoisseur tells us that the true appreciation of these liquids requires time and patience. The tasting process is not to be rushed. First, we must read everything on the box and bottle to learn all about what we are going to taste.

Then, we are to pour a small amount into a proper glass and look at its appearance, its colour and clarity. Then we must sniff it to detect all the subtle odours. This is why the proper glass has to be chosen so that we can properly 'nose' the liquid.

Only after this is done are we to sip a small amount. But we are not to simply swallow it. Oh no! We have to roll the sample around the mouth and over all parts of the tongue and then we have to chew it. Then we swallow the liquid and inhale a breath of air to savour the after taste. What a process!

If a person takes this long and lavishes so much care over a drink, think of how much time and patience we should spend in 'tasting' the Word of God. We should read it, re-reread it, meditate over it, chew it and eat it. Only then will we be able to properly appreciate the Word. Only then will we be able to take it in, act on it, and produce a bountiful harvest for the Lord.

The prophet Isaiah gave the words of God to the Jewish people saying: '...so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth: it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.' (Is. 55: 11) Whether we receive God's words or not, they are still circulating and working in the world; working to achieve what God wants for mankind.

We hear this expression almost every day: 'We are living in unprecedented times.' And it is true. We are living in a time of unprecedented crisis. We have the health crisis, the economic crisis, the racial crisis, and the climate crisis. It would be easy to feel that the end is near, that the world as we have known it is at the point of collapse.

But we can take comfort in Isaiah's prophesy that the Word of God is working in the world through all of these crises. And, if we think about it carefully and slowly, not rushing, we realize that God is working for the benefit of the world as a whole, the entire planet. He wants what is best for humanity, not just for individuals.

If nothing else, these crises should have made us realize that all of us in this world are connected. COVID-19 knows no political borders or social standing. It can attack any of us. And our actions or lack of action can have an effect on others. This is true for the climate crisis, the economic crisis, and the racial crisis as well.

Hopefully, during this time of pandemic when we have been less busy, we have had more time to taste and savour the Word of God and to think about the future of our planet. As we start to come out of the extreme lockdown measures, let us take the Word of God to heart and act on it for the common good so that we can help produce a bountiful harvest and preserve the world as God intended.