

**Hear the word and seek to understand!**

Isaiah 55:10-11

Psalm 65:10-14

Romans 8:18-23

Matthew 13:1-23

In the first reading Isaiah speaks of the power and fruitfulness of God's word and compares it with the natural process of planting seed, watering and cultivating it, and finally harvesting the results; God's words always accomplish what they are set out to do and they will make us fertile and fruitful in good works if only we will listen.

The psalmist rejoices in how the Lord visits the land, prepares it, waters it, and blesses its yield. The rich harvest overflows and there is much grain to feed the people and large flocks.

In the second reading Paul explains to the Romans that our present sufferings are nothing when compared to the glory to come. There is a glorious freedom to be revealed by God's children even though we oftentimes groan in our agony as we patiently wait. Even the whole created world awaits the redemption that can only come from our all-powerful God.

In the Gospel Jesus explains the parable of the seed to the disciples and to us while many listeners were and still are mystified by the meaning of his parable. Jesus explains that he speaks in parables *because many look and do not see, hear but do not listen or understand*, and this is something prophesied by Isaiah. When God's words impact us do we understand, let it take root, or do we let the world drown out its meaning?



The Father gives seed to the one who sows,  
The Son enriches it, The Holy Spirit cultivates it.

Isaiah compares the action of God's word to the planting, fertilizing, and harvesting of the land and we might think of ourselves as the fields where the spiritual seeds are planted, watered, and harvested in order to build up the Kingdom of God. In the field the farmer still needs to work hard for a bountiful harvest so we cannot expect to be fruitful unless we do the same. Jesus explains that all seeds do not fall upon fertile ground and we need to ask ourselves just how receptive are we to the sacred words of Scripture we hear. Are we among those who listen and understand?

Jesus summed up his Gospel teaching in the form of a parable and the meaning was not immediately evident to those who heard it. But Jesus himself believed that it was thought-provoking and worthy of attention. Most likely the small farm fields had a variety of soils and the yield of crops may have varied noticeably and Jesus picked up on this and found it to be a paradigm for the listeners he encountered in his preaching and teaching. He separates his hearers into four categories and the important repeated word in the parable is that they "hear." The first are those likened to seed on the beaten path, the Scribes who were prejudiced against Jesus' message. Another were those who seemed eager to grasp the ideas but faltered with even minor persecutions. The third group consisted of those who had the know-how to absorb the message but were derailed by worldly attentions. The fourth class consisted of those thoughtful persons who held fast unto the message, cultivated it, and brought forth good results. Just where do we fit in?