

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?

Seeds of Faith: Planted, Nourished, Harvested

You have been born anew
not from perishable
but from imperishable seed
through the living and abiding word of God.¹

The statement, "Jesus-era seed oldest to germinate," is true in more than one way. It was a Judean date palms seed about 2,000 years old discovered at Masada that surprised many by germinating. Its age is in the same time period when Jesus roamed the region and preached using a number of parables revolving about the metaphorical use of "seed" as "word of God." His words are as life-giving now as they were then.

In the **Parable of The Sower**², seeds were sown and some fell on a path, rocky ground, among thorns, and on fertile soil. The seed is a metaphor for the word of God and Jesus explains these situations.



On the path some were trampled, others eaten by birds; meaning there are those who hear the Word without understanding it, while others are influenced by Satanic ideas that take the Word away from their hearts so they will not be saved.

On rocky ground the seeds sprang up but not sustained because the soil was not deep so they withered for lack of moisture and roots.

These are ones who at first receive the Word with joy but are not deeply rooted so they quickly fall away under adversity and times of trial.

Amid the thorns the plants were choked off and no grain was produced. Such ones choke the Word due to worldly anxieties, lure of riches, strong desires for worldly things, with the result of no fruit produced.

But those falling on fertile soil produced fruit, 30, 60, even a 100-fold. These have embraced the Word with generous and good hearts, accepting it and bearing fruit through perseverance.

The Parable of the Weeds Among the Wheat³ describes how the enemy planted weeds amidst the good wheat when the farmer is



¹ 1Peter 1:23

² Mark 4:1-20, Matt 13:4-23, Luke 8:5-15

³ Matthew 13:24-30

unaware. Hence, when the crop grew and bore fruit the weeds also appeared. He decided, at this time, not to pull them up, against the advice of his workers, because this would uproot too many of the wheat; hence, let them grow together and gather them at harvest time when they can be separated, keeping the good fruit but bundling up the weeds for burning.

When you hear of corrupt persons among the good community it is the Evil One who does this as he desires to mix in the bad with the good and confuse the innocent. No one who is begotten by God commits sin⁴, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot sin because he is begotten by God. In this way, the children of God and the children of the devil are made plain; no one who fails to act in righteousness belongs to God, nor anyone who does not love his brother.

Furthermore, there are times when corrupt persons have indulged in their sinfulness seemingly without constraint, not even being identified at early stages where even then it would harm the faith of many innocent persons.....but it also appears there are times when they must be rooted out even before the final harvest time has come; witness the recent scandals in religious communities when corrupt leaders are called out! Good and righteous communities are constantly being harassed by the Evil One.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed.⁵ Jesus likened the Kingdom of heaven to a tiny mustard seed which grows into large shrub in which birds can make nests. If your faith, Jesus says, is the size of a mustard seed you can command mountains to move and sycamore trees be uprooted and they will be so moved. What is not mentioned is the time frame for which this will happen, for no doubt this calls for great patience. And the mountains to be moved, the trees to be uprooted, are not just vain shows of power, but rather are seemingly impossible tasks involving the movement and disruption of corrupt power into places that nullify their effects. When we encounter evil, we are called to do something about it, be it external to us or affecting us personally.



When seed⁶ is scattered, it sprouts and secretly grows and man does not know how this happens. The earth produces of itself as the seed becomes a tiny green blade, then an ear, then a fruitful grain that can be harvested. So too are the works of faith willed by words of God and empowered by Him; He is the One⁷ who supplies seed to the sower of justice, and will supply and multiply needed seed so as to increase the harvest of righteousness.

⁴ 1John3:9-10

⁵ Matt 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19

⁶ Mark 4: 26-29

⁷ 2 Cor 9:10

So, ask our Lord Jesus Christ, to help you clearly identify the troublesome mountains in your life that need moved or the difficult problems you need to uproot. Put your heart and soul into the effort and pursue it vigorously and pray for the determination see it through. Creative energy will be supplied by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and while progress may be slow it will be steady and recognizable. Praise God!

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