

1. Read (Seek) — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

2. Meditate (Find) — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

3. Pray (Ask) — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

4. Contemplate (Taste) — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence. **How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

Quick Connect

What is the Gospel saying? Matthew 13:1-23 — Pg. 1

What is the Church saying Past and Present? Pages 1-3

What is God saying to you through this passage? Page 4

Gospel Reading – Matthew 13:1-23 – Roman Missal

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.” The disciples approached him and said, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” He said to them in reply, “Because knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been granted to you, but to them it has not been granted. To anyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; from anyone who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because they look but do not see and hear but do not listen or understand. Isaiah’s prophecy is fulfilled in them, which says: You shall indeed hear but not understand, you shall indeed look but never see. Gross is the heart of this people, they will hardly hear with their ears, they have closed their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and be converted, and I heal them. “But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear. Amen, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it. “Hear then the parable of the sower. The seed sown on the path is the one who hears the word of the kingdom without understanding it, and the evil one comes and steals away what was sown in his heart. The seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears the word and receives it at once with joy. But he has no root and lasts only for a time. When some tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, he immediately falls away. The seed sown among thorns is the one who hears the word, but then worldly anxiety and the lure of riches choke the word and it bears no fruit. But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold.”

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[1] Matthew footnotes 13, 11

[2] Matthew 13:14-15

[3] Pope Benedict XVI; Jesus of Nazareth; page 189-191

[4] Psalm 115

[5] Roman Catholic Daily Missal [1962]; page 1838

Spiritual Reading – Office of Readings

From the beginning of the treatise On the Mysteries by Saint Ambrose, bishop

Open then you ears. Enjoy the fragrance of eternal life, breathed on you by means of the sacraments. We explained this to you as we celebrated the mystery of “the opening” when we said: Effetha, that is, be opened. Everyone who was to come for the grace of baptism had to understand what he was to be asked, and must remember what he was to answer. This mystery was celebrated by Christ when he healed the man who was deaf and dumb, in the Gospel which we proclaimed to you. After this, the holy of holies was opened up for you; you entered into the sacred place of regeneration. Recall what you were asked; remember what you answered. You renounced the devil and his works, the world and its dissipation and sensuality. Your words are recorded, not on a monument to the dead but in the book of the living...You entered to confront your enemy, for you intended to renounce him to his face. You turned toward the east, for one who renounces the devil turns toward Christ and fixes his gaze directly on him.

Purpose of Parables – Lesson and Discussion

“he spoke to them at length in parables”

Why can't the other people understand? “To understand is a gift of God, granted to the disciples but not to the crowds.”[1] It is also to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah, which says: “You shall indeed hear but not understand, you shall indeed look but never see. Gross is the heart of this people, they will hardly hear with their ears, they have closed their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and be converted and I heal them”[2] “If we want to understand the Lord’s mysterious words, we must read them in light of Isaiah, whom he cites, and we must read them in light of his own path, the outcome of which he already knows. In saying these words, Jesus places himself in the line of the Prophets – his destiny is a prophet’s destiny. Isaiah’s words taken overall are much more severe and terrifying than the extract that Jesus cites. In the Book of Isaiah it says: ‘Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed’ (Is 6:10). Prophets fail: Their message goes too much against general opinion and the comfortable habits of life. It is only through failure that their word becomes efficacious. ...And here, unexpectedly, we see a connection with the parable of the sower...It is striking what a significant role the image of the seed plays in the whole of Jesus’ message. The time of Jesus, the time of the disciples, is the time of sowing and of the seed. The ‘Kingdom of God’ is present in seed form. Observed from the outside, the seed is something minuscule. It is easy to overlook. The mustard seed – an image of the Kingdom of God – is the smallest of seeds, yet it bears a whole tree within it. The seed is the present of what is to come in the future. In the seed, that which is to come is already

here in a hidden way. It is the presence of a promise. On Palm Sunday, the Lord summarized the manifold seed parables and unveiled their full meaning: ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit’ (Jn 12:24). He himself is the grain of wheat. His ‘failure’ on the Cross is exactly the way leading from the few to the many, to all: ‘And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself’ (Jn. 12:32). The failure of the Prophets, his failure, appears now in another light. It is precisely the way to reach the point where ‘they turn and God will forgive them.’ It is on the Cross that the parables are unlocked. In his Farewell Discourses, the Lord says, apropos of this: ‘I have said this to you in parables; the hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in parables but tell you plainly of the Father’ (Jn. 16:25). The parables speak in a hidden way, then, of the mystery of the Cross; they do not only speak of it – they are part of it themselves. For precisely because they allow the mystery of Jesus’ divinity to be seen, they lead to contradiction. It is just when they emerge into final clarity, as in the parable of the unjust vintners (cf. Mk 12:1-12), that they become stations on the way to the Cross. In the parables, Jesus is not only the sower who scatters the seed of God’s word, but also the seed that falls into the earth in order to die and so to bear fruit.”[3]

What could cause us not to understand? When our hearts are “fat” with the things of this world, the heart cannot be open to God. When our ears are “heavy” with all the noise of the world, we cannot hear the word of God. When our eyes are focused on the darkness of the world, they will quickly “shut” when in the presence of the brilliant light of Christ. We, like the pagans, can become what we worship. “Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths but they cannot speak; they have eyes but they cannot see; they have ears but cannot hear; they have nostrils but they cannot smell. With their hands they cannot feel; with their feet they cannot walk. No sound comes from their throats. Their makers will come to be like them and so will all who trust in them.”[4] If we worship the world our hearts, ears and eyes will not work, this disability will extend to our whole life. Our mouths won’t speak the word of God and we will therefore not live out our Baptismal promise to be a prophet. Our nostrils will not “perceive the fragrance of God’s sweetness.”[5] Our hands will not feel the grasp of God, who walks hand and hand with us, now will our feet walk the path of perfection. We will become what we worship and will not understand the disability that has overcome us.

Why can the disciples only truly hear Jesus? We are called by our Baptism to be united with Christ. We are like the disciples because we heard the call of Jesus Christ. We should not ever take this for granted. Even though we may hear and see it with our own eyes, we must also follow His will. We see it with the disciples when they ran away from His side when Jesus was put through His Passion and death. Just because God has given us the grace to hear and understand is only part of the gift. The other gift is to act upon what He teaches. We do this by keeping our heart open to Him so that we can have bear great fruit within and out of us a hundred fold.