

July 12, 2020

Is 55:10-11, Rom 8:18-23, Mt 13:1-23 (1-9)

God says to us through the prophet Isaiah: *My word shall not return to me void, but shall do my will achieving the end for which I sent it.* A “word,” in this biblical sense, does not mean a single piece of language (like the words: “cat,” “car,” “run, hop jump,” etc.). To the biblical mind, a “Word” is a full message that contains a whole package of meaning - it also sometimes involves a deeper reality that unfolds over time. ... Now, a plant’s seed is also a “package” of meaning that unfolds over time. Inside a seed is all that is needed for the development of the plant and future seeds: all that will guide the plant to mature and grow and make its own fruit. But how God’s word - that package of meaning - achieves the end for which it is sent, and what that has to do with seeds - and us - needs a little exploring.

Looking at the Gospel we can think that Jesus is telling about God sewing his message ... There is God tossing the seed - if it falls on good soil (not on rocks, or paths, or in the weeds) then it will grow and unfold, otherwise it’s lost. In this reading, we hear Jesus telling us that we must be like the good soil where the word of God can grow - and this is exactly how he explains this same parable elsewhere. But he takes a different direction with it today. If you look at the language Jesus uses, he says that “the seed is the one who” lands on the path and is eaten, “the seed is the one who” falls on rocky ground, “the seed is the one who” is sewn in thorns, “the seed is the one who” lands on rich soil. Although we must be receptive to the full meaning of what God reveals, in this parable Jesus is the sower and we are the seeds. The seed mentioned in Isaiah, the *Word that shall not return to God void* is Jesus himself who *is* the Word of God. Jesus is the great seed which contains all that there is to be said about God. Jesus was “planted” here on earth and formed a strong tree that we call the Church. Jesus has taken root in our world, nurtured his Church from his own substance (the Eucharist which we are to receive) and the result is us - seed produced by the tree. Jesus is the sower sending us into the world - as he says elsewhere - *to go fourth and bear fruit.* However, unlike the seed a farmer sows that has no choice where it lands, we have the ability to change our landing place - to move to the rich soil.

We are seeds that contain within us the likeness of God. As we seek our place to be planted in this world, Jesus calls us to avoid the easy path where the evil one can steal us away, or the thin and rocky ground of shallow faith that does not nourish, or the forest of worldly cares

and worries that chokes off development of the plant and draw off energy that could be put to making fruit. If you are currently sending down roots in one of these areas ask Jesus to help you to replant in the good soil that truly nourishes. If you feel you have not yet even sprouted as a seed, or that you once sprouted - but now are a bit withered, don't be discouraged. Like the seed that lies dormant through the winter - a seed only needs to be planted, fed, and nurtured in order to grow - you can be watered by Prayer, Reconciliation, and Eucharist and sprout and grow.

This organic connection with God is vital - the whole of creation was made for God and is only truly complete in union with God - efforts to push God out of the world only bring that world farther from completion and satisfaction. Human beings are only complete when we are in union with God. St. Paul tells us today: *For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God* - a revelation we are called to spread by bearing fruit. Paul likens the bearing fruit to a birth, a birth that has with it labor pains: *We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now; and not only that, but we ourselves*. It may sometimes seem like we are experiencing labor pains, or that this world is moving into the winter and not the planting season. But these things are only temporary and what God offers is eternal - as St. Paul says: *I consider that the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us*. What a comforting, hopeful, beautiful truth.

Jesus calls us to put down our roots into good soil, to enjoy the spiritual nourishment he provides, and to grow healthy in the sunlight of his love. As strong and healthy plants we can witness to the truth of God's revelation, and at the same time, bear fruit of good works and service to our brothers and sisters - fruits that contain within them the seeds that further advance God's kingdom on earth. See how it works? The fruit we bear by planting in that good soil helps to bring about more individuals who will be seeds - some of which will multiply 100, or 60, or 30 times. In the end we live a fulfilling, healthy and fruitful life (even if there are some labor pains) - and we participate in Jesus' mission for which he was sent - the reason the Word came into the world - we become participants of Jesus achieving of the will of God on earth.