

The Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle A

July 12, 2020

Christ the Good Shepherd, OCC

Reflection by Father Charles Blanchard

First Reading: IS 55:10-11

Psalm: 65:10,11,12-13,14 LJ 8:8)

Second Reading: RM 8:18-23

Gospel: MT 13:1-23

Welcome to Christ the Good Shepherd. To our enduring parishioners and many new-found friends, know you're always welcome to Hear God's Word, feast at the Table where there is no partiality and celebrate God's Peace and Love.

When facing life's failures, the farmer of today's Gospel parable sounds a lot like many of us. You and I work hard, and only sometimes succeed. Most of the best things given to others are not by them well received. Most of what is planted in the lives of those around us doesn't "take"; it doesn't become rooted and permanently planted in their lives.

All of us have to deal with failure, **those areas where the best we've given to others comes up lacking, falling short of our hopes, our dreams, and our great expectations.**

Some biblical commentators who suggest that the parable of Jesus we just heard was autobiographical. Jesus certainly had to face a whole lot of apparent failure. He knew full well the pain of failure:

- He was born and raised in Nazareth and his own hometown folks rejected Him;

- His own Hebrew countrymen and women rejected His message;
- His handpicked twelve apostles? Well, one of them sold Him out for thirty pieces of silver and the others fled when He was crucified.
- Peter wasn't too swift to take His message to heart, Thomas was the doubter, and the others weren't much better either.

Up to this point, such remarks all sound **dismal, discouraging** and **depressing**. But call to mind that Jesus did not let apparent failure stop Him. In today's parable, Jesus went on to speak about a crop that yielded a harvest in successful amounts, some yields bringing spectacular success.

My sisters and brothers, today's Gospel parable is not a dirge – it is a celebration; it is a story of hope, not of despair.

Any Crisis has within it both **danger** and **opportunity**. True there are evils that surround us, but many of those evils are slowly being overcome. God is at work among us bringing good out of evil. Forever remember that in God's hands the slightest good can be multiplied to feed thousands if we would but hand our efforts into His care and providence.

You and I, like all good farmers who continually face floods and disasters of every sort, need to seriously engage ourselves in the enterprise of faith and hope; **planting what we have; planting the best of what we have;** and then **letting God's sun, wind, and gentle rains do the rest**. God's only-begotten Son, along with the gentle breath of His Holy Spirit, provide waters of grace to nourish and sustain what He has planted in the lives of

those whom we love. The best years of our lives, and the best that we have given to others in them, or are giving right now, or will give in the future, **will not be fruitless**.

Sure, our world is a mess now, but to some extent, my friends, it has always been. My sisters and brothers, we need to see that there is also an amazing amount of goodness in it. The greatest miracle of all isn't found at Lourdes, or Fatima, or Medjugorje, it's found in those around us, in those who are, in spite of terrible odds, **yielding** up love, kindness, caring, and sensitivity thirty, sixty and a hundred-fold. You and I have our modern-day heroes who are leading us as never before in efforts to rid our world of oppression, racism, injustice, sexism, homophobia and COVID-19.

And so, enduring parishioners and many new-found friends of "The Small Church with a Big Heart", keep on planting God's good seeds in the lives of those near to you. For God Himself has said through His prophet Isaiah that His Word shall go forth from His mouth "***... and it shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it.***" (Isaiah 55:11)

Faith and hope are what should be in our hearts, not defeat and despair.

Let our collective story, let our collective prayer during this liturgy, be one of hope and not despair; one of certainty and not equivocation; and one of clarity and not of chaos.

"Whoever has ears ought to hear" (Matthew 11:15).

Gracias de Dios para todos!

