

July 12th, 2020
15th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Cycle A

1st Reading: Isaiah 55:10 – 11.

God's Word achieves what it was sent to do: create a fruitful earth.

Psalms 65:10, 11, 12 – 13, 14.

The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest. (Lk 8:8)

2nd Reading: Romans 8:18 – 23.

God clearly intends all creation to share in redemption, revealed through us.

Gospel: Matthew 13:1 – 23.

God's Word is sown with reckless abundance.

“Blessed are the eyes that see and ears that hear”

God is good, **all the time**. All the time, **God is good**.

It is rare that we have such a convergence in our liturgy where all three readings come together in unison to declare a singular message. When I was a baby seminarian I was blessed with an English professor, himself a poet, Fr. Gordon Gilsdorf, who loved Gerard Manley Hopkins, SJ and his poem “*The Grandeur of God*” was immediately in my mind: (By the way this was Hopkin’s self proclaimed favorite poem)

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

Today we find ourselves still on the farm, even though Jesus removed himself to a boat, to get some space from the crowd (We might call it “social distancing”). Remember last week we heard a about the yoke of oxen as a metaphor for calling on the Christ to help us as we journey through our lives: to “lighten our burden” so to speak.

Today we hear the parable of the sower and the seed and the ground. It surely is one of the best known parables. I remember the good sisters in grade school always stressing that God is the sower and we had to make sure that we were the

“good soil” so as to be fruitful. Not that this is not a legitimate viewing of this parable; and there are volumes written on this parable and a strong consensus that the allegorical explanation given by Jesus is not part of the original text but added later by the community in which this gospel text developed. I’d like to have you consider for a moment what if we are the sowers and the seeds we are sowing are the Word of God. Do we have ears to hear and eyes to see?

How indeed would we sow those very valuable seeds that we believe so deeply in? Just like the farmer in today’s parable. We would throw them in every direction in huge amounts, to give it our best shot! Right? Will others laugh at us? Look at us like we are crazy? Reject what we have to offer? Sprout shoots and grow? This is the price of being an ambassador of God’s Word: some failure, and, when you least expect it, someone is deeply moved and touched making a difference in our world and God’s creation. For me this is one of the meanings of this parable. Do we have ears to hear, and eyes to see?

As the farmer, there is another detail in the parable we need to address. The word of God is not hydroponic. It does not sprout except in dirt, in hummus. It needs soil. So what is our responsibility to the earth to see to it that it has a chance to produce the bountiful harvest of God’s Glory? Pope Francis certainly claims that human responsibility in his encyclical, *Laudato Si*. Do we have eyes to see, and ears to hear?

How do we nurture the seed in our own hearts, planted by others, but now left to us to flourish? My contention is by doing the best we are capable of, which is all we can do. God will see to the rest, because that is why our God is. God’s Word never returns to God fallow and God does what God says God will do. What a God we have! Do we have eyes to see and ears to hear?

So here we are gathered today to celebrate the Eucharist. We have brought our stony paths, our rocky soil, and our thorny bushes: our lives. We tie our suffering to that of Jesus’ passion and death believing that like Jesus’ our suffering, our growing, our loving of one another will be transformed into an abundant harvest of resurrection. Do we have eyes to see and ears to hear?

In this way our Eucharist articulates a hope: a hope based on God’s freedom to act/love. The Eucharist asserts that to develop, to nurture hope is to cultivate the mystery: to create a Church and a world where love is love and all life, lives matter. We are back to being farmers and are open to God being God and doing the heavy lifting. Do we have ears to hear and eyes to see, and a heart open to transform?

God is good, **all the time**. All the time, **God is good**.

"Pied Beauty." By Gerard Manley Hopkins, SJ (another inspiration for me)

Glory be to God for dappled things—

For skies of couple-color as a brindled cow;

For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;

Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;

Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plough;

And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;

Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)

With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;

He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:

Praise him.