

## Homily For the 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year A St. Peter's Sunday 11:30/5:00 Masses - July 16, 2023

**Isaiah 55:10-11** "As rain waters the earth, so shall my word succeed in the thing for which I sent it."

**Psalms 65:9-13** "You visit the earth and water it. You crown the year with your bounty."

**Romans 8:18-23** "All creation will be set free from decay, (along with) we, the first fruits of the Spirit."

**Matthew 13:1-23** "What was sown on good soil is the one who hears the word and bears fruit."

### Good Seed, Good Soil

#### Introduction

Did you ever imagine in your wildest dreams ...?

God loves you and has a plan for your life. This is the basic message of Christianity that you can share with others if they ask you what is the reason for your hope. I asked old Mr Wallace for advice when I was first beginning to garden. He said, I just plant the seed and water it. God does the rest.

We remember today that every Sunday is the Lord's Day. Catholics are asked to attend mass on Sunday because it is a day that belongs to God. We see that in the story of creation. God rested on the 7th day, not because he was tired but so that he could give us the gift of a day to rest in gratitude for all of creation, for all of his good gifts. God is a giver, not a taker. The Lord's Day, Sunday, is not about God taking some of our time. The Lord's Day is a gift. "If we but paused for a moment to consider attentively what takes place in this Sacrament of the Eucharist, I am sure that the thought of Christ's love for us would transform the coldness of our hearts into a fire of love and gratitude." (St. Teresa of Avila)

God's plan, shown in nature, is not thwarted. We see it in Jesus. None of Herod or Pilate or Judas could prevent it. In nature we see God's intent. The seasons come and go. There is the end of life in the fall but always new life in the spring. Death and resurrection are always before us. Choose life, God tells us.

## **Isaiah**

In the Old Testament, God was perceived as a sower, one who makes it possible for things grow. Life was impossible without that growth. Every year they were amazed that the winter rains and snows would make the desert spring to life. Unless you are a farmer, there is a tendency for us to be distant from the reality that the exact same process is required today. Without rain and without seeds, all life is over. That's why we worry about the climate.

Even more important than this, however, is the life that God wants to nourish in us. There is no point to having enough food if we do not live a life with purpose and meaning. That's God's loving plan for our lives. We have the assurance that no matter how hopeless every situation appears, God is at work bringing life. God gives us his word. God's Word will succeed. The only question is whether we will be receptive to that word. That's a strange thing about our God. God gives us the freedom to reject his loving plan for our lives. It would be as if the soil itself could refuse to nurture the seed. Or, we might say, it would be as if the seed itself would refuse to grow.

## **Romans**

St. Paul intensifies this idea. He says that all creation is waiting to be born. Creation is not just a stage for actors. Creation is, all around us, the sign of God's fruitfulness, God's life giving power. It is part of God's loving plan, not just the background for it. And THAT is why we protect and care for the earth. That is what is missing in the conversation today. We worry about sustainability. We don't need to worry about that. We need to be part of God's plan to bring life where it looks like there is none.

In this we gain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We live by God's law so that we will have the freedom to live fully alive. Those in hell have chosen what they thought was freedom from the commandments. Go ahead, ask them if they are free, those who have lost the glory of the children of God.

## Matthew

The message is clear: God is generous in sowing, but the fruits of his sowing also depends on our free participation. So now we come to Jesus and this parable of the sower. This is the first of his parables about the kingdom. A parable challenges listeners to draw conclusions about their own lives, so that is also our challenge and our goal on this Sunday, this particular Lord's Day.

"A sower went out to sow." Now we know, as those listening to Jesus did, that the first sower is God, and we find out later that this is exactly what Jesus means. This sower doesn't just throw seed on the best prepared soil, like I would because I want it all to grow. He spreads his seed everywhere. He gives every single part of creation a chance to produce something. And does that happen? Well, that's the parable.

Some seed falls on the path. What is that? Well, the path is soil that has been packed down by people walking on it. There is no place for the seed to get rooted. There is no receptivity. But Jesus is not really talking about a physical path is he? God is providing his word of life, his loving plan of salvation, for those people who are not receptive, in the hope that they will see what God is offering and will begin to soften. They have no place in their hearts for that plan for their lives. Their hearts are cold. The birds eat the seed because it's not being used. That's the devil. When the messages of the world take over a person, that's when the devil steps in and takes over. You don't want God's plan for your life? Well, I have a plan for you also. That plan is your destruction, your eternal sorrow.

Some seed falls on rocks. There is soil there. It may even be good soil. We see this because Jesus says in his explanation of the parable that those people receive the word of God with joy, but there is no depth to them. The sun is good. It is necessary for life and growth, but too much sun and not enough place for roots and the plant will die of the heat. We see in the world how people run after temporary pleasures. They know there is something good there, but they don't develop real character, real depth and maturity. When they hear God's message,

they see it as another kind of pleasure, but they have not made enough space in their hearts for this message to grow.

Some seed fell among thorns. Again there is some good soil, and the seed grows, but it is choked out by the cares of the world. This one is a real tragedy.

Finally, some seed fell on good soil. And that soil produces an absolutely amazing return on investment. Thirty times, sixty times, a hundred times. Wow, not just a little fruit but, with God as the sower, and a receptive heart, there is almost no limit to the fullness of that life.

It's not likely that any of us are going to see ourselves totally in any particular category, even the good soil, but we need to think about each one. Become good soil. Persist. Study the word. Good soil doesn't mean the best circumstances. It means building up the soil. Develop a conscience. Study. Our choice. We are the soil, not the seed. We have the gift of thinking. The good of intelligence. It is hard to listen to God and to learn from God because:

1. I don't know how. Sometimes I am the hard path that has no place for God's life in me.
2. I don't have depth. I want what God offers me but I am not mature enough to let it grow in me.
3. I receive his plan for my life but the cares and values of the world take over. Like the thorns, I want it, even badly, but my heart is frequently turned to wealth and the good things of the world.

### **Call To Conversion**

The good soil God has made possible. But how do I nurture and make that soil, my heart, receptive. I have to turn to Christ. I have to take on the values of Christ. How do I know what are Christ's values. How do I align my values with him? It is his humanity which becomes the standard. I must order and interpret my values through him. He is the bridge over the gulf that is sin. The more I imitate the man Jesus Christ, the more I align ourselves with his values. For example, what vice did

Jesus attack most? Greed for money. You cannot serve both God and mammon or money. I met a man who told me what he would do differently with his life.

There are those who live on the natural plane, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in the love of God and wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life." (Jude 1:17-21)

Not understanding our faith. People don't understand why they are Catholic. Why the church is built on the Word of God and how Jesus fulfils Israel's Scriptures. It is easy for the evil one snatches away the seed that was sown in the heart. How many Catholics leave the faith because they don't understand their faith. If we do understand it, it will take root in our hearts and will not be easy to be taken away. We need hearts receptive to the Word of God. Take our your bibles and listen to that word. Don't make it fruitless.

"It is necessary to remember God more often than one breathes" (Saint Gregory Nazianzus)

Honour the Lord's Day. It's easier to go to mass once a week than once a month.

God has given us our freedom. He has made it possible for us to enter into his wildest dream for us.

## Key Passages

**Entrance Antiphon:** *As for me, in justice I shall behold your face. I shall behold your face. I shall be filled with the vision of your glory*

**Collect:** *O God, who show the light of your truth to those who go astray that they may return to the right path, give Christians the grace to reject whatever is contrary to the name of Christ and to strive after all that does it honour.*

**Isaiah:** *Thus says the Lord: "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, so shall my word not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it."*

**Psalms:** *You visit the earth and water it. You greatly enrich it. You provide the people with grain. For so you have prepared the earth. You crown the year with your bounty.*

**Romans:** *Brothers and sisters: I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. The creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. The whole creation has been groaning in labour pains and we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.*

**Matthew:** *Jesus sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered that he got into a boat and told them many things in parables. Listen! A sower went out to sow. Some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly since they had not depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched and, since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns which grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain. Let anyone with ears listen!" The disciples asked: Why do you speak in parables?" He answered: "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to those who have, more will be given, but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled: "This peoples' heart has grown dull and their ears are hard of hearing and they have shut their eyes, so that they might not look with their eyes and listen with their ears and understand with their hearts and turn and I would heal them. 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 the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in th heart. This is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy. Yet such a person has no root, but endures only for awhile and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. but as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundredfold, sixty fold or thirty fold.*