

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)
(Isaiah 55:10-11 / Matthew 13:1-23)
13.07.2014

Dear brothers and sisters,

“Imagine a sower going to sow...” We know this parable of the sower well. The seed is the Word of God. One of the lessons of this parable is that God sows his Word at all times and without sparing the seed. We shall see that this is nothing other than God’s mercy at work.

Seen from the Lord’s point of view, there is **an unlimited generosity**, a prodigality in the way that the Lord speaks to his people. The Word of God comes to us so often and under so many forms: during our Sunday Eucharist, or even for some of us during our daily Eucharist, or when we pray the Liturgy of the Hours, what we used to call the breviary. The celebration of the prayer of the Church is a practice no longer reserved to clerics and nuns. Today a lot of lay people pray the Liturgy of the Hours. The Word comes to us yet again when we practice Lectio Divina, the prayerful reading of the Scriptures, something we do most of the time on our own, at home. Yes, the Word of God comes to us every day, so many times, and under so many guises that we can speak of God’s prodigality towards us.

Seen from our point of view, we have to confess that there is **a waste**, a huge waste of the Word. We listen to the Word of God so often, and yet we don’t always pay attention to it, or we forget it as soon as we have heard it, or we don’t allow it to take flesh in us and to bear fruit for others through us.

From God’s side there is generosity, from our side there is waste! The parable of the sower speaks of three different soils in which the seed produces no crop, and of a fourth quality of soil in which the seed produces an abundant crop. So it is with the Word of God and our own hearts!

Jesus knew the human heart. The point of today’s parable is to invite us to focus not on our waste of the Word of God, becoming depressed, discouraged, or ashamed by this, but to focus on the generosity of God which is **the sign of his mercy**. He knows that he sows and that we frequently fail to listen, but he continues to speak all the same. He waits until we listen to Him and allow his Word to bear fruit within us. God’s behaviour, – **His mercy** – is not determined by our behaviour, but by his unlimited love for us. Here, we are in the presence of the difference between human behaviour, human wisdom or common sense on the one hand, and divine mercy on the other hand. If we speak to someone who does not listen to us, we stop speaking to him. This is an understandable human reaction. God, for his part, far from stopping to speak with us when we fail to listen to Him, continues to speak to us all the same, out of mercy, until we give hear to His voice. This is divine behaviour. This is mercy.

Jesus used parables to speak to the crowds. A parable is a story taken from our daily life in order to tell us something about the kingdom of God, about God himself, or the spiritual life. Consequently, when we listen to a parable, we have to reflect upon what we hear in order to understand it. To listen to a parable properly, we have to be a seeker, someone who seeks God, who seeks salvation, who seeks God’s will. In other words, our

heart has to be like good soil. What is this good soil? Good soil is a heart which seeks God and listens. Good soil is soil which is not like the first three sorts of soil mentioned in today's parable. Let us look at them briefly.

Unlike the hardened wayside where the seed is eaten by the birds as soon as it is sown, a good heart is a heart which is not sclerosed or hardened by the weight of routine. A good heart is an open heart, a sensitive heart, a heart sensitive to the uplifting and challenging Word of God, to the comforting and healing power of the Word of God. An open heart which seeks God is good soil!

Holiday time can provide an opportunity to us to open a breach in the routine of our daily lives, to take time to make ourselves available and receptive to the Word of God, ready to listen to it and meditate upon its message. It can provide us with time to ponder the Word.

Unlike the stony ground with little soil, where the seed springs up straight away but quickly withers because there is no depth of earth, a good heart is able not only to take resolutions, but also to implement them, to stick with them until the end. It happens so often that we begin well, taking a resolution or making a commitment. But once the cost of commitment is required of us, our enthusiasm begins to decrease. A good heart listens to the Word of God and allows it to accomplish its work until it bears plenty of fruit.

Unlike the thorny ground where thorns choke the growth of the seed, a good heart does not allow itself to be preoccupied and paralyzed by the worries of this world and the lure of riches. These worries and riches are multifaceted: All our addictions enter into this category: alcohol, sex, money, gambling, but also all the electronic devices to which we are so often the slaves. These so called channels of information and means of communication can lead to isolation. Destined to help us save time, they often become our most important time-wasters. Good soil is a heart free of all interference with the Word of God; it is a heart which is always careful to preserve its availability to the Word of God. Let us be realistic: listening to the Word of God is an unfinished business to which we have to come back each day of our lives until the last. But this is the right path, the path which leads to life, the good soil which yields a rich harvest.

Let us ask the Lord, not only for ourselves but for one another, the grace of a merciful and God seeking heart, a heart fashioned by his Word, a heart which gives flesh to the Lord's Word. The world waits for our testimony in this respect. Amen.