

**"Why do you speak to them in parables?"****Reading 1: Is 55: 10 – 11****Responsorial Psalm: Ps 65: 10 – 14****Reading 2: Rom 8: 18 – 23****Gospel Reading : Mat 13: 1 – 23****Scripture:** *Matthew 13:1-23*

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat there; and the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they had not much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched; and since they had no root they withered away. Other seeds fell upon thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.<sup>8</sup> Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear."

***Closed eyes and dull hearts***

Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" And he answered them, "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 him who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which says: 'You shall indeed hear but never understand, and you shall indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn for me to heal them.' But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

***Jesus' explanation of the parable***

"Hear then the parable of the sower. When any one hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in his heart; this is what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is he who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the delight in riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. As for what was sown on good soil, this is he who hears the word and understands it; he indeed bears fruit, and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

**Meditation:** What is the best and easiest way to help people understand God's kingdom? Like the rabbis of his time, Jesus very frequently used parables - short stories and images taken from everyday life - to convey hidden truths about the kingdom of God. Like a skillful artist, Jesus sketched memorable pictures with short and simple words. A good image can speak more loudly and clearly than many words. Jesus used the ordinary everyday illustrations of life and nature to point to another order of reality - hidden, yet visible to those who had "eyes to see" and "ears to hear". Jesus communicated with vivid illustrations which captured the imaginations of his audience more powerfully than any abstract presentation could. His parables are like buried treasure waiting to be discovered. Any farmer will attest to the importance of good soil for supplying nutrients for growth. And how does a plant get the necessary food and water it needs except by its roots?

***How do you listen to God's word?***

Jesus' parable of the sower is aimed at the hearers of his word. There are different ways of accepting God's word and they produce different kinds of fruit accordingly. There is the prejudiced hearer who has a shut mind. Such a person is unteachable and blind to what he or she doesn't want to hear. Then there is the shallow hearer. He or she fails to think things out or think them through; they lack depth. They may initially respond with an emotional reaction; but when it wears off their mind wanders to something else. Another type of hearer is the person who has many interests or cares, but who lacks the ability to hear or comprehend what is truly important. Such a person is too busy to pray or too preoccupied to study and meditate on God's word. Then there is the one whose mind is open. Such a person is at all times willing to listen and to learn. He or she is never too proud or too busy to learn. They listen in order to understand. God gives grace to those who hunger for his word that they may understand his will and have the strength to live according to it. Do you hunger for God's word?

***The refusal to believe and understand***

Jesus told his disciples that not everyone would understand his parables. Did Jesus mean to say that he was deliberately confusing or hiding the meaning of his stories from his listeners? Very likely not. Jesus was speaking from experience. He was aware that some who heard his parables refused to understand them. It was not that they could not intellectually understand them, but rather, their hearts were closed to what Jesus was saying. They had already made up their minds to not believe. God can only reveal the secrets of his kingdom - that which is hidden to the spiritually blind - to those who hunger for God and humbly submit to his truth. Preoccupation with other things can distract us from what is truly important and worthwhile. And letting our hearts and minds be consumed with material things can easily weigh us down and draw us away from the heavenly treasure that lasts for eternity. God's word can only take root in a receptive heart which is docile and ready to hear what God has to say.

***How God's word takes root in us***

The parables of Jesus will enlighten us if we approach them with an open mind and heart, ready to let them challenge us. If we approach them with the conviction that we already know the answer, then we, too, may look but not see, listen but not understand. God's word can only take root in a receptive heart that is ready to believe and willing to submit. Do you submit to God's word with trust and obedience? One lesson from this parable is clear: *the harvest is sure to come*. While some seed will fall by the wayside and some fall on shallow ground and never come to maturity, and some be choked to death by the thorns; nonetheless a harvest will come. The seed that falls on good soil, on the heart that is receptive, will reap abundant fruit. God is always ready to speak to each of us and to give us understanding of his word.

**Community Faith sharing questions**

1. What can the parable about seeds and roots teach us about the kingdom of God?
2. What can make us ineffective or unresponsive to God's word and in what ways can we overcome this?
3. What does the Word of God mean to you? How can you allow the Word to take root in your life and live in the Word submit and live in the Word of God?

"Lord Jesus, faith in your word is the way to wisdom, and to ponder your divine plan is to grow in the truth. Open my eyes to your deeds and my ears to the sound of your call, that I may understand your will for my life and live according to it".