

SPIRITUALITY

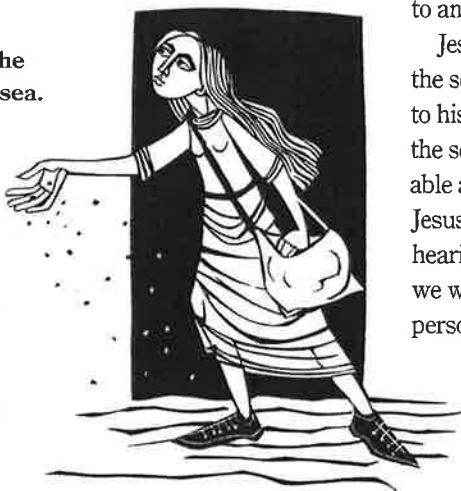
GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

R¹. Alleluia, alleluia.
 The seed is the word of God, Christ is the sower.
 All who come to him will have life forever.
 R². Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Matt 13:1-23; L103A

On that day, Jesus went out of the house and sat down by the sea. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd stood along the shore. And he spoke to them at length in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep, and when the sun rose it was scorched, and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it. But some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold. Whoever has ears ought to hear."

The disciples approached him and said, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" He said to them in reply, "Because knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven has been granted to you, but to them it has not been granted. To anyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; from anyone who has not, even what he has will be taken away."



Reflecting on the Gospel

We have all had the experience of talking about something important to someone and having the sense that our words are falling on deaf ears. We might even exclaim, "Will you please *listen* to me?" We are saying that physically hearing the sounds of words and sentences is not satisfying to us. When we are saying something important to others, we want them to listen to our hearts, listen to our lives, listen to us. We want them to take us into themselves. Listening is a relational activity. It is an exchange of person with person. This gospel is challenging us to listen to the words of Jesus. It is challenging us to an exchange of person with Person.

Jesus tells a parable about sowing the seed-word, receptivity to the seed-word, and fruitfulness of the seed-word. He even explains to his disciples what the parable means. Ultimately, to bear fruit the seed-word must take root in rich soil. And we can take the parable and its interpretation one step further. The sower and seed is Jesus himself, *the Word*. The rich soil is our own hearts open to hearing and understanding that Word. Are our hearts open? Are we willing to listen to Jesus as a relational activity, exchanging person with Person?

Because Jesus' word challenges us to conform ourselves more perfectly to him, we tend to close our hearts to listening to it and limit our response to living it. Yes, there is resistance to Jesus' word and only he can overcome it. Jesus sows the seed-word and desires that his word be heard with the heart and lived (bear fruit).

"Such large crowds gathered around" Jesus. He is scattering "the word of the kingdom" far and wide. Yet, many "look but do not see and hear but do not listen or understand." These look for the wrong seed and its fruit. Jesus is the Sower who is sowing the seed of himself, *the Word of God*. Leave the sowing of the seed to God—God does so with abandon and produces abundance. Leave the listening with our hearts to each of us—which we must also do with abandon to produce abundance.

Living the Paschal Mystery

Only seed that sinks into rich soil—our very hearts—can produce fruit. Our daily Gospel living is about tilling and fertilizing and constantly preparing the "soil" of our hearts so that we can receive Jesus' seed-word and nurture it to bear fruit. We must let Jesus' seed-word sink deep within us so that it can bear fruit in our daily living, "achieving the end for which [God] sent it" (first reading)!

Most of us hear God's word proclaimed primarily during the Liturgy of the Word at Mass on Sundays. It is naive to think that we can go to Mass cold, without having prepared the readings, and be attuned enough to God's word to hear and remember the message well enough to live it. One way to deepen our Gospel living is to take quality time each week—alone or with others—to sit with God's word and become attuned to the message. This is how we cultivate our hearts to hear God's word, so it is not wasted on barren hearts.

We also hear God's word through the words of others. A challenging remark that moves us to new action on behalf of others, a critical remark that causes us to look at our own behavior and choices, a kind remark that brings us joy are all ways God's word comes to us, and ways we can sow the seed of God's word in the hearts of others.

Continued in Appendix A, p. 295, or Matt 13:1-9 in Appendix A, p. 295.

Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: sower went out to sow, seed, rich soil, produced fruit, with their hearts, hears the word and understands it

To the point: Jesus tells a parable about sowing the seed-word, receptivity to the seed-word, and fruitfulness of the seed-word. He even explains to his disciples what the parable means. Ultimately, to bear fruit the seed-word must take root in rich soil. And we can take the parable and its interpretation one step further. The sower and seed is Jesus himself, *the Word*. The rich soil is our own hearts open to hearing and understanding that Word. Are our hearts open?

Connecting the Gospel

to the first reading: The promise God makes through Isaiah is that God's word will achieve "the end for which [God] sent it." Thus both the first reading and gospel promise that God's harvest will be fruitful and abundant.

to experience: Words are so widely scattered and sown in our daily living—for example, multi-sectioned daily newspapers, twenty-four-hour radio and TV, Facebook and Twitter, text messaging—that we can easily tune out. God's seed-word is also widely scattered and sown in our daily living. We are faced with a critical choice: tune in or tune out.

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: Isaiah compares God's word to the rain & down from heaven (first reading). Both inevitably accomplish which they are sent. In the parable of the sower and the seed that God's word does not always achieve its goal (gospel). G blocked by the choices of human hearts and the circumstar

We must be honest about the resistance to God's word th within the world and within our own hearts, but we need n of it. The psalm assures us that no matter how slow we are how reticent to let it grow, how distracted from the task, G both the grain and the land, "softening it with showers, / bl bring what has been planted to abundant harvest. We have this work, and to join all the world's fields and valleys in sl God's indomitable power.

to psalmist preparation: While the parable of the sower confronts you with the very real possibility of resisting Go the psalm turns your focus away from self to the gracious continuously waters and tills the earth and makes it fruitful resistance you put up against the word of God, God will pe "land" of your heart until you receive the seed that Jesus is fruit. What hope does this give you for yourself? for the ch

ASSEMBLY & FAITH-SHARING GROUPS

- What helps me to be rich soil for God's word is . . .
- My heart is most open to hearing and understanding Jesus, *the Word* when . . .
- My daily living witnesses to a heart open to God's word when I . . .

PRESIDERS

As presider, I receive the word of God from . . . I sow the word of God by . . .

DEACONS

When serving others, I am God's seed-word for them in that . . . They are God's seed-word for me in that . . .

HOSPITALITY MINISTERS

My hospitality tills the soil of the assembly's heart, making it ready for God's seed

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, July 16, 2017

Gospel (cont.)

Matt 13:1-23; L103A

This is why I speak to them in parables, because *they look but do not see and hear but do not listen or understand.*

Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in them, which says:

*You shall indeed hear but not understand,
you shall indeed look but never see.*

*Gross is the heart of this people,
they will hardly hear with their ears,
they have closed their eyes,
lest they see with their eyes
and hear with their ears
and understand with their hearts and be converted,
and I heal them.*

"But blessed are your eyes, because they see,
and your ears, because they hear.

Amen, I say to you, 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 then the parable of the sower.

The seed sown on the path is the one who hears the word of the kingdom without understanding it,
and the evil one comes and steals away what was sown in his heart.

The seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears the word and receives it at once with joy.
But he has no root and lasts only for a time.

When some tribulation or persecution comes because of the word,
he immediately falls away.

The seed sown among thorns is the one who hears the word,
but then worldly anxiety and the lure of riches choke the word
and it bears no fruit.

But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it,
who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold."

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