

[Readings: Isaiah 55:10-11; Psalm 65; Romans 8:18-23; Matt 13:1-23]

At a literal level, Jesus is talking about a sower. We know the parable.

If Jesus explains the parable so clearly, why do we need to keep hearing it?

Understanding the hidden nature of the parable is only the first stage in listening fruitfully to the word of God. The task ahead of each of us is a closer examination of ourselves. What kind of disciple are we?

Jesus teaches in parables because He wants us to look beyond the visible to that which is not visible. Are we not capable of misunderstanding the Word of God? Do we not confuse consolation in prayer for fidelity to Our Lord? Are we not also anxious, afraid to give up everything, to follow Christ unto the ends of the earth? Parables are about conversion. Do we want to be the kind of people who see beyond the visible to the invisible? Do we want to hear, understand, and bear fruit, or are we satisfied with what is on the surface?

St. Paul in the Letter to the Romans invites us to see creation in this way. There is a glory that awaits the created order. God will be all-in-all. But right now, creation is groaning. It is awaiting the fullness of redemption. We are awaiting the fullness of redemption. The groaning of creation is an invitation to deeper conversion, to a commitment to the Gospel. Life isn't going to come easy to us. Life ISN'T easy for us. But when God's Word becomes effective in our lives, it is worth the pain and suffering.

Dear friends, over the last months, we have seen this groaning. Men and women dying in hospitals, racism, violence on city streets, a politics defined by demonization. Creation is groaning, and it is hard to believe that this world, this history, this age may be transformed through the word of God.

But look harder, pierce beyond the visible to the invisible. See the glory that God intends even now for all those who bear fruit in Christ.

Listen to Isaiah in today's First Reading: "My Word shall not return to Me void, but shall do My will, achieving the end for which I sent It." God's Word IS effective. In creation, we read, "Then God said, 'Let there be... And so it was.'" "And the Word became flesh and found His dwelling place among us."

When God speaks, all creation obeys.

Today's Gospel parable reminds us that much of life does not turn out all right. Much of what we do, in fact, may look like failure. But God makes fruitful and abundant the hope and the grace that His sons and daughters are willing and able to accept. We wonder: will you and I ever make any real progress?

Perhaps we get down on ourselves because we have elements of all four kinds of soil within us: hard ground, rocky ground, thorny ground and fertile ground. We are not simply black and white. We are shades of gray and black and brown dirt. Throw in a few shades of red and orange clay, too.

Jesus never denied the power of evil or the reality of failure in life, or our own personal failures. Jesus encourages us to have confident hope in spite of it. The parables of Jesus are meant to be understood and to provide knowledge. Jesus appeals to His audience's experience and know-how. His parables are based on His observation of nature and of human activities. But above all, the parables of Jesus invite us to discover the Kingdom of God ALREADY here, through the very best of human experience: today, it's the generosity and patience of the sower. They challenge us to careful listening and to a generous response. God gives us the seeds to plant and to nurture.

We are all sowers of seed, seed of our own choosing and wants and dreams. Christ calls us as His disciples, to be sowers of the things and values of God in order that we -- or others after us -- may reap the harvest of God's final reign. God is not through with us until we have done His Word. Let us go out like the sower, preparing this world for a rich harvest of faith, hope and love. Let us look inward, at ourselves, and clear away the dusty soil of infidelity and water the ground with the obedience of love. Let us learn to see the world as a parable of divine mercy.

AMEN!