

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time A/2014

The readings of this Sunday talk about the power of the word of God. They show us how the word of God is efficient and capable of accomplishing what it is intended for. They invite us to welcome it in our life, to assimilate it and to live it out.

The first reading of Isaiah describes God's promise to the people of Israel. It compares the efficiency of God's promise to the efficacy of the rain and the snow that cannot fall without watering the earth. It highlights in particular the importance of the word that God pronounces and that achieves the end for which it is sent.

What is behind this text is the idea of God's faithfulness and fidelity toward his people in fulfilling his promise to them. There is also the idea that the word of God is efficient and performant, because when God speaks, what he promises comes to fulfillment.

This text allows us to understand the stakes of today's Gospel as Jesus speaks of the parable of the sower. First of all, Jesus compares the outcome of the word of God to the result that comes out when a sower plants the seeds in a field. He, then, portrays four situations relative to the plantation of the seeds, namely the path, the rocky ground, the thorns and the rich soil.

In order to illustrate the truth of his speech, Jesus shows how the seeds fallen on the path can be eaten by the birds, those on the rock can wither for lack of root, those among thorns can be choked, while those fallen on good soil can produce fruits.

After that, in order to respond to the question raised by his disciples why he speaks in parables to the Jews, Jesus explains that he does so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, because of the inconsistency of their life.

The Gospel finishes with Jesus' explanation of the parable as it illustrates the dispositions of the heart of those who listen to the word of God.

What do we learn from this Gospel? Today I want to talk about the prospect of the growth of the word of God in us and its potential obstacles. First of all, let me start with an assertion on the power of the human word. In fact, the human word is powerful, efficient and meaning what it says.

For instance, when one tells the other, "I love you", we realize that the other feels good. However, when he tells the other "I hate you", the other feels bad or is afraid. The positive or negative feeling that the pronounced words generate is an indication that the human word is a channel of energy that can build or destroy, that can do good or bad to a person.

In the same way, but with a high intensity of truth, the word of God is powerful and efficient. It means what it says, because nothing is impossible to God. Moreover, while the efficiency of the human word is limited to the circumstance of time and space, God's word is efficient independently of human circumstances and in its entire pronouncement.

However, the growth of the word of God and its efficiency in the human person depends on the disposition of the heart of the one who welcomes it. In that perspective, the disposition of the heart plays a big role in what the word can become in the life of someone. That is why the more we open up to the word of God and let it guide us, the more it can grow in us. The less we open up to it, the less it grows and bears fruit.

On a personal level, it means that if we want the word of God to grow and bear fruit in us, we better check the way we open up to it. In that sense, it is clear that if our heart is hard like a road ground, if it is impermeable like a rocky ground or full of negative things like a thorny field, we will never grow in Jesus. It is for that specific reason that we need to work on ourselves so that we make our heart as good as is a fertile soil capable of bearing fruit.

On the level of the proclamation of the word of God, it means that even if it is true that the success of the word of God depends on our disposition of heart, we should not, however, forget that God acts independently of human circumstances. Nothing can prevent his word to attain the goal for which it was sent. That is why, though there are obstacles, like road surface, the rocky ground, the thorny field, which can prevent the word to bear fruit, there is always possibility that some seed might fall on good soil.

That is a big encouragement and a source of hope for each one of us. First of all, whatever might be the difficulties the word of God can encounter in the history of the world, it will eventually bear fruit, because God does not sow in vain. After all, some seeds might fall on a road surface, on a rocky ground and even among thorns, but others can well fall on a good soil.

Second, in spite of the difficulties we can have in what we do on a daily basis, we should not be discouraged when things do not work very well our way, like in the case of the education of children, their schools or their life of marriage. We have always to remember that whatever might be our failure and mistake, there is always a chance that even a small portion of our work may succeed. What is needed is courage, patience and hard work in the hope of a blessed harvest at the appropriate time.

Let us pray that God may give us an attentive ear to listen to his word and put it into practice in our lives. Let us also ask him to help us change our conduct so that we become, not rocky or thorny ground, but good soil on which his word can fall and bear fruit. Let us, finally, ask him the grace of conversion so that we turn away from sin and everything that is opposed to him and prevents his word to grow in us. May God bless you all!

Isaiah 55: 10-11; Romans 8: 18-23; Matthew 11: 1-23



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