

## **Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time A/2017**

The readings of this Sunday talk about the power of the word of God. They show that 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 by it.

In the first reading, Isaiah talks about the assurance of God's promise to his people. It compares the assurance of God's promise to the efficiency 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 which achieves the aim for which it is sent.

What is behind this text is the affirmation of God's faithfulness and fidelity toward his people. There is also the idea that when God promises something, he fulfills it. The last idea is related to the truth of the efficiency and the performance of the word of God.

This text allows us to understand the point of today's Gospel in which Jesus speaks of the parable of the sower. First of all, the Gospel starts with the mention of Jesus preaching to the people from the boat on the sea while the crowd stands along the shore.

Then, it gives the details of the preaching in which Jesus compares the outcome of the word of God to what happens when a sower plants the seeds in a field. It singles out in particular four situations corresponding to the plantation of the seeds which can fall on the path, the rocky ground, the thorny soil or a rich soil.

After that, it refers again to the outcome of each of the situations by showing that 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.

The Gospel gives also the answer of Jesus to the question raised by the disciples about why he speaks to the crowd in parables by referring to the fulfillment of the scriptures and the inconsistency of the life of his listeners. The Gospel ends up with Jesus' explanation of the whole parable as referring to the dispositions of the heart of his listeners.

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 someone tells another, "I love you", we realize that the other feels really good and happy. But, when he tells him "I hate you", the other feels bad and is even afraid.

The positive or negative feeling that the pronounced words generate in people 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 dispositions of the heart of the one who welcomes it.

In that perspective, the dispositions of the heart play 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 surface, 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 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 the possibility that some seed might fall on good soil. That is a big consolation and a source of hope for each one of us.

What are the consequences of this vision? First of all, whatever might be the difficulties the word of God can encounter in the world, it will eventually bear fruit, because God does not sow in vain. Even if some seeds might fall on a road surface, on rocky ground or among thorns, it is always possible that others 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, etc. 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, then, 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 of heart 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!

**Isaiah 5: 10-11; Romans 8: 18-23; Matthew 13: 1-23**

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