

## **Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time A2023**

Let me start this homily with an observation. When a person tells another, "I love you", I often see the other one starts smiling, which is a sign that he feels good or is happy. If, however, he happened to say "I hate you", the other one becomes scared, feels bad and is afraid. The positive or negative feeling that the words pronounced generate in an individual is a sign that human word is a channel of energy that can build or destroy, do good or bad to a person.

In other words, Human word has a power to touch and transform a life; it can persuade or dissuade an individual. It can excite or shatter an individual. It can influence someone in bad or good way. If human words are able to achieve such a goal, how much more would the eternal word of God do? More than human word can do, God's word, with a high intensity of truth, is powerful and efficient. It means what it says for nothing is impossible to God. While the efficiency of human word is limited to the circumstances of time and space, God's word is efficient independently of human circumstances and in its entire pronouncement.

That is what God says through the mouth of the prophet Isaiah: "As the rain and the snow come down and do not return (...) till they have watered the earth, (...) so shall my word be. (...) My words shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it".

The questions that come up are these: If the word of God is as efficient and powerful as the prophet says, how can we explain that not all the people accept it straightaway? Why are not all converted once they listen to it? Where does it come that some accept God's word while others reject?

Jesus answers to these questions with the parable of the sower. For Jesus, the word of God is like the seeds that a sower plants in his farm. As the growth of the seeds depends on the quality of the soil, so the success of the word of God depends on the dispositions of the heart of those who listen to it.

The dispositions of heart of the listeners are symbolized in the parable by the path, the rocky ground, the thorns and the rich soil. In that sense, we have four types of people corresponding to the quality of soil on which the seeds fall in.

First, we have listeners whose heart is like a road surface. These are people in whom the word has no chance of gaining entry than the seed has no chance of developing on a path that people trample constantly. The reason that explains such an attitude is the power of evil that steals away that was sown in the heart, Our Lord says.

The second group is of listeners whose heart is like a rocky ground. These are people at the mercy of every new fashion. They live by the fashion and the mode. They drop things as quickly as they have taken them. They are enthusiastic for everything and for nothing, but never last in what they have chosen. They are ready to start, but never finish what they have embraced. Our Lord says that such an attitude is due to the lack of root.

The third group is of listeners whose heart is worried with all sort of problems of the world. They are so busy and preoccupied with many things that they do not give priority to the things of God. Their multiple preoccupations torment them like thorns that choke the seed to develop normally.

The last group is of listeners whose heart is like a fertile soil. Like the good ground, they are open to the word of God. As they listen to it, they act upon it. Such people understand what the Lord expects from them and strive to please him. Only those who do an effort to welcome the word of the Lord, to keep it and put it into practice are able to produce fruits.

The parable of the sower teaches us that human heart is a multiple layer-space that can be like a road surface, a rocky ground, a thorny land or a rich soil. Therefore, the dispositions of the heart play a big role in what the word of God can become in the life of someone. More we are open up to the word of God and let it guide us, more it can grow within us. Less we are open up to it, less it grows and bears fruit.

Consequently, if we want the word of God to grow and bear fruit within us, we better check the way we open up to it. If our heart is hard like a road ground, if it is impermeable like a rocky ground or full of negativity like a thorny field, we will never grow in our faith. For that reason we need to work on ourselves so that we make our heart as good as a fertile soil is capable of bearing fruit. This is an urgent task we cannot delay for tomorrow.

The parable of the sower teaches us also trust and hope in God when facing difficulties and failures in life. 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 a road surface, a rocky ground or a thorny field, which can prevent the word to bear fruit, there is always a possibility that some seed might fall on good soil.

That is a big encouragement and a source of hope for each one of us. 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. Though some seeds might fall on a road surface, on a rocky ground or among thorns, others might well fall on a good soil.

Applied to the education of our children, their difficulties in schools or in the life of marriage, the parable of the sower teaches that whatever might be our failures in what we do, there is always a chance that even a small portion of our work may succeed. We only have to be courageous, patient and keep working hard in hoping a good harvest at the appropriate time.

**Isaiah 55: 10-11; Romans 8: 18-23; Matthew 13: 1-23**



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