

Ordinary Time 15A 2017

Understanding What We Hear

The parable we just heard is familiar to all of us: A farmer scatters seed in hope of the harvest, and the ground on which the seed falls determines whether or not the seed will bear fruit.

When Jesus disciples hear this parable, however, they do not understand its meaning until he explains the mystery of the kingdom of heaven to them. The parable is not about farming but about the kingdom of heaven. The seed that the farmer scatters is the Word of the Kingdom that Jesus preaches, and the ground on which the seed falls is how people receive the Word. For, although Jesus preaches the Word to everyone, not everyone receives the Word in the same way.

First, there are many who hear the Word without understanding. They do not understand the mystery of the kingdom of heaven and its meaning for their lives, and so they do not change their life. And because they do not change their lives, the Word does not bear fruit in their lives.

Second, there are those who hear the message of the kingdom with joy but the Word does not take root in them because they do not nurture the Word. They do not pray, they do not study the Word, and so they quickly fall away because the Word is not rooted in them. What could have been a glorious harvest of goodness and holiness never matures because they are not rooted in Christ.

Third, there are others who receive the Word, but the cares and anxieties of the world choke the Word. The desire for wealth and possession, career and reputation, become all-consuming and more important than God's Word, and so the Word cannot bear fruit in their lives.

Finally, there are those who hear the Word of God with understanding. They hear the Word with a good and generous heart. They understand its meaning and importance for their lives. They understand that God is at work in their lives, and so they change and reform their lives to prepare a place for the Word. They understand they must follow the Lord in the way of discipleship if the Word is to bear fruit in their lives. And so they gladly embrace the way of discipleship because they understand that nothing is more important than God's Word.

In today's reading from the Prophet Isaiah, the Prophet writes that just as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return until they have watered the earth, so the Word that comes forth from God does not return to God until it has achieved the end for which God has sent it. *The Word of God is Jesus Christ,* and this Word always achieves God's purpose. In God's way, in God's time, *even when we try to frustrate it,* the Word of God achieves its purpose. Sometimes the Word achieves its purpose by pronouncing judgment on us because we refuse to embrace it. But when we receive that Word with an understanding heart, the Word of God brings salvation and bears fruit thirty, sixty, a hundred fold. Our lives are changed and transformed into the very image of the Word who is Jesus Christ. The more we hear and receive the Word, the more we become like the Word, who is Jesus Christ.

Let Christ, the Word of God, enter your life, and God will transform you into the image of his Son. Hear and accept that Word that is Christ with an understanding heart and you will understand God's purpose for your life.