

Sunday Message

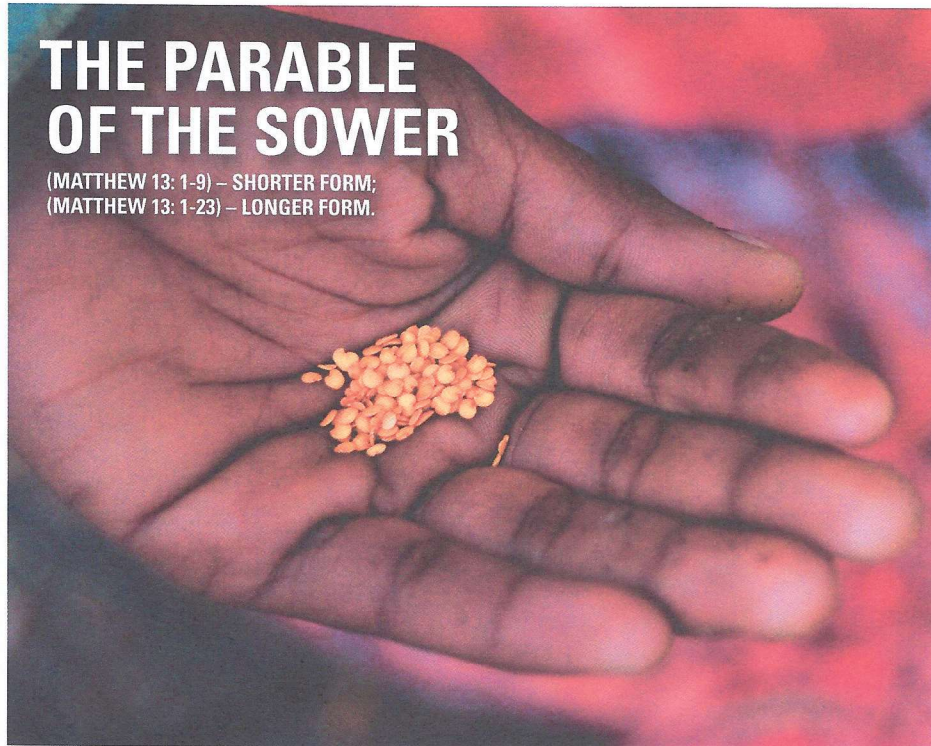
15TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year A • 16 July 2023 • Psalter Week 3

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

(MATTHEW 13: 1-9) – SHORTER FORM;
(MATTHEW 13: 1-23) – LONGER FORM.



The first thing that may strike you today is the hunger of the people to hear God's Word.

The crowds have gathered in such large numbers that Jesus must sit in a boat. He teaches them using parables or stories. Bishop Robert Barron (www.wordonfire.org) states that poetry and story-telling are so important in trying to reach life's deeper realities. In order for Jesus to explain the nature of God, he time and time again turns to story-telling to teach people the deeper realities of a life in God.

The Parable of the Sower contains that inherent challenge for all of us to be good listeners and receivers of God's Word. ■

LEARN

'Both the Old and New Testaments are like a mirror in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks at God, from whom she has received everything, until she is brought finally to see Him as He is, face to face.' (*Dei Verbum*, 7)

DO

This is the year of Matthew's Gospel. Get into the habit of reading a single chapter every week. You will find yourself naturally entering into the world of Jesus and his followers.



SAY

God our Father, help me to hear your Word with an open mind and heart. May it bear fruit in my life and increase my faith. Amen.

REFLECT

One of the great joys for art lovers and even curious minds like myself is a visit to 'Musée d'Orsay' in Paris. The works of Jean-Francois Millet is one of the many features there and his most famous piece is that of *The Sower*. The fame of the art work increased ten-fold with its appropriation by Vincent Van Gogh in the latter part of the 19th century. If you're computer literate, take the time to Google the two separate pieces and compare them. You will notice that Van Gogh's depiction has more colours but there are many similarities also.

Both artists demonstrate the generosity of the Sower. His satchel full of seed is resting on his left shoulder and you can tell by the extension of the Sower's right arm, that the seed is being spread generously across the tilled earth. The Sower walks with confident strides and is totally concentrated on the task in hand, spreading the seed. Since most of Millet's paintings depict peasants at work, we can presume that the Sower in this painting worked for a local landlord.

One can surmise that there was very little reward for his long hours of hard

work. The injustices against peasants are a feature of many 19th century French artists. However, despite this, the Sower continues to sow. He has an indomitable spirit that makes him good at his job and seeks little or no reward in return for his hours of labour.

Most of us have a great understanding as to the difficulties Jesus faced as the Sower of God's Word in the world. A lot of what he said fell on deaf ears and those who did listen, never really allowed the Word to take effect or change their lives. But Jesus never gave up in his task of preaching and showing God's love to the world. He is the ultimate Sower, the kind of person who continues to follow a path and seeks nothing in return.

We listen to the seed of God's Word each time we participate in the Eucharist and when we read the Bible. May this Word take root in us and effect our minds and hearts. May it not fall on deaf ears, for in sowing God's Word, Jesus opens us up to the possibility of encountering God. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

As for me, in justice I shall behold your face;
I shall be filled with the vision of your glory.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

O God, who show the light of your truth
to those who go astray,
so that they may return to the right path,
give all who for the faith they profess
are accounted Christians
the grace to reject whatever is contrary to the
name of Christ
and to strive after all that does it honour.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 55:10-11

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Thus says the Lord: 'As the rain and the snow
come down from the heavens and do not
return without watering the earth, making it
yield and giving growth to provide seed for
the sower and bread for the eating, so the
word that goes from my mouth does not
return to me empty, without carrying out my
will and succeeding in what it was sent to do.'

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 64

Response:

Some seed fell into rich soil,
and produced its crop.

1. You care for the earth, give it water,
you fill it with riches.
Your river in heaven brims over
to provide its grain. (R.)
2. And thus you provide for the earth;
you drench its furrows,
you level it, soften it with showers,
you bless its growth. (R.)
3. You crown the year with your goodness.
Abundance flows in your steps,
in the pastures of the wilderness it flows.
(R.)

4. The hills are girded with joy,
the meadows covered with flocks,
the valleys are decked with wheat.
They shout for joy, yes, they sing. (R.)

SECOND READING Romans 8:18-23

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Romans.

I think that what we suffer in this life can
never be compared to the glory, as yet
unrevealed, which is waiting for us. The
whole creation is eagerly waiting for God to
reveal his sons. It was not for any fault on
the part of creation that it was made unable
to attain its purpose, it was made so by God;
but creation still retains the hope of being
freed, like us, from its slavery to decadence,
to enjoy the same freedom and glory as the
children of God. From the beginning till now
the entire creation, as we know, has been
groaning in one great act of giving birth; and
not only creation, but all of us who possess
the first fruits of the Spirit, we too groan
inwardly as we wait for our bodies to be set
free.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia! Speak, Lord, your servant is
listening.
you have the message of eternal life.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL Matthew 13:1-23 (or short version
Matthew 13:1-9)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Matthew.

Jesus left the house and sat by the lakeside,
but such crowds gathered round him that
he got into a boat and sat there. The people
all stood on the beach, and he told them
many things in parables. He said, 'Imagine a
sower going out to sow. As he sowed, some
seeds fell on the edge of the path, and the
birds came and ate them up. Others fell on
patches of rock where they found little soil
and sprang up straight away, because there
was no depth of earth; but as soon as the
sun came up they were scorched and, not
having any roots, they withered away. Others
fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up
and choked them. Others fell on rich soil and
produced their crop, some a hundredfold,
some sixty, some thirty. Listen, anyone who
has ears!'

Then the disciples went up to him and
asked, 'Why do you talk to them in parables?'
'Because' he replied, 'the mysteries of the
kingdom of heaven are revealed to you, but
they are not revealed to them. For anyone
who has will be given more, and he will
have more than enough; but from anyone
who has not, even what he has will be taken
away. The reason I talk to them in parables
is that they look without seeing and listen
without hearing or understanding. So in
their case this prophecy of Isaiah is being
fulfilled: You will listen and listen again, but
not understand, see and see again, but not
perceive. For the heart of this nation has
grown coarse, their ears are dull of hearing,
and they have shut their eyes, for fear they
should see with their eyes, hear with their
ears, understand with their heart, and be

converted and be healed by me. 'But happy
are your eyes because they see, your ears
because they hear! I tell you solemnly, many
prophets and holy men longed to see what
you see, and never saw it; to hear what you
hear, and never heard it. 'You, therefore,
are to hear the parable of the sower. When
anyone hears the word of the kingdom
without understanding, the evil one comes
and carries off what was sown in his heart:
this is the man who received the seed on
the edge of the path. The one who received
it on patches of rock is the man who hears
the word and welcomes it at once with joy.
But he has no root in him, he does not last;
let some trial come, or some persecution
on account of the word, and he falls away
at once. The one who received the seed in
thorns is the man who hears the word, but
the worries of this world and the lure of
riches choke the word and so he produces
nothing. And the one who received the seed
in rich soil is the man who hears the word
and understands it; he is the one who yields
a harvest and produces now a hundredfold,
now sixty, now thirty.'

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
(all bow during the next two lines)

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living
and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Look upon the offerings of the Church, O Lord,
as she makes her prayer to you,
and grant that, when consumed by those
who believe,
they may bring ever greater holiness.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for her young:
by your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and
my God.
Blessed are they who dwell in your house,
for ever singing your praise.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having consumed these gifts, we pray, O Lord,
that, by our participation in this mystery,
its saving effects upon us may grow.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.