



***Fifteenth Sunday Ordinary Time 2005***

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

We could call today, Seed Sunday. The readings are about that ordinary yet wondrous thing, the seed. To look at an acorn and image the 100year old oak is impossible. To look at each other and imagine our beginnings as seed, is awe inspiring.

There was once a bag of seed. A farmer took it and began to walk across his field broadcasting the seed to left and right. Some landed on the path, a gift to the birds that were following closely behind the farmer. some fell on the stony ground at the corners of the field, the warmth germinated the seed but as the ground was too hard the little shoots perished after a day.

Some seed fell in the thorn bushes, they were sheltered for a time but the stronger thorns soon choked the wheat. Much seed fell in the good soil, there it flourished and was fruitful.

A good parable is a gift. We are meant to take it and wrestle with it. Its like a hard centred chocolate, it lasts and goes on releasing sweetness. A story has us asking questions. What was that? Why? How?

In a long explanation Matthew describes what he understood the parable meant for his community. It might not mean the same for us. The seed is the word of God, offered freely to the people by Jesus, without distinction.

The gift of God is offered freely, so why don't people hear it and respond? The community of Matthew were challenged by the mystery of acceptance and rejection. Why do good people, religious people shut their hearts to the movement of the Spirit preferring the security of the old ways. Something of their dilemma faces Christians today as young people seek to return to old ways which are a kind of perpetual childhood. There are leaders who even encourage such movements.

The gospel story uses metaphor to show how different people encounter and respond to the Word of God.

The hard-hearted cannot hear, they believe in their own righteousness.

The shallow-hearted, embrace the new but don't seek a deep of understanding.

The crowded-hearted hear but don't discern.

The open-hearted hear the Word of God and recognise that real *hearing* requires transformation and action. They recognise that the Word of God is active, it reaches out to proclaim Good News, to inspire, and to serve. Even among the disciples there will be differences in the passion with which they respond.

What is pictured for us is a typical mixed community; in fact any parish, anywhere, anytime. People join a group for a variety of reasons. People stay in groups for other reasons. People followed Jesus because they liked him, some enjoyed the supportive fellowship, some thought it was a revolutionary movement, only a few grasped the vision of the reign of God. They recognised that they were called to be more than followers, they were called to be other Christs.

It shouldn't surprise us that our groups are similar. We need to remember another parable about seeds, let God attend to the harvest we are the labourers.

Isaiah uses the picture of the water cycle to speak of God's Word. Rain falls, the earth is watered, seeds are nourished, the sun calls the water back in clouds ready to be given again.

This image tells us that the Word of God is not lost. God continually pours it forth for all. This prodigality reminds us not to be anxious about whether we are successful or not as disciples. It's God's work. All we are asked to do is to co-operate with the grace of God according to our abilities.

Paul's image of all creation groaning in labour for the new to be born encourages us to accept the pain and disappointment that might be part of our discipleship, our efforts will bear fruit in God's time.

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