

Parable of the Sower of the Seeds
July 16, 2017, 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time
by
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The other day I read a story about a man named Joe. Joe had a beloved, faithful dog named Jacque who died. Joe went to his parish priest and asked, "Father, could you say some prayers in Mass for my dog?" The pastor said, "Joe you know very well that we don't pray for animals at Mass. Why don't you go down to that Baptist church and ask them? I'm sure they'll do it." Joe said, "Well, ok, Father, I'll do that. Oh, by the way, do you think they'll be offended if I offer them \$10,000 to pray for my dog?" The pastor said: "Why Joe, you never said Jacque was Catholic!"

Some Scripture scholars believe that understanding a parable, like the one we heard in the Gospel about the Sower of the Seeds, is less like breaking a code and more like getting a joke. The punch-line of a joke is not funny unless you have been properly "set up" by what precedes it. So, the Lord used parables, in a similar manner, to reinforce His message.

This Parable of the Sower illustrates the difference between people who place emphasis on God's Word, and those who place emphasis on things that distract from God's Word. Those responsive to God's Word produce fruit. Those who are unresponsive do not. It is that simple.

Why are some of us unresponsive? It is because we become distracted. We are easily distracted by three things: the world, the flesh, and the Devil.

Let's take the world first: Christ says: The seed sown among thorns is the one who hears the word but then worldly anxiety and the lure of riches choke the word and it bears no fruit. In other words: "...I tell you it is easier for a camel to go through the eye

of the needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.” The **LURE** of riches—a **BIG** distraction.

The Flesh is a distraction: Christ says: “The seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears the word and receives it at once with joy. But he has no root and lasts only for a time. When some tribulation or persecution comes...he immediately falls away.” Essentially, he stumbles! In other words, “The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.”

The Devil causes distraction: Christ says: “The seed sown on the path is the one who hears the word of the kingdom without understanding it, and the evil one comes and steals away what was sown in his heart.” In other words: Satan deceives us and tempts us into sin. We should recognize Satan to be our worst enemy.” So, we must be on guard not to become distracted. We must guard our faith.

Now, this parable of the sower can give the impression that if the seed doesn't take root in a person, that person is no longer able to be saved. That is not the case at all. Christ does not spread the seed just once. He uses us to continue spreading the seed, on His behalf, throughout our lives.

I am sure many of us have known people who began to fall in love with the Lord, and may have even entered the Church, but then fell away.

I recall one elderly gentlemen who told me he grew up Catholic, but then rejected the faith as a young adult because of some great trials he experienced—the seed did not effectively take root. He became a professed atheist, writing and speaking against the Church and against God.

In our first encounter, the subject of faith came up and he demanded that I prove that God exists. I told him that faith is believing in someone even though they are not visibly present. He told me that he would not believe in something he could not see. I told him that he actually did believe without seeing since there was another person down the hall whom he couldn't see, but in fact he believed was present there. He told me that he had not thought about faith in those terms and invited me to visit him at his house the next week.

Well I, along with a number of other parishioners visited him regularly for several years. There was also an entire group of Catholics who were praying for him—they were interceding for him. He was fascinated with the idea there could be a Communion of Saints, and that people were praying for him. Even though there was no proof of it, he believed they were praying. That is how the Gospel was spread. People believed in the truthfulness of those who were Disciples of Christ.

In that first visit, he told me he wanted to debate the existence of God and I told him I felt compelled instead to talk to him about his relationship with God and most especially about his immortal soul. He fought the idea of the existence of God until about two weeks before he died. Within a few hours of his death, he called for the priest, went to confession, and received the anointing of the sick and the Apostolic Pardon.

So, the seed of faith is sown more than once. And that is what we are called to do, to continue sowing the seeds of faith, because the immortal soul of each person is a very serious issue. Eternal life is by far more important than our temporal lives on earth. What comes next is most important.

The Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen said: "Faith is far more than the passive acquiescence to a proof; it is a dynamic thing accompanied by an intense desire for the possession of God as author and finisher of our lives."

We are called to have hearts which are open to the God who loves us, who heals us, who saves us. We are called to be people who trust God, and who live lives which proclaim God's saving truth regardless of the cost to ourselves, gladly laying down our lives to serve the truth which sets us free. When we do that, we help Christ reap a great harvest of souls, which is our commission—so that the world may believe and give glory to God.

I'd like to conclude with a story. There was a man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had a habit of walking on the beach before he began his work. One day he was walking along the shore and saw a young man reaching down, picking up something and, very gently, throwing it into the ocean. As he got closer, he called out, "Good morning! What are you doing?" The young man paused, looked up and replied, "Throwing starfish into the ocean." "Why are you doing that?" "Well, the sun is up and the tide is going out, if I don't throw them in they'll die." The writer said: "But, young man, don't you realize that there are miles and miles of beach and starfish all along it. You can't possibly make a difference!" The young man listened politely, then bent down, picked up another starfish and threw it into the sea and said, "I made a difference for that one."

So, go, plant more seeds of faith, intercede on behalf of those who need God's mercy the most, and let God use you to make a difference for at least one soul.