

# Commentary on Sunday Scripture – Year A

## Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

### **First reading:**

(Isaiah 55.10-11)

*The effective Word of God*

This poetic passage from Isaiah about the word of God may be understood on two levels. On one level, it prepares for Jesus' parable in the gospel reading about the sower and the seed. But while Isaiah stresses the effectiveness of the word of God, Jesus reflects on the failure of his word with many sections of his hearers, as well as on the brilliant success of his word in those who bear fruit 'thirtyfold, sixtyfold, a hundredfold'.

On another level, it prepares for the meditation on the Word of God in the prologue to the gospel of John: 'In the beginning was the Word; the Word was with God and the Word was God.' This helps to explain just how God, the awesome and inexpressible, can be manifested and active in creation.

In Genesis, God created by his Word ('Let there be light, let there be a vault, etc. '), so the Word is seen not as something separate from and independent of God, but as the concrete expression of God's will, the manifestation of divine power. The Word that comes forth from God's mouth and does not return unfulfilled is, on this level, the creative power of God, unstoppably fulfilling the will of God in the world.

### **Question:**

*What does the image of Jesus as God's Word convey?*

### **Second reading:**

(Romans 8.18-23)

*Creation Freed from Corruption*

In our reading of Romans 8 on life in the Spirit of the Risen Christ, we have missed out (they are used on a separate occasion) a few crucial verses on our adoption as sons, enabling us - both men and women - to call God 'Abba, Father'.

This intimate Aramaic family name, used by Jesus to his Father in his agonized prayer in the Garden (Mark 14.36), can be used by all his followers who share his life. With Jesus, we are heirs of God, sharing his inheritance. Not only ourselves, however, but the whole of creation is renewed and re-created by the Spirit. It all takes on a new dimension and a new life, groaning in the Spirit to be released from frustration.

This is a new reason for renewed human beings to care for God's creation. In the first place, we were created in the image of God to further and to complete his creation. Now, re-created as adopted sons and heirs of God, our responsibility is increased and intensified.

As yet, we have only the first fruits of the Spirit, but first fruits make sense and have their value only in view of the fullness and completion of the harvest.

### **Question:**

*Are there any echoes of such disunity in your community?*

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## Gospel:

*(Matthew 13.1-23)*

### *The Parable of the Sower*

Like any good teacher, Jesus uses pictures - or parables. Ever heard the one about the elephant and the wasp? Or electricity like a toy train going round a room? Anyway, for the next three weeks we have some of these pictures, to show us what Jesus is trying to do.

This first one is rather sad. Whatever he does seems to fail: seed pecked up by birds, scorched by the sun, choked by thistles. What are my pecking birds, my scorching sun, my choking thistles, which annihilate the seed Jesus sows in me? Different for every one of us.

But some, just a little, of the seed bears a fantastic harvest. There must be something I can show to the Lord with pride and gratitude: 'Look, this is the seed you gave me; it has grown, developed, and here is your harvest.'

Jesus, too, reflected on his mission to establish his Father's sovereignty on earth. Jesus, too, got depressed and wondered if he was getting anywhere. It was only when he had failed utterly, alone, deserted and tortured, that his perseverance won the crown. Jesus doesn't want the successful. He wants the failures as his followers - and that is where the harvest lies.

## Question:

*Does this parable show Jesus optimistic or disappointed?*

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