

The Parables of Jesus—Part 1 (15th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

Isaiah 55:10-11—God Gives Seed to the Sower

1. Rain that gives “seed the sower” = “my word” that goes forth; “shall not return empty”

Psalm 65—The Seed that Falls on Good Ground yields a Fruitful Harvest

1. The Lord “visits” the earth and “waters it”; makes it fruitful (vv. 9-13)

Romans 8:18-23—Creation Itself will Be Set Free

1. “Creation itself”: “longing” for the “revealing” (Greek *apokalypsis*) of the sons of God

Matthew 13:1-23—The Parable of the Sower (Beginning of Parables Discourse)

1. “Parables” (Greek *parabolē*; Hebrew *mashal*)—“comparison,” “riddle,” “proverb”
2. The Parable of the Sower: goes out to “sow” seeds (13:1-9)
 - a. The Path: birds come and devour them
 - b. Rocky Ground: no depth of soil; grow quick, die fast (no roots)
 - c. Among Thorns: the thorns grew up and “choked them”
 - d. Good Soil: brings forth “grain” 60X, 30X, 100X (seeds to seeds?)
 - e. Riddle: “He who has ears let him hear!” (Where is the ‘twist’?)
3. Why Does Jesus Teach in Parables? (13:10-17)
 - a. Common Answer: simple form of teaching that anyone can understand
 - b. Parables are *comparisons* drawn from everyday life
 - c. Also *riddles*: they *reveal* and *conceal* the mystery of the kingdom (CCC 546)
 - d. Disciples: parables reveal the “secrets” (Greek *mystēria*) of the kingdom
 - e. Others: parables conceal the mysteries (cf. Isaiah 6:14-15)
 - f. Blessing of Disciples “Eyes” and “Ears” (13:16)
4. Explanation: Seed = “the word of the kingdom” (13:18-23)
 - a. The Path = those who hear but do not understand (Birds = “the evil one”)
 - b. Rocky Ground: those who accept, but fall away when suffering comes
 - c. Thorns = “cares of the world” and “delight in riches” choke the word; no fruit
 - d. Good Soil: “he who hears the word and *understands* it”
 - e. 60X, 30X, 100X: amazing harvest! ($7^{1/2}X$ average; 10X a good harvest)
(see Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 150)

The Catechism on the Parable of the Sower and Meditation

1. Three Kinds of Prayer:
 - a. Vocal Prayer (CCC 2700-2704)
 - b. Meditation (CCC 2705-2708)
 - c. Contemplative Prayer (CCC 2709-2719)
2. Meditation: “the mind seeks to understand the why and how of the Christian life” (CCC 2705) (e.g., Scripture, the Fathers, Spiritual Reading, etc.)

Christians owe it to themselves to develop the desire to meditate regularly, lest they come to resemble the three first kinds of soil in the parable of the sower. (CCC 2707)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (15th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

1. What do you think of Jesus’ explanation of why he teaches in parables (Matt 13:10-17)? How does this square with other explanations you may have heard?

2. Which of the four kinds of soil do you identify with in the parable? Why?

3. Review the *Catechism’s* section on Vocal Prayer, Meditation, and Contemplation. Do you “meditate” on Scripture “regularly,” as the Catechism states (CCC 2707)? If not, why not? If so, what fruits do you see it bearing in your life?

For Further Study

1. Three Kinds of Prayer:

- a. Vocal Prayer (CCC 2700-2704)
- b. Meditation (CCC 2705-2708)
- c. Contemplative Prayer (CCC 2709-2719)

An excellent, concise discussion of the three main “expressions of prayer” and how to cultivate them in one’s spiritual life.

2. Klyne R. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008). A truly comprehensive (but readable) study of all the major parables of Jesus by a Protestant scholar. Very helpful for putting the parables in their original context. For intermediate or advanced students of Scripture.