

Mt 13:1-23; Isa 55:10-11; Rom 8:18-23 Soil in Our Hearts

Do you ever wonder: Will our pets, like dogs and cats, join us in heaven?

Listen to what St. Paul said, *For [ALL] CREATION awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God* (Rom 8:19) ...*[that is, to] share in the glorious freedom of the children of God* (Rom 8:21).

That means heaven will include all of creation not merely humankind!

Because His Word, the Word of God, causes things to happen. It's like performative speech:

In a wedding, when spouses say their vows, it causes the marriage to happen. When a judge pronounces judgment, it causes the judgment to happen.

Like God said in the first reading: The rain and snow come down from heaven and do not return to heaven, until they water the earth giving us food and life (Isa 55:10).

Just so, the Word of God has come down from heaven and will not return to heaven, until the will of God is achieved for which the Word of God was sent (Isa 55:11).

What is the Word of God? The Word of God is Jesus Christ (Jn 1:1-5).

Everything Jesus said, everything Jesus did, His love, mercy, healing, forgiveness and love...is the Word of God speaking and causing what it says to happen—which is our salvation!

But sometimes our hearts are like the soil of a hardened footpath. Like the scribes and Pharisees--we may think we know it all. Or our hearts may be hardened by habitual sin and anger.

So we close our hearts to the Word of God. The Word of God takes no root. And like birds of prey, the devil himself will snatch it away.

Sometimes our hearts are like the soil on rocky ground. We see that in Lent when so many people come to Ash Wednesday and it sets their faith on fire. Enthusiastic, but under the surface, superficial.

The Word of God does take root, but it doesn't last. When our prayers go unanswered, when we suffer--like when others make fun of us...how quickly our faith fades away.

Sometimes our hearts are like the soil with thorny bushes. The Word of God does take root, but it bears no fruit.

Because thorns, like false gods--the desire for wealth, power and pleasure, become our priority. It chokes the Word of God out of us. So, we bear no fruit.

Like Jesus said, *you cannot serve [both] God and mammon* (Mt 6:24).

Let's face it. There are times when our hearts have been like each of these soils. But what we should really want is a heart like good and rich soil (Mt 13:8, 23).

That means a *receptive* heart. A heart that receives, listens and understands the Word of God—in our heart.

Where do we find the Word of God? In the words of Scripture, in the words of the liturgy, in the words of the sacraments, and in the living tradition of the Holy Catholic Church.

Because a *receptive* heart, is a heart that *bears [much] fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold* (Mt 13:23).

What is that fruit? St. Paul says, *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control* (Gal 5:22-23).

And what about the Sower? This parable is not only about how well we receive the Word of God, but how well we *respond* to it—how well we spread it.

Because we have been sent into this world not only to receive, listen and understand. We have been sent into this world to *live* the life to which Jesus is calling us. To live a life of loving one another as He loves us!

Yet, there will be setbacks. As a priest, many parents come to be discouraged, they blame themselves, because as hard as they have worked to pass the faith on to their children...they walked away from the faith.

Why? Maybe the soil of their hearts was too hardened, too superficial, too concerned with worldly concerns. We cannot control another person's soil.

All we can do, and this is what we must do...is keep planting the seeds! Never give up!

So, let us receive His Word in confession when He forgives our sins. And may we respond by sharing the seeds of His mercy with anyone who offends us.

Let us receive His Word when we receive the real presence of Jesus Christ in Holy Eucharist. And may we respond by planting the seeds of living for God in Jesus Christ,...

...because, I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me (Gal 2:20).

And, let us receive His Word when we look up at the cross and receive the love of His most precious blood poured out for our salvation...

And may we respond by planting the seeds of receiving His love and using His love, to love others the way He loves us.