

## The Sower and the Seed

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Sometimes preaching is easy and sometimes it's not so easy. This is one of those not-so-easy times. You see, as soon as you hear Jesus start the parable, you already know the ending. Just like when he starts the parable of the Prodigal Son with the words, "A man had two sons", so today when He starts with "A sower went out to sow", we immediately know the rest.

Some of the seed falls on the path and the birds come and eat it up. Some of the seed falls on rocky ground, where it had little soil and so when the sun came up, it was scorched and withered for lack of roots. Some of the seed falls among thorns and the thorns grew and choked it. And of course, in the end, some of the seed falls on good ground and produces fruit, a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold.

Jesus then explains the parable to the disciples. The seeds are us and how we receive the word of God. Some of us will hear the word but not understand it and so, the evil one comes and steals away what was sown in our hearts. Some will hear the word and receive it at once with joy. But since there is no foundation, when trials and struggles come upon us, we fall away. And so on and so on.

A few years ago I related a story from Fr. Joe Robinson about a woman depressed over the state of the world. She longed for love among her family and friends, peace among all people, compassion for the poor and vulnerable. There were problems everywhere as she saw so much selfishness, greed, hatred and lack of moral values.

One day she came upon a little shop. She walked in and was surprised to see someone behind the counter who reminded her of Jesus. She couldn't believe it really was Jesus, but the similarity was so striking that she just had to go to Him and ask: "Excuse me, are you Jesus?" "I am" "Do you work here?" "No, I am the owner." "What do you sell here?" "Well, I really don't sell anything. It's all free. I have here just about anything you might want. You're welcome to walk around the aisles and see what you might be interested in. Make a list of all the things you want and bring it back to me. I'll see what I can do for you."

She was amazed at what she saw on the shelves: peace on earth, food to feed the hungry, clean air and water, warm clothing for the poor, forgiveness. The woman compiled a long list and brought it back to Jesus. When He looked at all the items she had written down He smiled and said “no problem.”

He bent down behind the counter and ran His fingers through several boxes. He then stood up and laid out a series of small envelopes for the woman. “What are these?” she asked. “Seed packets,” Jesus replied. “This is a catalogue store.” “You mean I don’t get the finished product?” she asked. “No,” Jesus said. “Just take these seeds home, plant them and nurture them and help them grow and you will be quite pleased with the results.” She said “Oh!” and left the store without taking anything with her.

Fr. Robinson summarizes the story by suggesting that most of us want God to solve problems for us overnight, and when He does that’s great, but mostly He gives us the means and the help we need and calls us to have faith and patience. Live by God’s word Fr. Joe says, and it will not disappoint us. As God promised in today’s first reading: “my word will not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it.”

Another author says much the same thing but by way of a series of questions. What is the word of God that we need to speak by our life fully lived? Is it a word of kindness and compassion? Is it a word of redress and challenge? Is it a word of forgiveness and healing? Is it a word of guidance? Sustenance? Nurture? Liberation? Is it a word of love?

The author concludes by reminding us that we are a word spoken by God. Who we become in this life gives voice to that word. How will we as words spoken by God, accomplish the will of God through the action of the Word (capital “W”) in, with and through us so that we, too, might water a parched creation? No one can answer that question for us but we ourselves.