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Daily Reflections



Center for Spiritual Development

NURTURING THE SEEDS GOD SOWS

By Elisabeth Beall

Today's Gospel

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Hear the parable of the sower.

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.

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 because of the word, he immediately falls away.

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.

But the seed sown on rich soil is the one who hears the word and understands it,

who indeed bears fruit and yields a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold.”

MATTHEW 13:18-23

Reflection

My dad has a few pet phrases – as most dads do, I suppose! But I bet the one I have heard the most times during the course of my life is “A word, once spoken, cannot be recalled.”

It’s not hard to understand – obviously, we cannot turn back time, or modify someone’s memory, to “erase” something we wish we hadn’t said in the first place. (I don’t even have any luck with the “recall email” function to grab back an email I thought better of sending!) But though I had heard this phrase so, so many times, and I could comprehend the logic behind it, I didn’t *really* understand what it meant until I unthinkingly said something hurtful, and saw how my words had wounded someone else. Only then did I fully grasp the bigger truth of these seven words, which should have pointed me to thinking before I spoke, toward considering how others might be impacted by something I said.

Today’s Gospel reading reminds me of this, because it feels like there’s a category missing when Jesus lists the different situations into which seed can be sown. Certainly there are times when we can receive a message and it’s an “in one ear, out the other” situation – or we’re distracted by our own worries, and don’t have the bandwidth to absorb something new.

But surely we have all experienced a time when we learned a lesson of some type and that knowledge faded – and we had to learn it all over again. That re-learned lesson, or re-absorbed experience, may stick the second or third or tenth time – like the meaning of my dad’s words finally did.

I imagine there aren’t many among us who learn or hear or see something one time, and after that, there’s no need for any further reminders: that lesson or experience has been fully internalized and understood. Isn’t that one of the important reasons for continuing to read scripture, to hear it at Mass, to pray over it – so that we can glean every drop of meaning from it, and really take it into our hearts? (Even the writer of this Gospel understands the importance of repetition -- the parable of the sower was also shared, in different words, earlier in this same chapter!)

To this telling of the parable, I’d like to add another category to the ones Jesus listed: the seed that was sown on soil where aggressive weeds thrive, guzzling

all the nutrients. This seed isn't lost; it just needs to be cared for. We can pull out the weeds, water and fertilize and stake the fledgling plant to help it grow bigger and stronger.

Living out our faith isn't a "one and done" situation. Every day, every hour, every minute, we have another opportunity to take God's love into our hearts, and to share that love with the people around us. Where the seeds of the Good News initially land may matter less than the care we take to nurture them within ourselves.





Female Gardener Weeding Among Flowers
Photo by Katarzyna Bialasiewicz

For Pondering

- Do you recall a situation where you had to learn a lesson, or experience something, more than one time to absorb its whole meaning? How did that last time make you feel -- frustrated, weary, relieved, joyful, or ...?
 - What are your favorite spiritual practices to make the soil of your soul more receptive to the seeds God plants there?
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For Prayer

Gardener's Prayer

Help us, Oh God, to be ever mindful of the beauties around us.

May we grow with our flowers

in gentleness, patience, courage, laughter, and love.

As we turn the soil and plant our seed, may we learn faith:

faith in the goodness of the earth,

the clemency of the sun,

the fullness of the clouds.

May we be grateful for the privilege of cooperating with You

in nurturing even one tiny flower;

And grant that we may know the great joy

that comes from sharing with others.

ADAPTED FROM JULIE HOWARD MOTHERALL

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