

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY [A]

Isaiah 55:10-11; Romans 8:18-23; Matthew 13:1-23

God is not stingy. God holds nothing of Himself back for us.

In today's parable, the first of a series of parables about the meaning of God's Kingdom, the sower sows seeds far and wide.

There is no stinginess in God. God holds nothing of Himself back.

Jesus provides us with an explanation of the parable and we do well to listen carefully to Jesus' explanation.

Some seed sowed lands on the path. Some hear God's Word but do not understand it. It is difficult to imagine many – if anyone – in our land who has not heard about Jesus, who has not heard at least the Holy Name of Jesus.

We will not understand God's Word until we are willing to understand it.

A recent study shows that Catholics are second only to Jews in the ineffectiveness of passing on their religious tradition and heritage.

Are you kidding me? This is deeply alarming. Please say that it is not so!

God is not stingy however the contemporary research suggests that many people are quite stingy, choosing to live life on their terms with nary a care for the eternal and divine.

The same study goes on to show that most Americans, including Catholics, favor a radical *tolerance* in terms of religious belief. Now mind you when tolerance means treating others respectfully and the like it is a good quality. However when the word "tolerance" is twisted to mean that "everyone can believe whatever they wish and it does not matter" then God's undivided truth gives way to politically correct nonsense.

The same study further shows that there is a shocking ignorance among Americans (including Catholics in America) regarding the understanding of their own belief system, dogmas and doctrines.

We, too, are prey to politically correct nonsense if we are unwilling to understand our Catholic Faith. If we are inept at knowing, loving and serving God and if we fail to teach God's Word well to our children, then we become a part of the deadly problem.

If we do not desire God's Word – I'm just too busy and cannot concern myself with God, but maybe later" - if we are not willing to open our hearts and minds to

God's Holy Word then we become the seed that sown on the path and get trampled underfoot.

Before we can understand God's Word, we have to be willing to listen and learn, we have to desire God, we have to want to hear and consider what God is saying to us.

Previous generations of believers in and around Sandusky dared to desire God so that we might know, love and serve God and others. Early on they built a solid Catholic school so to hand on the faith and form Christian leaders. In fact, the history of our area cannot be accounted truthfully without highlighting the enormous local contributions made by our Catholic school and its remarkable alumni.

Early generation German and Irish Catholic immigrants in this area (and later Italian and Hispanic Catholics) were not deterred in their faith by awful bigotry and despicable discrimination many of them faced. Their desire for God moved them mightily to sacrifice and live generously for others. Their desire for God is seen stunningly in this parish church (along with the other two Catholic churches in the city) which so fittingly testifies to the importance of their faith in God and His Church.

My friends, there is no stinginess in God. God holds nothing of Himself back.

Next the Lord Jesus explains that *the seed sown on rocky ground is the one who hears the Word and receives it with joy but it has no roots and it lasts only for a time*. When difficulties and disappointments arise, this person loses confidence.

This, too, happens all the time. People can be fascinated by the spiritual and profoundly moved by the religious. A retreat of sorts or even a traumatic event can turn people on to God's Word and there is nothing wrong with this for this may be the way that God chooses to plant the seed of His Word. But without discipline and wholeheartedness the first fervor wanes and vibrant faith gives way to a mere fad.

Nothing we ever take serious is unaccompanied by discipline and wholeheartedness. Life is difficult and those aspects of life most important require hard work. We don't have to be told what is important in the life of another because we see what is important in the choices they make.

That which is truly important matters truly. When something (or someone) matters – guess what - we don't have to convince someone it matters.

Is it true that for many Americans, including Catholics, a sense of wholehearted practice of their faith has faded? Do you think so? Are we surprised that

people's convictions don't last? Are we surprised that religion becomes superficial for many people?

- "I don't get anything out of Mass."
- "I don't have time for God right now."
- "You don't understand - the kids have too many activities."

Well, no. When something is taken seriously it is surrounded by discipline and desire. That which is truly important matters truly. The Lord Jesus says His Holy Word is truly important and is to matter truly in all of our lives.

Now we arrive at the third shortcoming. *The seed sown among thorns is the one who hears the God's Word but then worldly anxiety and the lure of riches choke it off and it bears no fruit.* That is very direct, isn't it – very telling. Some people hear the God's Word and take it in, but then they are unable to maintain their focus, that is their priorities get out of whack.

What do I mean?

The Word of God must be the central and defining dynamic of one's life. To know the will of God, to know the mind of God, to understand His purpose and path is all important. Without it you lose your way in the midst of all the conflicting voices and inclinations of the world.

It doesn't mean for a second you can't be interested in lots of other things.

But the Word of God brings order and balance to all those other interests. What the Lord here calls "worldly anxieties and the lure of riches" are lesser concerns that obscure and compromise what ought to be the primary concerns of one's life.

Simply put what the Lord Jesus is warning us about is *money, sex and power*. When money or sex or power become a defining passion – and not God's Holy Word – to use a word from our German Catholic ancestors, *Actung!* Look Out!

Have you given something (or someone) other than God a dominating role?
Have money, sex or power choked off your interest in and love for God?

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