

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Yr A

[Reading I: Isaiah 55:10-11](#)

[Responsorial Psalm: 65:10, 11, 12-13, 14](#)

[Reading II: Romans 8:18-23](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 13:1-23](#)

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/071623.cfm>



There are three important points that the scripture selections highlight today. God self reveals the divine to us in a personal way. God does this in various ways, including through the Word of God. God is also active in and through all creation that awaits God's plan's fullness.

Revelation is a gift from God to humanity. It was God who decided to reveal the divine to us. We may have reasoned that there is a higher power on our own, but God wanted a more personal and intimate link with us. God revealed something in creation with all its beauty and complexity. Science continues to explore the created world, from the atoms to the galaxies. This handiwork of God reveals something of the creator. God is revealed in the very gift of life that we each have. We can do nothing to control our next breath or heartbeat. It is all a gift from God. God is also revealed in the deeds of God through the ages, mainly through the events of biblical history, the Exodus, and the return from Babylon. One of the Jewish hymns associated with the Passover celebration is "Dayenu"; it would have been enough. If God had only created the world, it would have been enough, or if God only freed us from slavery, that would have been enough.

God is revealed through the people whom God has called to leadership and particular ministry

, in the lives and ministries of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs, the Prophets, the Monarchs, and the faithful people of every age. Through their service and response to God, we come to know God. God spoke to us through events, people, and the community's life. If we listen, we come to know God deeply, personally, and intimately. Like Abraham, we can become a friend of God.

From all these interactions, the community draws together the Word of God. The Word is expressed in human words, through limited human understanding, in vocabulary, and in images of a time and place. Our challenge is to allow the Word to sink into our hearts and enlighten us today. While we are not a nomadic or agrarian people, God's messages continue to challenge us today.

The first reading is from the third part of the book of Isaiah (Is 55 - 66). The Isaiah school compiled it at the time of the return of the Israelites from the Babylonian captivity around 500 years before Jesus. The texts offer support and encouragement to the people who have suffered and are now being allowed to return home. (Most of them were born after the captivity began 60 years previously. So many did not return to Judah because it was a foreign land.) The prophet speaks in glorious tones about going to Jerusalem and Judah because it is the land that God had promised them as His chosen people. This section speaks about the effectiveness of God's Word and that what God has promised will never fail.

The Gospel passage begins a set of parables (that will continue next week) grounded in agricultural terms that ordinary people can relate to and understand. Parables are a unique form of teaching. They take a typical experience in life and use it to open a deeper

understanding of something beyond standard description. A parable usually has a surprise twist that makes one stop and look at things differently. The original audience would understand that if seed fell on the path, birds would see it and eat it. If seed fell on rocks if it rained, it would sprout but soon die in the heat. If it fell among brambles or bushes, they would get the moisture and grow over the wheat. The surprise came in the amount produced that fell on good soil. Most farmers looked for a yield of 5 to 10 fold. Those who allowed the Word of God into their lives could experience an exorbitant experience – 30, 60, or 100-fold – this was astronomical, beyond all imagination. There is power in God's Word. If we are open to the Word, it can produce an amazing result.

Paul's reflection continues to explore what the salvific work of Christ means. While we are destined for new life, begun already in baptism, and yet to be fully revealed at the coming of the reign of God, so too all of creation waits for redemption. We have a pre-experience of redemption in baptism. "For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God." When the children of God are revealed, redemption will come to the fullness, and all the rest of creation will come to its fullness. The Book of Revelation speaks of "a new heavens and a new earth." All creation will share in the newness that is possible in God just as we share in new life through baptism.

Themes

God's Word in Scripture
Parables of Jesus

Hearing and living God's Word
Redemption

Reflection Questions

What dreams do you have for the future? How will you allow God to be part of that developing future?

Each of us has a variety of areas: pathways, rocky, vines, and good soil. To what area do you pay attention? Is there room for the Word of God to take root in your life, or do other preoccupations consume your time and energy?

How do you see the created world in transition? What are the struggles in the natural world, and how do they impact the human family?

What challenges do you encounter in reading the parables?

Prayer Suggestions:

For the Church: that we may spread the hopeful and exciting message of the Gospel through both our words and deeds so that others may encounter the God who loves them

For a greater love for the Word of God: that we may make space in our busy lives to allow the Word of God to challenge and prune us so that we may bear abundant fruit

For openness of spirit: that our hearts may welcome the Word of God and be fertile soil where the seed will produce an abundant harvest of faith and charity

For freedom from all that enslaves our hearts: that we may allow God's Word to free us from fear, anxiety, and financial worries and empower us to be faithful disciples of Jesus.