

23. September 2023

The fruit of God's Word

Lk 8:4-15

When a great crowd came together and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: "A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell along the path, and was trodden under foot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns grew with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew, and yielded a hundredfold." As he said this, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy; but these have no root, they believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. And as for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience.

The crucial question for us is how we can learn to listen better, so that the Word can enter our hearts, remain there and bear fruit, in a persevering walk with the Lord.

In today's Gospel, the Lord shows us very clearly what happens when we do not receive the Word deeply: the devil steals it away from us, it does not take root in us; the worries, the riches and the pleasures of life prevent the seed from bearing fruit.

So how can we listen well?

The Word of God is best received in silence, and it takes on a completely different meaning when we take the time to listen attentively.

It is advisable to listen daily to a meditation on a biblical text, for example the readings for the day. To deepen the word, it is good to reflect on it, to move it in our hearts and minds, to immerse ourselves in it.

To receive the Word, it is also helpful to read good biblical interpretations and commentaries, and to listen to good preaching and sermons. At this point it is important to be careful that biblical interpretations are not permeated by a modernist spirit that tends to relativise and is based on a false or inadequate theology. If this is the case, believers will not be instructed by the Spirit of God and His Word will not reach their hearts.

God's Word wants to instruct us and delight our hearts, to enlighten and clarify our thoughts, and to help us understand the circumstances of our lives in the light of God.

To the best of our ability, we should seek silence again and again. Let us remember, for example, that the temple of the Lord is not a place for private conversation. Only in silence can we discover God's presence in the Blessed Sacrament and in His Word.

The Word of God is so powerful that a single sentence that touches our hearts can transform our lives. The Desert Fathers spoke of "ruminating" on the Word of God. By this they meant taking a particular phrase from Scripture and repeating it over and over again in our hearts and minds. We too can become accustomed to this fruitful practice by taking a phrase from the readings and repeating it as an "ejaculatory prayer", as a "prayer of the heart".

Take, for example, the following word of the Lord: *"Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"* (Mt 6:26). If we internalise this in different ways, it can help us to better combat unnecessary worries and deepen our trust in God.

The same is true of many other Bible quotations that we can consciously choose in order to deepen the content of Scripture. In order to strengthen our trust in God, I always

recommend that we choose a suitable word and repeat it constantly in our hearts, especially when we find it difficult to trust.

Hand in hand with repetition goes the daily and persevering reading of Scripture. The Word of God needs to be an essential part of our lives and needs to be more and more integrated into them. Let us remember what Jesus said: *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"* (Mt 4:4).

This food may not be so sweet to the palate at first. But the longer we absorb the Word of God, the more it will unfold all its power in us. We should read it constantly, not just read it for a while and then neglect it. Once it begins to dwell in a receptive heart, it will bear wonderful fruit.