

Proper 10 Yr. A: How to Take Root

Isaiah 55:10-13; Romans 8:1-11; Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-23

The Reverend Paul D. Allick, the Church of the Advent, July 12, 2020

On the first day of my first year of college I was given the Word of God. The Gideon's were on campus that day handing out little green New Testaments. I put it in my backpack and forgot about it. I didn't really want it. I was being polite.

One evening out of utter boredom I took that Testament out and started reading it. For the next few weeks, I could not put it down. I had been taught about the Bible my whole life but it was not until then that I began to absorb the message.

By the grace of God, I was made ready to receive the Word. I devoured the Gospels according to Matthew and Mark. The word began taking root in me. I experienced a sense of contentment. I felt very close to God. That experience has kept me engaged with Scripture ever since.

The Word of the Lord is not just "words." The Holy Scriptures convey the wisdom and love of God to us. We call it the "logos."

In the beginning was the Logos and the Logos was with God and the Logos was God. The Logos was with God in the beginning.

New Testament Scholar William Barclay wrote, "The Christian message, the logos, the word, is something which came from God; it is not the discovery of man, but the gift of God." The Word of God is the message heard and lived out not simply written and read.

The Logos is the comprehensible part of God's being. The Logos is the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the Word of God put into words for humankind. The Logos was made flesh and dwelt among us.

This is who I discovered in that little green New Testament. This wasn't another book of rules and regulations. Engaging with this Word brought me into a relationship with our Savior.

This was God's plan all along. He would send his word through the prophets to prepare us for the Messiah. In these last days he has spoken to us by his Son. He is nearer to us than ever before. He is present with us every time we pick up our Bible.

The early Church Fathers taught that just as Jesus is truly present to us in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, he is truly present to us in the Holy Scriptures.

If God is coming to us in this way through his Word personified in Jesus Christ and written down in our little words then how can we receive him there? The Parable of the Sower illustrates this for us.

At times some of us are like a dirt path. We aren't paying any attention. The word of God comes to us but just sits there. The evil one can easily snatch it away.

Others of us receive the message with great excitement but as soon as any kind of trouble arises to challenge our living out of that message, we abandon it. One needs a well cultivated spiritual root system for the Word to take hold.

Sometimes we are just too darn busy and distracted to receive the word. The thorns of stress or the allure of amusements choke the word we have received.

How can we be sure we have good soil to receive the Gospel and watch it transform our lives? St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans helps us with that part.

Paul teaches us about two mindsets: one is the flesh and the other is the spirit. In the mindset of the flesh our worldview is based on the rational order. There is no room for mystery or faith. And when we live in the flesh we are bound by our inner conflicts and prejudices. We cannot discern the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Conversely, in the mindset of the spirit we spend our energy looking for the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives and the lives of others. This search for the work of the Holy Spirit motivates our life. This mindset is full of mystery and faith.

God sends his Word to nourish us. God's Word is like rain from heaven bringing us seed for sowing which becomes bread for eating. God sends the water and we make the bread and bear the fruit. Then that water returns to heaven having accomplished God's purposes on earth.

God's Word is always raining down on humankind. It is going to sink in somewhere and give new life. Let us pray and endeavor to make our souls ready to receive it.

References:

New Testament Words by William Barclay (p.179)
Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, KY 1974

Flesh/Spirit Mindset Ideas from Chris Haslam Online Commentary, Christ Church Cathedral, Montreal.