**6TH SUNDAY after PENTECOST SERMON**

 The Gospel Reading today (Matt 13) is about the Parable of the Sower, which, along with its explanation, is Jesus' response to the events that have taken place in the previous chapter.

In Chapter 12, we read that Jesus’ disciples were frustrated and discouraged because they realized that their master was facing opposition and hostility from the scribes, Pharisees and the Temple priests. The synagogues refused to admit him to preach. So Jesus had to go to beaches and hillsides. Some of the Pharisees were planning to trap him, and the common people were more interested in his ability to heal them than in his preaching.

Is there any explanation for that situation? The answer is: Yes. The explanation begins with simple words: "A sower went out to sow." This parable is an answer to such question.

A brief look at the parable: In Jesus time, sowing was really broadcasting seeds far and wide oftentimes before plowing. The sower would usually come back and plow the seeds into the soil.

In this parable, the sower is the Lord who is broadcasting the seeds right and left. So much so that some seeds fell on the beaten path, some on rocky ground, some among thorns and some on good soil. Ultimately the harvest depended on where the seeds fell.

The seed is the Word. Thus the parable is a story of a generous Lord who is always scattering the seeds/his Word – around us whether we deserve them or not, whether we receive them in our hearts or not. But of course, the yield of the harvest depends on the soil type.

And the soil is all of us. So much so that a good yield in life depends on how much we willingly accept and respond to the word of the Lord.

In this parable, Jesus uses four different soil-types to represent four separate responses we can give to God's saving word.

* 1) The soil along the path. This soil is too hard to absorb the seed. Soon the birds eat it up or passers-by trample it under foot. This is us who hear the word of God without letting it sink in. The seed/word is then replaced by our worldly concerns.
* 2) The soil on rocky ground. This soil-type is us when start looking for novelties. We are at first impressed by the message but quickly lose interest.
* 3) The soil filled with thorns This soil represents us who are addicted to evil habits and those whose hearts are filled with hatred, jealousy and greed. These choke the life out of our hearts.
* 4) The good soil. This soil-type represents those of us who hear the word of God and diligently keep it. Those of us who are eager to hear the word and ready to put it into practice.

The parable, therefore, is an explanation why our Lord Jesus Christ, the SEED, was not accepted by most of the people: because of the soil of their hearts: like hardened oath, like rocky ground, like soil filled with thorns. But there are also “good soils” where the seed of the Word grows and bears abundant fruit.

How does the parable apply to us? This is the same as asking the question: “What type of soil for the word of God do we represent? Are we like the **pathway** where the seed cannot even sprout, or like the **rocky** ground where the seed sprouts but has no roots, or like **thorny** ground where the word of God is choked to death by worldly cares, or like the **good** soil that bears much fruit?

Having answered those questions brings us to the most important question to ask: “How can we become a good soil so that the word of God can bear fruit in our life more abundantly? The Parable’s answer is: “Hear the word and understand it. “**But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and *understands* it, who indeed bears fruit**

What is it that makes us understand the gospel? Jesus answered this in John 8:43 we read, “**Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot accept my word.”**

In the end, it is not only TO HEAR THE WORD, but TO UNDERSTAND IT which ultimately means TO ACCEPT IT. And we can only accept the Word of the Father, if we accept that this Word was made flesh – if we accept our Lord Jesus Christ – the Son of the Father. When we do: all the blessings, all the abundant fruits -- everything else will be given to us besides.

In terms of the current corona virus pandemic and racial unrests, let us pray that our hearts will be a good soil that produces abundant compassion, mercy and generosity because we are moved by the Word of God that is the guide and foundation of our lives. Amen.