



瀬田の丘

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Today's Word

The Fifteenth Sunday, Year A (12 July)

Parish Priest: Father Hiroshi Konishi

First Reading: Isaiah 55:10 - 11

Second Reading: Romans 8:18 - 23

Gospel Reading: Matthew 13:1 - 9 (short form)

From the Three Readings

The theme of the First Reading is “the work of God’s Word.” God’s Word is invisible to the eye, but it falls like rain from heaven. It is sown in the human heart, just like a seed. Then it causes that person to grow, and they return once more to God. Look at verse 11: “My word .” “Word” is “davar” in Hebrew. This literally refers to “word,” but it also points to the reality brought about by that “word.” At the beginning of *Genesis*, God performs the work of creation through the “word” (davar); this “word” gives life to things and brings them into existence. In other words, the “word” is intrinsically linked to “existence.” The “word” in today’s reading is not merely a symbol, but something that gives “life.”

In the Second Reading, the theme will likely be the “groaning” experienced by those in whose hearts God’s Word has been sown. Paul states with conviction, “All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God” (Romans 8:14). However, even as “children of God,” perhaps life means living while uttering a “groan” of hope amidst the sufferings of daily life. If we consider this “groaning” in relation to the First Reading, might it not be the suffering that occurs when the seed sown in the heart sprouts—the pain of the transition from seed to “life”? In fact, Jesus Himself “groans” (see Mark 7:32, 34). This is because Jesus has deep empathy for human beings who live while “groaning.”

Verse 20 mentions “emptiness.” In Greek, this is called “mataiotes,” which means “emptiness, void, or transience.” It appears only three times in the New Testament (Ephesians 4:17, 2 Peter 2:18, Romans 8:20).

In two of these instances, it is translated as “foolishness” or “meaninglessness,” but it truly describes the state of humanity when separated from God. It expresses that emptiness. In the *Letter to the Ephesians*, Gentiles who are far from God and indulge in a life of debauchery are bluntly called “foolish” (see Ephesians 4:17). In the *Second Letter of Peter*, false teachers are condemned as those who speak “meaningless” boasts (2:18).

In today’s second reading, however, the term seems to carry a different nuance from these two examples. This is because the previous two instances refer to the emptiness resulting from separation from God—a void caused by human actions—whereas in the *Letter to the Romans*,

although humans are indeed created beings, they come to regard themselves as gods and, having forgotten their relationship with God, “are subject to futility.” However, this is “according to the will of the One who subjected them.” In other words, it is a “nothingness” and “emptiness” brought about by God and originating from God. As a step toward God, creation is now “groaning together and suffering the pains of childbirth” (v. 22) while experiencing this “emptiness.” We might even call it a “nothingness” and “emptiness” filled with hope.

The Gospel reading is the parable of the “Sower,” in which the sower continues to sow tirelessly, believing that there will surely be a harvest. The sower is Jesus. Jesus continues to speak the word of God, even if there are those who oppose Him, reject Him, or mock Him. This is because Jesus Himself is sustained by the word of God and believes that the word of God has power.

Although it was omitted from the Mass readings, please take a look at verse 18 and following. It is possible that the core of the “Parable of the Sower”—the part Jesus actually spoke—was limited to verses 1–9.

The subsequent sections may have been added by the early Church as it sought to understand and interpret the “Parable of the Sower” during the process of compiling the Gospels. I believe the original theme of this parable was that the “sower” continues to sow seeds without ceasing. However, as the early Church interpreted Jesus’ parable, did it not evolve into an understanding centered on holding fast to one’s faith?

Jesus’ parables were stories that were easy for his listeners to understand and relate to in the context in which they were told. For the people of Galilee, who made their living as part farmers and part fishermen, this story would have made perfect sense when understood in the context of their daily lives. It would have truly resonated with them. However, once the parable began to be told in isolation from the rich natural setting of Galilee, the vivid meaning it originally possessed was lost. In the early church, when criticism or doubts arose regarding Jesus’ words and actions as he proclaimed the gospel of the Kingdom of God, it seems they used parables to respond and explain his message. Furthermore, I believe they came to regard the parables as moral lessons and understood Jesus’ words as norms and guidelines for their daily lives. This is likely how the Gospels as we know them today came into being.