

15TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

There once was a woman who was depressed over the state of the world. She longed for love among her family and friends, peace among all people, compassion for the poor and vulnerable. There were problems everywhere as she saw so much selfishness, greed, hatred, and a lack of moral values.

One day she came upon a little shop. She walked in and was surprised to see Jesus was behind the counter. She asked him, "Do you work here?" Jesus replied, "No, I am the owner." She asked, "What do you sell here?" Jesus said, "Well, I don't really sell anything here. It's all free. I have here just about anything you might want. You're welcome to walk around the aisles and see what you might be interested in. Make a list of what you want and bring it back to me. I'll see what I can do for you."

She was amazed at what she saw on the shelves. There was peace on earth, food to feed the hungry, clean air and water, warm clothing for the poor, and forgiveness. The woman compiled a long list. She brought the list back to Jesus.

Jesus saw the list, smiled and said, "No problem." He bent down beneath the counter and fingered out several small envelopes. The woman asked, "What are these?" "Seed packets," Jesus replied. This is a catalogue store. The woman asked, "You mean I don't get the finished product?" "No," Jesus said, "Just take the seeds home, plant them, nurture them, and help them grow and you will be quite pleased with the results." She said, "Oh," and left the store without taking anything.

Most of us want God to solve all the problems of the world. Instead, what God does is plant those seeds within us so that with His grace and power anything is possible. Yet, perhaps we are like the soil in the parable. Maybe some days we are so hardened to God or his grace by our sins, indifference, or pride that those seeds never get planted and blow away or are eaten by the birds.

Sometimes our soil is filled with weeds and thorns. Our weeds might be the busyness of life, our fears, or possessions. At other times our soil might be rocky and not very deep because we have neglected prayer and worship. We haven't asked for grace and blessing or let go of bitterness or revenge, so God's grace can't get a foothold in our life. But, when all of those distractions are gone and our soil is rich and deep, it's amazing what God can do.

I think that Jesus told this parable to His disciples as he was sending them out on mission. He knew that the Apostles would be fired up bringing the Good News to those they met along the way. Yet, not everyone who would hear those words would receive them. Not everyone would be interested. Some might even be hostile. Yet, there would be others whose lives would be enriched and changed forever. In other words, "You win some, you lose some." That's the way life is.

We know that there are many things that work against the Gospel. We know there is pain in the world and in our lives. We know that there is sin in the world and its consequences can be found everywhere. We know too that all of these things can get us disheartened. We can give up thinking the world can be a better place. We can give up even thinking we can be better people. Maybe it's hard to see growth in holiness in your life and so you think, "If I am no different, why should I expect others to be different."

That way of thinking is not from God. Jesus came to this earth to show us that every person can make a difference. It didn't matter if they were rich or poor, Jew or Gentile. What mattered is that they would say yes to that grace. It would matter if they realized the ways of the world provide no real happiness or joy. Jesus faced rejection on this earth, even being put to death on a cross. Yet, He never gave up, even to his dying breath. We shouldn't either.

The world is groaning awaiting redemption. God has a great plan for making that so. The problem is that it is in those seeds in your pocket. Will you plant them deeply into your soul? Will you nurture those seeds and let them grow? Say yes, and see great things happen.