



LIVING THE GOSPEL

**15th Sunday of Ordinary Time
July 12, 2026**

Theme: "He who has ears, let him hear."

Gathering Prayer

Facilitator: O God, who show the light of your truth to those who go astray, so that they may return to the right path, give all who for the faith they profess are accounted Christians the grace to reject whatever is contrary to the name of Christ and to strive after all that does it honor. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Matthew 13:1-23

¹ That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. ² And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat there; and the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³ And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵ Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they had not much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, ⁶ but when the sun rose they were scorched; and since they had no root they withered away. ⁷ Other seeds fell upon thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸ Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹ He who has ears, let him hear."

¹⁰ Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" ¹¹ And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. ¹² For to him who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ¹³ This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

¹⁴ With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which says: 'You shall indeed hear but never understand, and you shall indeed see but never perceive. ¹⁵ For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn for me to heal them.' ¹⁶ But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. ¹⁷ Truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

¹⁸ "Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹ When any one hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is

sown in his heart; this is what was sown along the path. ²⁰ As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹ yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. ²² As for what was sown among thorns, this is he who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the delight in riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

²³ As for what was sown on good soil, this is he who hears the word and understands it; he indeed bears fruit, and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

Gospel Focus

For the first time this liturgical year, we hear one of Jesus' parables in a Sunday gospel, and we also hear Jesus' explanation for their use. Jesus' words here continue in line with his prayer to the Father in last Sunday's gospel reading. God desires to reveal, but on God's terms, not ours. Those who are able to understand the parable are those who approach it through the lens of faith. It is not for their abstract concepts that hearers are unable to understand Jesus' parables. Jesus intentionally uses relatable imagery; today, a sower and seeds, a familiar image even in our time. While the seed ultimately either bears fruit or does not, there are several ways that the seed fails and only one in which it succeeds—that one being good soil, openness to the word of God that is sown. The proclamation of the gospel demands a lived response, both for the congregation and those who minister. As Jesus says, "Whoever has ears ought to hear."

Gospel Reflection

The fastest growing religious denomination is "none." Among the almost 20 percent who do not identify themselves with any religion, approximately three-quarters were raised with a religion as children. The study prompts important questions: Why is this happening, and what can be done about it?

The Matthean community asked similar questions, as reflected in today's gospel. Why do some accept Jesus' interpretation of the law while others do not? Like all Jesus' parables, the one in today's gospel is open to a variety of interpretations. If we take the sower as the focus, the parable invites us to reflect on the boundless generosity of God, who offers the Word, in the person of Jesus, to all in the hope of a fruitful response, no matter how poorly prepared to receive it some may seem to be. If we zero in on the seed, the parable assures us of the efficacies of the word. No matter what the yield, the seed itself is good, and it will bear fruit. If we take the harvest as the focus, the explosive return propels us into reflection on eschatological fulfillment of hopes beyond our wildest dreams. Finally, if the different types of soil are our focus, the parables urges effort to do everything possible to cull out obstacles and cultivate maximum receptivity to the word.

As Jesus' first followers struggled to understand why others did not respond as they did to Jesus' teaching, they turned to the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah articulates that this experience is repeated in the life of every prophet: Some people are disposed to see and hear and respond positively to the prophet's message, while others close themselves off to the challenging word that could bring healing and that could free them to the life more fully in God's love. To explain the negative response by the latter, Isaiah puts the onus not on the prophet nor on the message, but on those who deliberately close themselves off to the prophet's words and actions.

In the gospel, Jesus explains that the ability to accept his teaching is a gift from God. What is given is "knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (v.11).

While verses 11 and 12 explain the knowledge of the mysteries of God's gift, verses 13 to 17 emphasize human responsibility to cultivate receptivity so as to be able to respond as fully as possible to the gift. Some let the gift be snatched from them; some toss it aside in

favor of something else that seems more alluring. The parable and its allegorical interpretation undercut any smugness or complacency on the part of those who have received the gift. The gospel invites us to shift our focus from wondering whether the "seed" is effective-it is!-or why other's soil is unreceptive, to the question of how those who have received the gift can be intent on helping prepare receptive soil and to continue the profligate and indiscriminate work of the Divine Sower, who eagerly shares the mysteries far and wide.

Old/New Testament and CCC links

First Reading — Isaiah 55:10-11

¹⁰ Yes, as the rain and the snow come down from the heavens and do not return without watering the earth, making it yield and giving growth to provide seed ¹¹ for the sower and bread for the eating, so the word that goes from my mouth does not return to me empty, without carrying out my will and succeeding in what it was sent to do.

Responsorial Reading — Psalms 65: 9-13

R: The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest

You have visited the land and watered it; greatly have you enriched it.
God's watercourses are filled; you have prepared the grain. **(R)**

Thus have you prepared the land: drenching its furrows, breaking up its clods,
softening it with showers, blessing its yield. **(R)**

You have crowned the year with your bounty, and your paths overflow with a rich harvest;
the untilled meadows overflow with it, and rejoicing clothes the hills. **(R)**

The fields are garmented with flocks and the valleys blanketed with grain.
They shout and sing for joy. **(R)**

Second Reading — Romans 8: 18-23

¹⁸ I think that what we suffer in this life can never be compared to the glory, as yet unrevealed, which is waiting for us. ¹⁹ The whole creation is eagerly waiting for God to reveal his sons. ²⁰ It was not for any fault on the part of creation that it was made unable to attain its purpose, it was made so by God; but creation still retains the hope ²¹ of being freed, like us, from its slavery to decadence, to enjoy the same freedom and glory as the children of God. ²² From the beginning till now the entire creation, as we know, has been groaning in one great act of giving birth; ²³ and not only creation, but all of us who possess the first fruits of the Spirit, we too groan inwardly as we wait for our bodies to be set free.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

546. Jesus' invitation to enter his kingdom comes in the form of *parables*, a characteristic feature of his teaching.(Cf. Mk 4:33-34) Through his parables he invites people to the feast of the kingdom, but he also asks for a radical choice: to gain the kingdom, one must give everything.(Cf. Mt 13:44-45; 22:1-14) Words are not enough,

deeds are required.(Cf. Mt 21:28-32) The parables are like mirrors for man: will he be hard soil or good earth for the word?(Cf. Mt 13:3-9) What use has he made of the talents he has received?(Cf. Mt 25:14-30) Jesus and the presence of the kingdom in this world are secretly at the heart of the parables. One must enter the kingdom, that is, become a disciple of Christ, in order to "know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven".(Mt 13:11) For those who stay "outside", everything remains enigmatic.(Mk 4:11; cf. Mt 13:10-15)

1724. The Decalogue, the Sermon on the Mount, and the apostolic catechesis describe for us the paths that lead to the Kingdom of heaven. Sustained by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we tread them, step by step, by everyday acts. By the working of the Word of Christ, we slowly bear fruit in the Church to the glory of God.(Cf. the parable of the sower: Mt 13:3-23)

Sharing and Discussion

1. What are the secrets of the kingdom that Christ has given to the disciples and perhaps to us as well?
2. Why do some have eyes and not see-ears and not hear and heart that do not understand and why do some have eyes that see, ears that hear and heart that can understand?
3. In what ways does CCC 546 suggest that we can bear good fruits?

Closing Prayer

Facilitator: Loving God, it is you who sow and you who harvest. Penetrate the brittle soil of our hearts and plant your love deep within us, giving us the courage to be who you call us to be. Hear these prayers and answer them according to your will. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

All: Amen.

Facilitator: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen