Sexa(2023)

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**:

 *"But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience"* ***+***

 Jesus parable today would have been easily followed by the crowd in rural Israel. The four types of soil a planter might encounter when sowing seed would have been **just** as Jesus spoke.

 Parcels were in long thin strips (slices), instead of the big fields we know in America. We drove past this very type of field once in Bavaria which was being preserved to show how tiny parcels had been before the Second World War. Anneliese's father was involved--being from the Agriculture department--in trying to coax farmers into swapping fields so modern machinery and techniques could increase yields.

 So in Jesus' day there would have been ground between plots to allow access without trampling on someone else's crops. A sower out casting seed by hand would have had some of it go onto these beaten down hard paths. Nothing would grow there it only because someone would step on the soil.

 A lot of Israel has limestone under the soil. Limestone is not good for growing plants so even a few inches of soil would have not been enough to yield a crop. Thus, we have the **second** type of soil, that which would not allow strong roots.

 A third type of soil also **looked** good, like the last, but also had problems. It was fertile, but never had been cleaned and so was filled with roots from old plants which would come back with a little rain. Seed falling on such soil would have become choked by weeds.

 And lastly we have good soil. That would have been soil which wasn't hard, but turned over, cleaned, and deep. This type of soil would yield a harvest for a sower.

 One can see two different major meanings which flow from Jesus' parable here. The first is that the fate of the Gospel in our lives depends upon what is in our hearts at any particular moment. Are we closed minded to believing the good news? "Hah! Just try that in the real world!" might be a response we've had in our hearts once or twice.

 Or is our heart often ruled by passions such that when something new, different or exciting comes along with think, "wow! that sounds like fun!" or "well, I'll try anything once!"? Once the bloom is off the rose does our interest in something usually wane?

 Perhaps when we hear the Lord speaking to us, or at least attempting to, such as in church, do we find ourselves frequently distracted? Are we pondering something else? Are we so caught up with life--our jobs, the kids, grandkids, medical problems, vacations--that we just can't spend much time pondering what Jesus might be wanting us to do?

 Maybe there are times in our life when distractions actually are low and we are motivated to spend more time contemplating the Lord and our spirit's health--say during Lent. At times such as these we can be "good soil" for hearing and responding to the Gospel. We can be a good place for the seed of truth to land; a place when are where it will be nourished and pondered and not dismissed or ignored. Maybe we spend more time in prayer of spiritual reflection, Scripture reading.

 At such times we may produce a good harvest for the Lord. We get started on a new path, a new direction in life. We work on bad habits. Maybe we find ourselves being more charitable towards others in need and more trusting in general.

 But there is another meaning possible from this parable besides the very important one that the fate of the Gospel in our lives depends upon our own spiritual soil. That other meaning could be a comforting proclamation: **do not fear**. Or as Pope John Paul proclaimed often**:** be not afraid!

 Do not fear when troubles abound. Do not fear that some of the good acts you do seem wasted. Do not be afraid that those around you are hard hearted or shallow. Do not fear that some around you are choked by earthly desires, cares, and worries. Do not fear even if all of this, at times, applies even to you! Some of the good that you do with and in your life will fall on good soil and bear lots of fruit!

 Certainly Anna and Simeon, from the Gospel for the Purification of Mary on the 2nd, point out how to be **good** soil---the best soil-- for the Gospel. They always were worshiping and praying. They always sought be in the Lord's province as much as possible each day.

 In today's world one has to fight NOT to be IN this world 24/7. Between health issues, grandchildren, bills, to say nothing of television, the internet and I-phones one can be continuously plugged in to today's world.

 In contrast stand Simeon and Anna saying: **no thanks**. I'd rather be a door keeper in the house of my Lord than sit in the tents of the ungodly. (Or modernly: I'd rather sit, watch, and wait in my Lord's house than know all the latest "talk"!) Despite their advance ages and her being a widow for years, they were not bitter towards God, rather, the Spirit moved in them.

 Besides being good soil, Anna and Simeon also showed the trust flowing from Jesus' proclamation of comfort today: be not afraid! Your life is not wasted. Much of what you do will bear no fruit, but some of it will, and that will produce a mighty harvest of good fruit. And, as we know, fruit trees keep producing even after our own lives end. Amen. +