

Homily for the 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A). *Hesed* Love

Today's Gospel presents us with one of the most familiar parables in all Sacred Scripture: The Parable of the Sower and the Seed. When we listen to this passage, our minds begin to analyze the landscape of the story. We ask ourselves: What is the seed? What do the different environments represent? And, commonly, we look inward and ask: *What kind of soil am I?*

But today, I am not going to explain the soils to you. Jesus already did that in the Gospel, and I can guarantee you that I will never be able to explain His parable better than He did.

Instead, I want us to focus on **the Sower**. Seeds are valuable assets in agriculture. A good farmer understands his soil. He is experienced in the *how*, the *when*, and exactly *where* to plant his crop. You do not waste seed. You carefully till the earth, you drop the seed and you guard it.

But is that what we encounter in this parable? Not at all.

If this Sower were auditioning for a farming job, he would be fired on day one. He throws seeds everywhere. He is tossing them onto the hard-packed walking paths where the birds are waiting. He is slinging them onto shallow, rocky cliffsides. He is letting them drop right into thickets of thorns. It looks completely reckless. It looks as if he has a massive hole in his seed bag and is just oblivious to his surroundings. What is wrong with this Sower? Is he making a rookie mistake? Is he completely clumsy, or does he just not care?

The answer changes everything when we realize who the Sower is. The Sower in this parable is a representation of our Heavenly Father. And what looks to the human eye like a careless, inefficient farming exercise is a revelation of God's **Hesed** love.

Now, you might wonder: What is *Hesed*?

Hesed is a Hebrew word found throughout the Old Testament to describe the distinct character of God's love for humanity. It is difficult to translate because it is too complex for a single word. In our Bibles, it is translated as "steadfast love," "loyal love," "unfailing love," or "merciful love." I like to define it simply as **radical love**.

It is radical to me because it completely shatters human expectations. *Hesed* love is built upon four pillars: it is a **covenant** love, a **loyal** love, an **action-driven** love, and a **merciful** love. It is **Covenant** because it belongs to a formal, binding relationship. It is **Loyal** because it is unchanging; it does not waver. It is **Action-Driven** because it is never just an internal emotion, it must be visible or demonstrated. And finally, it is **Merciful** because it goes infinitely beyond duty or obligation. It is grace running wild.

When we view the parable through the lens of *Hesed*, the Sower's behavior stops looking foolish. Why does He throw seeds everywhere? Why is He not selective about where His Word lands?

Because the Sower's love is so radical that He refuses to give up on any patch of dirt. He gives *everyone* an opportunity. He does not look at a hardened heart and say, "Wasted effort." He does not look at a soul choked by the thorns of addiction, or anxiety and say, "Not worth the seed." He sows generously over all of us because He sees the potential multiplier of a seed that finally takes root.

Our readings today give us three reasons why the Sower showers this *Hesed* love upon us so extravagantly.

First, we look at the prophet Isaiah. God speaks through him and declares that His Word—His seed—will never return to Him void. It will always achieve the end for which it was sent. Jesus Christ is the Word made flesh, the supreme Seed sown into the soil of human history. He came to save us. He came to conquer death and open the gates of heaven. Our Father throws His Word so generously because He wills that all men be saved. Jesus did not suffer and die in vain; He wants an abundant harvest of souls.

Second, we see the motivation for this love in Saint Paul's letter to the Romans. Paul writes with hope, stating that our current earthly sufferings are as nothing compared to the monumental glory that awaits us. The Sower knows your private groaning, your heartaches, and your trials. He casts His seed of grace relentlessly because He knows that if we anchor ourselves in His *Hesed*, we will withstand the storm. The glory of the beatific vision that awaits us will make every earthly sorrow pale in comparison.

Third, the Sower is incredibly generous because He knows the staggering power of the harvest. The Gospel tells us that when the seed hits rich soil, it produces fruit a hundred, sixty, or thirty-fold.

To put that in historical perspective, a typical, successful grain harvest in first-century Galilee would yield about an **8 to 10-fold**. If a farmer had a perfect year under miraculous conditions, he might reach **15-fold**.

So, when Jesus tells the crowd that the good soil yields **30, 60, or 100-fold**, their jaws would have dropped. A 30-fold harvest completely shatters normal human expectations. A 60-fold harvest is legendary and miraculous. A 100-fold harvest is completely supernatural—unheard of in the natural world.

When the Word of God takes root in a human soul, the transformation and impact on the world are entirely supernatural. Think of the Twelve Apostles, ordinary men who turned the Roman Empire upside down. Think of the great saints who started as regular soil: Mother Teresa, Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, Saint Francis, or your own patron saint. The seed of God's Word in them yielded a supernatural harvest that continues to feed the Church centuries later.

Today, our Heavenly Father is inviting us to enter His *Hesed* His radical love. If you feel like the rocky ground today, dried up and shallow, do not despair. If you feel like the thorn-choked field, consumed by the relentless busyness and anxieties of the workweek, look up at the Sower. He has not stopped throwing seed at you. His love is loyal; He will never walk away from you when

things get difficult. His love is action-driven; He is reaching out to you through the Sacraments on this very day.

Let us open our hearts during this Mass. Let us break up the hardened clay of our souls through confession, prayer, and let the dew of His grace fall upon us. Trust that because you are hearing His voice, He is sharing His *Hesed* with you, granting you a direct pathway to eternal glory, and preparing your life for a miraculous, supernatural harvest.

Amen.