

Homily for Sunday Mass
February 3, 2019
Year C – Luke 4:21-30
----Father Michael Grant George Cadotte----

At Wednesday's Mass we reflected on the well-known parable of the sower of seed and we explored how this relates to us. First, we agreed that Jesus was preparing those around Him then, as us now, on realistic expectations of spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world. Jesus knew that He, that is the Word, will be received in different ways by different people. Some will not allow their harden hearts to hear the good news (that rocky ground or hardened path) while others will hear the Word and get excited about it but at the first moment of stress or turmoil, they run from it (they are the shallow soil that could not stand the world around it). We then encounter those that refuse to remove themselves from the temptations and allurements of the world around them (they are thorny, weedy soil). Finally, we come to those that receive the Word, that is Jesus, and embrace Him and allow a new way, a new birth to enter their lives and structure their lives in the Word (they are the rich and fertile soil). We then did the math on that – only a 25% success rate. WOW. This preparation was to understand that you can spread the Word to all, and you should spread the Word to all but not only in voice but in action – being the hands and feet of Jesus Christ. But the Word alone cannot save on its own, as humanity has free will, and thus each recipient will have to make their own connection with the Word and that will determine if they are in rocky soil, tempted by the weeds of the world around them, or of a fertile heart ready to receive the love of God.

There is another, more subtle meaning here that is important to note. Jesus knows that we are all those soils in one person. He knew that there will be days we live our faith to its fullest and there will be days we fall flat on our face. The seed, the Word – Jesus, is always there waiting for us to move from our stony hearts to our rich fertile hearts where He can once again grow in us in love. Jesus understand our human condition and embraces it in that parable. He knows we have temptations, anger issues, weaknesses and allurements in our life and yet, with all that potential failure on our part (75% failure) He is still here with us sowing seeds of His love in and around us. Waiting for us to turn back to Him, to God, to embrace His Word once again.

In visiting His hometown, in today's Gospel reading, Jesus finds His words falling on that hard ground, the stony hearts. People could not see past their own worldly view of the carpenter's boy come home all uppity with knowledge and questioning their faith. They were hardened to the fact that they were not going to receive some special dispensation for being of Jesus' kind – there was nothing in it for them. They allowed the sinful weeds of hate, racism, nationalism, and prideful faith to choke out what Jesus was teaching them. They could simply not allow themselves to open their hearts to others not like them; to others that did not have faith like them. They allowed this resentment and anger to boil over to the point where they tried to murder their own. A sad foretelling of Jesus' future journey to Calgary.

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Our first reading reminded us that often prophets experience the worse of humanity as, “They will fight against you...” but God reminded us in the reading that they will, “...not prevail over you, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD.”

It is important to remind ourselves of these sad realities of life then, and now, as we are, at our baptism, all made priests, prophets, and kings given our life’s mission to be shepherds to all of God’s creation.

As we profess the saving words of love of Jesus, we will certainly come across that 75% failure rate we touched on earlier. The fact is that many view religion as a set of rigid rules that must be followed without thought and without exception. When such rules are broken, we see ourselves, or others as often the case is, as sinners. The message of the great Prophet Jesus, the truth of His revelation about God, is that we are to be more than followers of the law. We are to be more than faithful practitioners of ritual. We are to be more than obedient to law.

As such, religion has become misunderstood, twisted and distorted. When that happens, it tends to bring out the worst in people. We become narrow and bigoted, feisty and fanatical, mean and nasty, hateful and hurtful, even to the point of wanting to kill anyone who dares to disagree with us.

True religion, however, and especially that of following Jesus, brings out the best in us. It liberates and humanizes us. It makes us friendlier, more accepting and more forgiving people. It fosters harmonious relationships and builds community. When this happens, religion is something beautiful. In the purest application of our faith we must rely on the words of St. Paul from our second reading where he reminds us that of, “...faith, hope and love; ...the greatest of these is love’.

So, the question we must ask ourselves is what kind of soil are we? What level of acceptance do we truly open ourselves to in relationship with Jesus Christ? So, each of us must ask, and ask here and now: What does religion bring out in me? Is it really and truly making me a better person?

AMEN