

Homily for the 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 11-12, 2020

Readings: Isaiah 55: 10-11; Romans 8: 18-23; Matthew 13: 1-23

Preacher: Nancy DeRycke

Pay Attention!

When I was in early teen years, my Dad and I were out for a ride. We were in his truck, coming home on a quiet road. He pulled over on the side of the road and said, "Okay why don't you drive?" Normally I would've loved that opportunity since I was an eager novice driver, but I protested that I didn't know anything about a standard transmission. Dad looked at me and said, "How many times have you ridden with me and watched me drive? You should know how by now! Haven't you been paying attention?"

So, knowing I hadn't noticed a thing about the process, I reluctantly got in the driver's seat and protested through many attempts to figure out the gears (with Dad's somewhat-patient direction). I was unprepared, didn't want to do it, but eventually I learned more and discovered something new that I never would've wanted to do. And it served me well in future years when all I had access to was a stick shift car.

Today's readings seem to say the same thing to us. Pay attention. Our experiences and problems matter and can teach us about life and give us tools for living.

Isaiah says: Just as rain and snow (that we don't always appreciate except when it's 95 in a drought!) help nature grow, God's word will not return empty... We can learn and benefit from it....whether the Word comes through Scripture or through God's people or through life's challenges, we can grow and become more of who we are called to be....

Paul's letter to the Romans talks about the sufferings of that time as precursors to something else coming (the Kin-dom? Goodness? New life?). When we are confronted with challenges (how to drive or what to do in precarious situations that we are not prepared for), we too groan. Sometimes we want to run away,

fight about whose fault it is, or just get out of tough situations (as we've seen these last 6 months in our world). But if we stick with the pain, the challenge and work through it, we can learn much or give birth to something unforeseen that we never could have imagined or chosen before that.

We have and are still experiencing a huge challenge to our world and our own selves. If we pay attention, this Covid-19 and Black Lives Matter time can be seeds for growth in our personal and communal lives. If we pay attention, we can uncover our own prejudices and work together to change how we see and treat each other.

We have seen the "seed" (the call to change or pay attention) fall on the path, on rocky ground, in thorns, or maybe even on fertile soil. When we complain about it disrupting our normal life (our "path" so to speak), we dismiss it as a huge annoyance and protest that won't make a difference.

When the seed falls on the rocky ground, we see the devastation it does— the deaths and the dangers that so many essential workers and loved ones faced. We have also seen what happens when it falls in the thorns—of political arguments, or the hoarding of supplies, or the suspicions of anyone who comes close, or the selfish denial of the need to take precautions for those around us. We've also seen thorns of looting and violence taint important protests.

If we can stay with it and not get desensitized from all the media that has come at us, perhaps we can be more conscious of what we have taken for granted— health, freedom, diversity, relationships, creation and nature, work and workers, time and how we use it.

New seeds of deep caring, of God's call to love each other, might just help us see what can and needs to grow in our hearts and in our world:

Where 2 or 3 are gathered, I am in your midst...

Love is patient, kind, does not give up, boast, ...

Love one another as I have loved you....

May whatever we help to plant these days give birth, through whatever pain is necessary, to a new or deeper understanding and living of the kin-dom of God where we are truly kin to one another in the body of Christ.

