

Homily for July 11, 1999
15th Sunday in Ordinary time Cycle A

By Father Charles Bowes

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

God isn't afraid of wasting his generosity.

We Americans are so result oriented...nothing is to be wasted when it comes to manufacturing or producing. "Just in time" production methods in our factories insure no idle time or accumulation of inventory...products come out as needed and are to be sold, utilized.

So to hear of a farmer in Jesus' parable of Matthew 13 broadcasting seed, heedless of where it falls, smacks of pre-industrial age inefficiency. Such a farmer today would go bust.

"Remember, son," my farmer-employer said to me one fine spring day, "that seed's expensive, make sure it goes in the drill just so, so none's wasted." And we were off and running, with me holding on for dear life astride the seed drill the farmer pulled behind the tractor. My job was to insure the seeds fell freely into the drill's distribution compartments.

But God isn't like us. Efficiency isn't God's watchword. Love is. And love, God's love at least, knows no bounds – doesn't know when to quit. God knows his word will always be fruitful and so he doesn't live in fear of its lavish distribution. There are few parents who have never said something like; "Do you think I'm just talking for my health? I'm not just whistling 'Dixie,' you know, – I mean it. I'm not saying it again. Read my

lips. Listen to me." In Isaiah 55, God speaks of the power of God's words – as rain and snow come down and don't return without watering the earth, producing seed and bread, so God's word is not uttered in vain – ever – but always accomplishes the purpose for which God said it. God knows that...and the saints knew that too. I believe it was medieval mystic Juliana of Norwich said, "And all will be well. And all will be well. And all will be well."

The word of God is proclaimed just as seed is sown, but it doesn't always take root and produce a fruitful response. God's will is done in any event. The four categories identified in the allegorical explanation in the final verses of Matthew 13 give an accurate enough description of why not all believe: some reject the word outright, others fall away because of persecution, others are caught up in worldly anxieties, and still others are lured away by worldly wealth or success. These explanations were true in St. Matthew's day, and they're true today.

The word of comfort to us, to whom the mission of the Gospel is entrusted whether parent or priest or teacher or co-worker – is that the sower sows without worrying about the outcome, the seed of the Gospel is potent and God's harvest is rich. God's harvest will be rich because, as Isaiah 55 proclaimed, the Word of God that goes forth from God will not return to God empty – ever. What takes root in good soil bears fruit and

yields thirty, sixty, even a hundredfold. Whenever we put our experiences of frustration, discouragement and uncertainty about the outcome of the mission and to dialog with the parable of the sower, we truly hear the Good News. It's something to celebrate – that's what we do here at Eucharist.

In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Thomas Hardy describes market day in Casterbridge. A strange new piece of farm equipment called “seed drill” has been placed in the Town Square for people to gawk at. One of the younger farmers, Donald Farfrae, extols the virtues of the new machine in these words, “It will revolutionize sowing hereabouts! No more sowers flinging their seeds about broadcast, so that some falls by the wayside and some among thorns and all that. Each grain will go to its intended place, and nowhere else whatever!”

As Christians, we rejoice to
know that God isn't afraid of
wasting his generosity.