

## WAIT UNTIL THE HARVEST

Years ago a magazine carried a moving story. It concerned a retired lay missionary and his wife. They spent their final days on a tiny farm outside a town. The couple worked hard growing vegetables and chickens. They couldn't eat all they grew, so they sold their surplus to the townspeople. After a while the townspeople began to gossip about how miserly the retired missionary and his wife were. "They weigh every vegetable and they count every egg twice," said one townsman. "They wouldn't give you an extra potato or an extra egg to save themselves. I wonder what kind of missionaries they were." Eventually the missionary's wife died. Only then did the real truth come out. Every cent the couple earned from selling their vegetables and eggs went to two elderly widows who depended on them for their sole support.

This brings us to the point Paul makes in his letter to the citizens of Corinth. It is the same point Jesus makes in his parable. We have to be content to live in a world and a church where saints and sinners live side by side. A church full of saints might be a nice church, but it wouldn't be Christ's Church. As Henry Ward Beecher put it, "The Church is not a gallery for the exhibition of eminent Christians, but a school for the education of imperfect ones". Or as Charles Clayton Morrison put it, "The Christian Church is a society of sinners. It is the only society in the world in which membership is based on the single qualification that the candidate be unworthy of membership".

Here is a prayer you might want to say today:

Lord, help us realize that the Church is not a showcase for saints but a shelter for sinners. Prevent us from passing judgment on anyone, especially members of our own family and members of our own church. Help us take to heart the fruitfulness of God's word depends on the openness of the heart into which it falls.

In gospel times, farmers sometimes sowed their seeds on top of the soil and then plowed them under in one operation. It was not uncommon for some of these seeds to blow onto footpaths that crisscrossed fields or to blow into rows of thorn bushes or briars that sometimes enclosed fields to discourage animals from entering them. Some seeds also fell on the thin skin of soil that hid large rocks just below the surface. Jesus utilized this familiar situation in his parable of the sower. Let's see how that parable applies to life. Consider two brief, true stories.

The first story recalls the seed that fell on the footpath. It concerns Sir Kenneth Clark, the British television celebrity who produced the TV miniseries "Civilization." In his autobiography, Clark describes a religious experience he had in a church at one time in his life. It was so intense that he considered making some drastic changes in the way he was living. After the experience passed, however, Clark decided against making the changes. Looking back on his decision, he says: "I think I was right: I was too deeply imbedded in the world to change course: But that I had 'felt the finger of God,' I am quite sure." Clark's response might be compared to the seed that fell on the footpath. It stands for those who receive God's word but later lose it because Satan steals it away from them before it can

take root.

Our second story recalls the seed that fell on rocky soil. It concerns two brothers, Clarence and Robert, who had committed their lives to Jesus in their youth. Clarence grew up and became a civil rights activist. Robert grew up and became a lawyer. One day Clarence asked Robert for legal help in a civil rights matter. Robert refused, saying that it could hurt his political future. Clarence was stunned. He confronted Robert about his commitment to Jesus. Robert responded, saying, "I do follow Jesus, but not onto the cross. I'm not getting myself crucified." Clarence looked at his brother and said, "Robert, you're not a follower of Jesus; you're only one of his fans." Robert's situation might be compared to the seed that fell on rocky ground. It stands for those who receive the message with joy but abandon it in time of temptation.

Finally, our last story recalls the seed that fell on good soil. It concerns the author John R. Stott. In his book *Basic Christianity* he describes an incident that happened in his youth. One night he knelt down and committed his life to Jesus. The next day he wrote in his journal: "Yesterday really was an eventful day! ... Behold, Jesus stands at the door and knocks. I have heard him and now he has come into my house. He has cleansed it and now rules in it." Later on, Stott wrote these words:

"I really have felt an immense and new joy .... It is the joy of being at peace with the world and of being in touch with God.... I never really knew him before." John's commitment might be compared to the seed that fell on good soil. It stands for those who hear God's message and take it to heart.

Are we like the seed that fell on good soil? That is, are we like John Stott, who committed his life to Jesus and then rearranged his life to follow through on that commitment? This is the question Jesus asked the people of his time. It's also the question he asks each one of us in our time. And once we answer that question, Jesus expects us to do something about it. And so we pray, Lord, may your love make us what you have called us to be. My brother and sisters, when you pray this prayer with a true heart, you will know that.....

YOU ARE LOVED,

DEACON DAN

+Thanks Fr. Link