

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Beyond the Possible**    Third Week in Ordinary Time    Wednesday, January 29, 2014  
8:15 AM    2 Sm 7:4-17;    **Mk 4:1-20**    (The goal is everyone hears the word and decides what he or she is going to do about it.)

This reading from the Gospel of Mark might be a little bit difficult to encounter, to digest, especially this reference from Isaiah, the reason for parables being that **“they may look and see but not perceive, hear and listen but not understand, in order that they may not be converted.”**

That sounds awfully negative, but what was behind it is that **bearing fruit requires a great deal of effort and willingness on behalf of the listeners.** This is about hearing the word and doing something with it, not just hearing the word and passively sitting and expecting that somehow now God is going to take over your life. The Scriptures are actually quite clear about freedom. **Freedom is an irrevocable gift.** God gives us freedom so that we can do with our lives as we choose. He is inviting us; **God is inviting us to serve him,** to serve the kingdom of God, to make a real gift of ourselves to God and to others because God is in communion with all of his like-minded friends.

Now willy-nilly we are totally dependent upon God for our existence. The Scriptures make that clear, but this is not about our existence. This is about what we do with our lives. **This is about our choices our decisions. This is about our will.** We do not have to live out our dependence upon God. We can be independent. We can be autonomous. **We can do whatever we want with our lives.**

The **various descriptions of soil refers to the various levels in which people have some attraction to the word of God.** The first, those who are on the footpath really have no attraction. They are not interested. They have allowed themselves to be deceived about the meaning of life, or they don't even care about the meaning of life; they just live. The others actually have some

interest. They hear the word of God; they are interested in the word of God; they think maybe someday they might do something but not right now, or there are other things more important or more demanding or of greater interest, and so they really don't bear fruit.

We have to keep this teaching, these parables, in mind because we do experience in our own personal lives, in the life of the Church, in the life of the world **all kinds of reverses, all kinds of failures**, and it could actually make us rather depressed. If we think that the goal that God expects is that everyone is going to hear the word and miraculously be changed, that's not the goal. **The goal is everyone hears the word and decides what he or she is going to do about it.** And, realistically speaking, many choose nothing.

But those who do, produce **an incredible, miraculous harvest**: thirty- or sixty- or a hundredfold. Well, in Jesus' day that was impossible; by the standards of sowing, of farming, you could never get thirty- or sixty- or a hundredfold. So he is referring to something beyond the possible. **Beyond the possible actually is possible because the seed is the word of God.**