

Lenten Reflection

Tuesday, February 16, 2016

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Today, we hear from the prophet Isaiah about the task given to the Word of God, which will not return to God empty-handed. He compares the Word to the simple creations of rain and snow. The rain and snow fall on every person's head; there is no special treatment. Everyone gets wet; all the ground is watered. The rain and snow nourish bushes, trees, flowers and grass and prepare them for the springtime blossoms. So God's Word actively accomplishes a similar task -- falling on the ears of all who hear it, and trying to move into those same hearts. Except there is a 'rub.'

The Word is offered to all who can hear. They can hear with their ears, but do not necessarily *listen* with their hearts tuned-in. The Word of God is sown into many hearts, like seeds sown into the ground. However, only those who *listen* and only those whose hearts are *open* and *ready* for it will receive it, let it take root and be affected by it in their lives. There's the task that the Word of God must fulfill -- to find its way into all hearts and to affect the lives of all people, before it returns to God.

In today's Gospel, Jesus teaches us how to pray. No fancy words or formulas, just a simple prayer directed to our Creator. This prayer was intended to help shape our interior life. Two things strike me about it: 1. We address God in the plural: OUR Father...give US this day...forgive US our trespasses. 2. We ask God to give us the same *mercy* that we show to others. This may have been a formal, memorized prayer for us in our youth. But when we cannot think of our own words, in times of need, the 'Our Father' is one prayer we can fall back on, as we recall it from memory. It sums up our relationship with God and teaches us in plain language how to ask for what we need and trust that God will provide for our need.

So as we pray today let us pay greater attention to the chord that God's Word strikes in our hearts. Let us be open to God's Word in our hearts and in our lives. Ask yourself: What is the Holy Spirit calling me to **do** or to **be** during this Lenten season? How will God's Word help me to fulfill my call?

"The prayer of the heart and of good deeds has more value than the prayer of the lips."

- St. Augustine of Hippo