

JANUARY 28, 2026 FATHER GUSTAVE INEZA

Dear brothers and sisters, on this week day, we are given one of the longest Gospel passages of the liturgical week, drawn from Mark, chapter four.

Scholars of scripture often notice that this chapter stands alongside chapter 13 as one of the most substantial teaching sections in Mark's Gospel. Length, however, does not make it simple.

On the contrary, this passage unsettles us, challenges us, challenges our assumptions, and calls to a deep humility before the mystery of God's Word.

The first source of discomfort is the parable itself, often called the Parable of the Sower.

If we judge the sower by ordinary standards, he seems remarkably inefficient. Seed is scattered on the path, among rocks, and in thorny ground. Only a portion falls on good soil.

From a practical perspective, this is almost reckless. Yet this apparent failure reveals something essential. The focus of the parable is not on agricultural success, but on the extravagant generosity of the sower.

The seed is precious, yet it is given everywhere, without calculation, without discrimination. God's Word is offered freely, even where it seems unlikely to take root.

A second difficulty lies in Jesus' citation of Isaiah. "That they may see, but not perceive, and hear, but not understand."

These words, taken from Isaiah's vision in the temple in chapter six, verses nine and 10, have long troubled readers. Are we to believe that God does not want people to understand or be converted?

Biblical scholars, including John R. Donahue, remind us that this text belongs to the language of apocalypse. It is not a denial of God's mercy, but a stark way of naming a tragic reality.

Hearts can become hardened, not because God withholds grace, but because people resist it. In Mark's Gospel, this resistance becomes painfully clear when we read the story backward, from the cross to the beginning.

Jesus, who healed, taught, forgave, and sowed generously, dies abandoned. Unlike other Gospels, Mark offers no consoling words from the cross, and the early Christians wrestled with a haunting question.

How could such generosity end in such loneliness? The parable of the sower helps them and us face these mysteries honestly.

When we read this Gospel today, we do so in our own context. The question is not primarily what kind of soil are others, but what kind of soil am I today?

It may be tempting to categorize people neatly. This one is rocky ground, that one thorny soil, another good earth, but such judgements are both spiritually shallow and deeply uncharitable.

Human hearts are not static. We change, we struggle, we grow. At different moments in our lives, the same person may be all four kinds of soil.

This is why humility becomes essential. The parable is not a tool for self-satisfaction, but an invitation to self-examination.

How often do we welcome the Word with joy only to let it wither under pressure? How often do anxieties, ambitions, or fears choke what God is trying to grow within us?

Or how often, by grace alone, do we become good soil, receiving the Word, nurturing it patiently, and allowing it to bear fruit beyond what we could imagine?

To acknowledge this movement within ourselves requires humility. None of us is permanently good ground.

Bearing fruit is not a personal achievement, but a gift. At the same time, none of us should be dismissed as hopeless soil. God continues to sow again and again, trusting that even hardened ground can be transformed.

So, dear brothers and sisters, let us pray for a church that mirrors the generosity of Christ, sowing the Word widely and without fear.

Let us pray for the humility to recognize our own struggles and resist the temptation to judge others, and let us ask for the grace to become, little by little, good soil, receiving the Word with patience, allowing it to take root and bearing fruit for the life of the world. Amen.