

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Aug 27th 2013

In Omaha, we are starting to see our fall harvests: the abundant fruits of our gentle preparation and tinkering this spring and summer. Time spent in March to prepare the soil, time spent in May to gently tie and guide the growth, time spent now pruning back has all helped this yield.

Taking time daily to deepen our commitment to God and to one another through prayer and reflection is the way we prepare our soil and steer our growth. How nice it is to have an outward sign of what has been going on inside all along. Today we are called to further action, further integrity so that we may all have a rich harvest and share our fruits.

In today's first reading, the Apostles were humble and confident in their call and mission to share the Gospel. This sharing and giving of themselves was done in a spirit of mutual affection for those they visited. This personal care was so intimate; Paul described the affection as being as gentle as that of a nursing mother caring for her children.

How much care do we give in cultivating our call?

How gentle are we with our community?

Paul describes his group as having been strengthened in courage and message after being treated badly in Philippi. It seems difficult to imagine that the temptation would not have existed to shrink back, to change course or to become jaded by past trials.

How often do our co-workers or our families weather a crisis and come out more true to our values, more humble in our approach?

The Gospel reading today underscores what all gardeners know: you must do the pre-work to get good results. Good preparation is vital. So much of what goes on with the plant and the harvest is not even visible to the passerby.

In life as in gardening, it is not what we do on the outside that counts most or last, but rather we must start from within.

We must cleanse ourselves first and foremost on the inside before the outside as the Gospel says.

Are our motives for church participation, service and ministry stemming from a call to share the Good News?

Do we make space and time to see God working in our lives? Is this as important as daily bathing?

What deeper kinds of justice, mercy and faithfulness are we called to?

These so called weightier parts of the law are often the parts that are tested with times of difficulty. When we are at our best, tithing and generosity abound. When we are harmed by another, justice and mercy are asked for, along with trust and faithfulness in God. These can be enormous undertakings even for the well-practiced spiritual gardener. This call to continual renewal, refocus and preparation is done in the spirit of being ready for the droughts, the floods and the harvest.

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