

THE FIRST READING IS FROM THE BOOK OF THE  
PROPHET ISAIAH

Thus says the Lord:

‘For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven  
and do not return there but water the earth,  
making it bring forth and sprout,  
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,  
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;  
it shall not return to me empty,  
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,  
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.’

THE WORD OF THE LORD

THE RESPONSE TO THE PSALM IS

*Some seed fell into good soil and yielded its fruit.*

You visit the earth, give it water;  
you fill it with riches.

God’s ever-flowing river brims over  
to prepare the grain.

*Some seed fell into good soil and yielded its fruit.*

And thus you prepare it:  
you drench its furrows;

you level it, soften it with showers;  
you bless its growth.

*Some seed fell into good soil and yielded its fruit.*

You crown the year with your bounty.

Abundance flows in your pathways;  
in pastures of the desert it flows.

The hills are girded with joy.

*Some seed fell into good soil and yielded its fruit.*

The meadows clothed with flocks.

The valleys are decked with wheat.

They shout for joy; yes, they sing!

*Some seed fell into good soil and yielded its fruit.*

THE SECOND READING IS FROM THE LETTER OF ST  
PAUL TO THE ROMANS 8, 18-25

Brothers and Sisters: I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the

redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience

## THE WORD OF THE LORD

### THE GOSPEL ACCLAMATION.

Alleluia, alleluia.

The seed is the word of God, Christ the sower;  
all who find him will live for ever.

Alleluia.

### A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

At that time: Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the lake. And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: 'A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose, they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear.'

Hear then the parable of the sower:

When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.

As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while,

and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.

As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it.

He indeed bears fruit and yields,

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As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.

As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.’

## REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

I can tell God what I would like for me in heaven, but he may decide my heaven would be that of a perfect football referee encouraging players to play with honesty and admit their mistakes or that they were not hurt.

the true understanding of the virtue of hope is trust in something unknown: Archbishop Tutu in the time of Apartheid in South Africa said it was the light in the midst of darkness.

In the challenging book of Job. Job in the bible, he loses family and fortune—he is a plaything of the devil who has a bet with God that the devil can corrupt any man. Job's wife snaps at him and says in despair 'Curse God and die. But Job will not curse God. Job speaks of his innocence when his friends tell him he must have sinned because God is just Job accuses God of unfairness.

Job challenges God, he knows he has been a good man, but disasters have happened, he wants God to—let the Almighty answer me; let my accuser put his indictment in writing.”

In the end after God spoke of his creation beyond Job's capability, Job admitted he cannot understand God's ways but accepts them:

“I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted, things too wonderful for me to know”.

St Paul tries a better approach to suffering. Paul recognises in Jesus words and actions there is a better way: we will be God's children in a redeemed and perfect creation.

Paul tries a bit harder for an explanation. He firstly recognises this world is full of suffering and describes it as “groaning” comparing the experience to being as bad as the pain of childbirth. This he says is part of God's plan, not accessible for us to understand. It is the greatest challenge of faith, a hope which is described as one being in what we do not see.

The legend of Pandora's box may have been known to Paul The Greek legend of Pandora's secret box, told it must not be opened, she does and unleashes all the evil in the world, but hope remains and is also released.

Newman also accepted that to have "faith in God" is 'to surrender oneself to God, humbly to put one's interests or to wish to put them in his hands who is the sovereign giver of all good.

Suffering is something we have to accept without an adequate explanation, God is beyond us and has a remoteness beyond us. I do not think suffering is punishment in this world for what we have sinned. We hope in a glory unknown to us, a hope given to us with the promise of sharing in the life of heaven.