

LENT 2017 – day 4 – 7th March

Isaiah 55:10

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater...

It is talking about the pattern of life. Rain falls to the ground and then fertilizes the earth and the earth produces the life for the seed and then you have the trees, the wheat, the paddy. Then you eat it and send it back to the earth, the rain comes down and the cycle of life goes on.

Isaiah 55:11

...so is my word that goes out from my mouth; it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

The author of Isaiah - I am saying author of Isaiah because, when you study the Bible, we see that there are three stages of Isaiah. This is called the third Isaiah, that is Isaiah that is written after the exile. The people of Judea went into exile in 500 BC and they were taken to Babylon. The first Isaiah was written before they went into exile, and the second Isaiah was most often in the time of exile, and this was written after the exile - when they returned to Jerusalem and Judea. So obviously it can't be the same person because he would have had to live a 150 years if he was to write it. It is a collection of thoughts put under the name of Isaiah. That's how biblical scholars will explain Isaiah.

The third Isaiah is telling us: Like rain falls and fulfills its purpose, God's word will fulfill its purpose.

But first I want to give you some bad news: What happens when rain falls on rock? Nothing will happen. That's why many people's lives remain unchanged over years. The word of God, which is the rain, is falling on rock and bouncing off.

Today is a good day to examine your heart and see if the rain is falling on rock.

What do you mean by rock? Because of our childhood wounds, some of us have hardened our hearts.

- "I'll never forgive them." That's what you mean by a hardened heart.
- "I'll never say sorry. I'll never take a step back."
- A person once told me, "It's my nature. Even if I'm wrong, if I have taken my first step, then I won't take it back."

Those are hardened hearts.

When the word of God falls on hardened hearts, it bounces off. That's why we have many people living unchanged lives over the years. They can

- Pray,
- Listen,
- Go to mass,
- Come for prayer meetings - *but the word of God is bouncing off their hearts.*

What do you mean by a fertile heart? The beautiful example is the Virgin Mary.

What I am going to explain is not my thought but what Pope Benedict said in his reflection about the Virgin Mary. He has brought out this beautiful idea that the word came from heaven like rain, but it was looking for a soil that was open to bear fruit. The soil that the Holy Spirit found that could really hold the word and make it grow was the womb of the blessed mother. She had a participative part in this. Human beings are like that. We have a free will, and if you say no then we become a rock and the word bounces off our being. But when you say yes to the word, you become the soil. When you become the soil, the word of God came like a seed and fell into the womb and it was actually fertilized by the Holy Spirit. Suddenly, the God of heaven found a place in which He could become a human being.

Why I explained this is: Our own hearts can be places where God's word can come alive, and the word that comes alive is Jesus Himself.

- First we open our hearts so His word can rest inside us;
- Then we allow the Holy Spirit to fertilize us with the anointing and the power.
- Then what happens is, suddenly, Jesus the word of God is living and working through us.

Today is a good day to find out whether you are a rock, where everything is bouncing off - or if you open yourself for the word to come inside, like it came into the heart of Mary. She couldn't comprehend it, but she said, "Let it be done unto me according to your word."

What I am discovering is, I have wasted many years trying to fathom how God is going to do it and you have a lot of worry over that. "How can He answer us?" **Now the shift is knowing that He is creatively capable of giving you the most amazing solutions,** I no longer worry - *but look in anticipation* and wonder at how He is going to do this. It is no longer worry, but great anticipation because God is giving me a creative solution.

I have spent years worrying. Until the answer comes, we worry. We are great worriers - we can take the problem, turn it upside down, look at the bottom, look at the top, the side, all the possibilities that are never going to happen - and we enjoy worrying about the whole thing. God is actually unable to speak to a worrying heart. **Why?** Because you're full of your own worries and your thoughts are all worries and you can't hear Him.

But when you're relaxed, trusting - over the years I've found, when I looked back at my memories I

began to realize, God has always found a creative solution. Some of those solutions are impossible to think of at the moments we were going through it. Then I began to realize how much I've worried because I didn't trust His capacity for a creative solution. You only have to look at the resurrection to understand that. It is a creative solution that you can't comprehend. So either you worry through it to the end, or you allow God to give you a peaceful, happy life. He will find a way.

Otherwise, the other danger of worry is, as you worry, you take control over the situation and you don't allow God to act. That's when you really need to worry. Then we are running the show and the steps we are taking will get us the results. That's how we mess up issues.

Therefore, allowing the word to come inside and fertilize inside us by openness and living a life free of worry. Now I'm beginning to realize, to really worry is to live in sin. Sin is not only an action that you do, but an attitude. We don't trust what God can do. When you do that, you pay the price. When you worry enough, you will take matters into your own hands. When you take matters into your own hands, then you have to start worrying because soon you're going to get the results of what you're doing.

That's why we ask,

- "What is God doing here while I'm doing everything?"
- "What is the alternative?"

Instead of worrying or taking matters into our own hands, the gospel tells us what to do:

Matthew 6:7

And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans...

So people use this text to accuse us and say, "All of you are babbling like pagans." We aren't babbling - we are praising the Lord. Babbling is worrying in your prayer time. People who look down on our babbling in praise actually worry greatly in prayer time.

Matthew 6:7 continued

...for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

We keep on telling the Lord the same thing and it doesn't work. Then what works?

Matthew 6:8

Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

Isn't that beautifully comforting? The Father knows but we don't know the Father knows, so we are babbling. If the Father knows what you need and we are still babbling then we have to do something else, instead of babbling:

Matthew 6:9

This, then, is how you should pray:

Every night and every morning as I pray, I pray with the Our Father, because that's what Jesus asked us to pray with. It's so amazingly rich. Sometimes it's half an hour, sometimes an hour of quietly running through the Lord's Prayer.

Matthew 6:9 continued

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name..."

We can say it better: "**Our Father in heaven** - hello, how are you?" That's what He is saying. "Hello, I am connecting to you. You are in heaven - how are you?" Immediately a lot of things switch off because you have a Father above history, above events, above the problems of this world. If you connect to Him and look at Him, everything changes.

So why don't you try this prayer? You can whatsapp the Father and say hello. The first thing we need to do is to break out of this environment and acknowledge and look at God. It brings a lot of peace.

"**Our Father in heaven.**" He is above this situation, He is more powerful, He is alive, He does miracles and He can do things that we can't even imagine. We say, "Hello, good morning Father. I look at you this morning, I acknowledge you." Then you do the same thing in the night. "Hello Father, I want to bring my whole day to you, I want to connect with you." That's it. It's so simple instead of complaining.

When many people start prayer they're in depression and when they end the prayer they're in despair because they have explained their whole problem while babbling and not penetrated the cloud. You penetrate it by the words of Jesus: "**Our Father in heaven.** How are you doing? **Holy be your name.** You are unchanging. You are above every situation."

Matthew 6:10

...your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

This is how you become fertile soil - not a rock. By saying, "Let your rule come into my life - **your kingdom come. Let your will be done in me as it is in heaven.**" What happens then is, when His rule comes into me and His kingdom settles down into my life, wherever I go, He will get involved.

When I was first flying in the planes, I used to carry the plane on my shoulders. Later on I found that a lot of people were doing that but wouldn't admit it. Every creak and every shake, I would think if it would crash. So, most of the time you're up rather than sleeping.

As I grew in the journey, I saw a place in the act of the apostles where the boat that St. Paul was on was sinking. Everyone thought it was going to sink and they were ready to die.

Then the angel visits Paul and says, "None of your people will die here because you have to go to Rome." "**Your kingdom come**" There was one man who had the kingdom in his heart. "**Your will be done.**"

There was one man who was allowing God's will to happen to Him. Because of this one man, the whole boat was in the hands of God.

If you're involved in a situation, you can be sure God is going to be involved because you have surrendered into His kingdom and you're hosting His presence.

That's how you walk in freedom through the agonies of the world. It's so beautiful and we have lost it all. I choose that and then God says, "I'll be involved in this place." Because Jesus died on the cross in obedience to the Father, the resurrection comes. Because of one man who was listening to the Father, Lazarus rises from the dead. Divine intervention comes when there is a person who is hosting the presence of God. Instead of babbling, crying and fighting - better carry His presence to places.

Here is the secret: Conversion all the time. Sometimes you have to pray the Lord's Prayer many times before you fit it in. Then everyday we make the connection. This alone is enough. Connect with the Father and that's how you pray. "Hello Father, I have come - here I am. I am connecting to you, I see you, I acknowledge you. Don't hide today." The Father plays hide and seek and there are days when He is hiding. We tell Him, "No, you are not hiding today - I see you." The Father loves to play that game and says, "Okay, I'm caught." Then He opens up. You say, "Your kingdom come. Here I am, I am open to you. You come. Your will be done - I am surrendered to you. I host you and I carry you into the world."

The more you do that, the more powerfully He will manifest through your life into the world, the more powerfully He will touch the lives of other people. It happens effortlessly - you're not doing anything but you're carrying His presence into the world. People who never know God will know Him through us, people who never have a divine intervention will have a divine intervention through us. As we pray for people, miracles are taking place and breakthroughs are taking place. God is moving among us because we are hosting His presence.