

Rev. Emmanuel-Garet Ifeakor
Isaiah 55:10-11
Romans 8:18-23
Matthew 13:1-23

15TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Epiphany Catholic Church
Louisville, KY, USA
July 12, 2026

Theme: Reactions to the word of God.

Reactions to the word of God. (Singing) "Trust and obey for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey." My dear friends in Christ. I would like to invite you so that we can reflect on "reactions to the word of God." Everybody here knows what is "to react" or "reaction." Reaction is to behave in a particular way; maybe to something, to an event or occasion. A reaction is also to respond in a particular way to an event, occasion, to something or whatever that has happened to you or said to you. Some of us here might have taken a class in your high school in biology. One of the things we were taught is how do we respond to stimuli. It is how you respond or react when an external force/object acts on you or happens to you. We might also talk about reaction as how we process things that happen to us or said to us. In all these, we have different reactions because it is not the way I react, you will react. We do not react in the same way. We react differently. Our different background accounts to or informs how we react. In those moments, we may react positively, indifferently or negatively. This takes us to the gospel. In the gospel reading, we have Jesus coming out with a parable; the parable of the sower. Now let us unravel and understand the parable. The sower is God. The seed is the word of God. And the ground in which the seed is sown is all of us. So, when I say all of us, I mean, it is you and me. So, I can say that the ground is me. Then you might say the ground is you. Since we have established this, let us now look at these reactions. There are different kinds of reactions or varied reactions. So, we want to start with number one reaction to the word of God.

1. Prejudice and pride: number one of them is prejudice or pride. So if you are biased or prejudiced, your reaction would not be positive but hostile. You know when Jesus was talking to the people, some people were already biased about Jesus. Some people like the the Pharisees and scribes. So they were biased about Jesus. They were prejudiced about Jesus, the speaker. These kind of people already block their mind before the word comes. They already shut their hearts. They

wouldn't want to listen to what the speaker is saying. I want to take you to Acts of the Apostles 17. When Paul was preaching in Athens, teaching about the resurrection. At a particular point, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject," v. 32. Those who sneered were the Greek philosophers. They were thinking that they knew more than Jesus. This was as a result of pride or prejudice or you think that what the person is talking about doesn't make sense to you. Another point we can add here is the prejudice about God himself. I have seen some people who say that they don't believe in the God of the Old Testament. Keep in mind you that there are no two Gods. These people say, I don't like or believe in the God of the Old Testament. They are already biased. We have only one God. In the mystery of our salvation beginning from the Old Testament to the New Testament, God was acting in the interest of the human race. So, for the people in this group, when you begin to talk about God, they might block their mind. They don't want to understand the word of God. They shut up their mind. Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in them, which says: *...Gross is the heart of this people, they will hardly hear with their ears, they have closed their eyes, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and be converted, and I heal them, Isaiah 6:9-10.*

2. Welcome without assimilation: So, number two reaction is what we call the people who welcomed the word of God, but the word was not assimilated. They are like the seed that fell on the rocky ground or thorns. These people have good intentions in the beginning, but the good intention was not enough. In this group, you can hear - oh, this is a nice homily. Oh, this is a nice preaching. They welcomed the word, but it was not grounded. You have seen some people who began something but don't reach to the end. With joy, these people welcome the word of God. But no sooner had they welcomed the word than they dropped it. That is another reaction. Welcoming but not assimilated. And that's why Paul, when Paul was writing to the Philippians, in 1:6, says, may God who begins this good work in you bring it to perfection.

3. Bothered by many things: Recall number one is prejudice and pride. Number two is welcoming but not assimilated. Number three is people who are bothered by many things. In this group we have people who are bothered by many things that they do not have time for the word of God. They don't want to hear about the word of God. Their interest and priority is not in the word of God. Even when you talk from now till tomorrow, their interest is not on the word of God. And these people are the people who are bothered maybe by work, education, career or profession.

4. Open minded people: The last group is what I will call the people with open mind. These people are the people who want to learn. They are receptive. These

people are the people who are amenable and willing to learn and produce fruits. Even if you don't understand the word itself as the word of God comes to you, but you are willing to process it. You are available to know what this word of God is saying. You present yourself as a willing instrument to understand the word of God and bear fruit. I think the number four is what God wants you and me to be in that parable. And that is why in the first reading, we hear that, "Thus says the LORD: Just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to the one who sows and bread to the one who eats, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; my word shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it." Therefore, this is the intention of the word of God. Whenever it comes to us, we are willing to receive it and bear fruit. Even if it is hard on me, I can process it to know what God is saying.

And in this case, it demands trust because you can't believe the word of God if you don't trust in God. This is why even in our suffering, when the word of God comes to us, how do we treat it? In the second reading, it says, our suffering in this world is nothing to compare with what is going to be given us in heaven. My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, let us ask God to give us the grace always to be open-minded whenever the word of God is coming to us. God wants us to bear fruit. Even if we don't understand the word at that particular time, we can ask God to give us the Holy Spirit to interpret the word to us. What God wants from us is to be amenable, be open, be willing, be open to welcome the word and trust in God. And when you do that, the next line of action is to obey, bear fruit and leave the rest to God. Reactions to the word of God. (Singing) "Trust and obey for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey." Reactions to the word of God.