

15<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year A  
**Con Foley**

**Lectionary 103:**

Isa 55:10-11  
Ps 65:10, 11, 12-13, 14  
Rom 8:18-23  
Matt 13:1-23

**Possible preaching themes:**

- How to remain energized in building the kingdom of God despite setbacks, indifference, and opposition.
- Listening for the two different types of words that God speaks: Commands and Invitations.
- How the four different types of ground (Gospel) affect the growth of faith.
- The Generosity of God and how the seed of God’s Word is broadcast
- Supernatural Results

**Possible scientific resources:**

- **The elephant listening project**, Eavesdropping on Elephants – Elephant Listening Project (ELP), and <https://elephantlisteningproject.org/katy-payne-on-elephants/>
  - **Summary of materials:** Bioacoustics researcher Katy Payne and her colleagues have found that elephants use low frequency sounds to communicate. These sounds are mostly below the range of human hearing (Infrasound). The ELP focuses on elephants inhabiting the closed-canopy forests of Central Africa. It records and analyzes forest elephant calls (known as “rumbles”) to better understand where they are, what they’re doing, and what they can tell us. The insights gained from listening to these elephants “as key architects” of second largest rainforest on earth, helps protect the biodiversity of that forest.
- **The power of Listening to help people change**, <https://hbr.org/2018/05/the-power-of-listening-in-helping-people-change>
  - **Summary of article:** Harvard researchers examine how to give effective feedback. Listening to employees and asking them questions might be a more effective way to help them change.

- **Linking to the Scriptures:** The need for intentional listening to hear God's voice to know how to act for the building the kingdom
- **A Tiny Island Off the Coast of Maine Could Be a Renewable Energy Model for the Rest of the World** <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/tiny-island-off-coast-maine-could-be-renewable-energy-model-for-rest-world-180974415/> and <https://batteryuniversity.com/article/bu-209-how-does-a-supercapacitor-work>
  - **Summary of articles:** A remote island community off Maine, attempting to be self-sufficient in renewable energy, needed to overcome the problem of how to store intermittently produced energy from solar and wind. Lithium-ion batteries were deemed not suitable for their needs. The problem was overcome by adopting an innovation in energy storage: supercapacitors. These large devices do not decay like typical batteries and can release abundant energy when required.
  - **Linking to the Scriptures** – using the supercapacitors of our faith to provide divine energy to overcome temptation and opposition.

*All of these scientific contributions are employed in this outline*

### **Homily outline: The need to hear God's word to find the energy to be fruitful.**

- **The scriptures teach us that God speaks in two distinct ways: either through commands, or through invitations. Commands of God make things happened. Examples include "let there be light" (Gen 1:3), "Talithakoum!" (Mark 5:41) and other miracle stories where Jesus only has to "say the word" (Matthew 8:8) and something is miraculously transformed.**
- **Most of Jesus' preaching and teaching is invitational.** It requires our attention, and our willingness to co-operate. This is the type of word we hear about in the Parable of the Sower. For the seed (God's invitation) to flourish the ground conditions (our attention and co-operation) need to be good. We find four types of ground in the parable
  - **Hard Ground:** when we oppose God's ways, are hard hearted, prejudiced or egocentric
  - **Weeds, thorns:** when we allow distractions, addictions, the deceitfulness of riches, the trials of life, or even good things to stop us listening to the voice of God
  - **Shallow, rocky soil:** where there is little time for prayer, spiritual reading, or reflection
  - **Good soil:** when we attentive to God's word, humble, open, on the watch out for goodness
  - Prayer and humility are the devices that tune us in to the Infrasound of God's voice and the rumbles of the saints. Responding out of this awareness leads to abundant fruitfulness.

- **Sometimes the problem may not be with ourselves.** We may be listening to God’s voice and trying to act in the right way, but our attempts to be missionary disciples face indifference or opposition. Setbacks can leave us drained, disillusioned, or despairing, and it’s then that we need the renewable energy of divine love.
- At these low times we need to remember that the good soil has already produced results. There is great power stored up in the various **supercapacitors of our faith.** These supercapacitors are the sacraments, the saints, our parish and school communities, the Scriptures, the Tradition of the church and the structures that bring healing and hope.
- **Here we find the energy to be generous scatterers of God’s precious seeds,** to be broadcasters of God’s extravagant love. The most unlikely places and unlikely people are to be given a chance. This is the form that Jesus’ ministry took, there was nothing selective about His approach.
- **Jesus too experienced rejection, hostility, and betrayal.** These obstacles did not deter God, nor should we despair. Whatever our personal weaknesses, or the obstacles in the church and the world, we need to remember that there is good soil out there (“I have many people in this city” Acts 18:10). There will be an abundant harvest.
- **The seed is good and powerful,** and the world is saturated with God’s seeds. God, and those who have listened and acted to the Word, have done the sowing, and grace can work through the smallest opening.
- **The Word of God continues to be creative and fruitful,** like a well that never runs dry (John 4:14). When God’s Word meets our attentive hearing, and God’s grace sparks our generous response, when we are plugged in to the supercapacitors of our faith, then we bear supernatural fruit, and something of God’s kingdom is revealed on earth.

Glory be to him whose power, working in us,  
can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine (Eph 3:20)

**Tags:** bioacoustics, listening, super capacitors, Word of God

### **About the Preaching with the Sciences Initiative**

A primary way Roman Catholics explore their faith and nourish their spirituality is by participating in Sunday Mass and actively engaging in the homily. However, few preachers explicitly connect faith or spirituality with science. The Preaching with the Sciences initiative, made possible by a generous grant from the John Templeton Foundation, gathers scientists and leading homileticians to explore the positive contributions science can make to preaching, and consequently contribute to more contemporary modes of believing. Such contributions are

grounded in the rich imaginations that scientists bring to their work as well as in scientific discoveries that have a potential for revealing religious truths and even shedding new insight on ancient teachings and beliefs.

With guidance from world-renowned scientists with differing areas of expertise, a select number of homileticians will draft homily outlines for preaching key Sundays and feast days across the 3-year lectionary

cycle. Over 100 homily outlines will highlight some of the way's sciences and the contemporary search for religious meaning can interface. These free homiletic resources have the potential to influence thousands of preachers seeking help each week in crafting sermons and helping to shape a scientifically informed religious imagination among future preachers.