

June 14, 2009

Scripture: Mark 4:26-34

Sermon: "Scatter Seeds"

The Kingdom of God is like...The Kingdom of God is like...The Kingdom of God is like... We know this phrase. We know that as soon as we hear this phrase that Jesus is sharing a parable with his disciples. We know that as soon as we hear this phrase that Jesus is trying to take the mysterious, mystifying ideal of the Kingdom of God and try to explain it words that we will comprehend. We know that as soon as we hear this phrase, we will also hear "his disciples did not understand and so he explained it all to him."

The Kingdom of God is like a sower scattering seeds...We understand this image, but the thing that we get stuck on in this parable is that after the sower scatters the seeds, he goes on about his business. We don't get reports that he checked the acidity of the soil before he sowed his seeds. We don't get reports that he watered the seeds daily. We don't get reports that he went out into fields daily to survey the growth.

All the author of Mark gives us as readers is that the Kingdom of God is like a sower scattering seeds. He scatters them in the field, and then goes on with his life. He gets up in the morning and goes to bed each night. He gets up in the morning and goes to bed each night. He gets up in the morning and goes to bed each night.

Then when the harvest is ripe, he goes out into the field and brings in the sheaves.

And after reading this parable, we are left with our questions... Well, what did the sower do to prepare the fields? How did the seeds grow without the care of the sower? What did the sower do to guarantee that the seeds that he sowed would grow? Surely he did something. Surely, he worked daily with this crop. Surely, his hard work counts for something. Surely, the work of the sower helped somehow to make the seeds grow.

And Mark responds by giving us one more important detail in this parable: "The seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself." Mark is letting us know that the sower cannot make the sows grow faster by adding Miracle Grow to the soil. Mark is letting us know that the sower cannot guarantee that all the seeds that he sows will actually become plants. Mark is letting us know that that the sower cannot force the seeds to sprout. Mark is letting is know that all the sower knows is that he has the hope that the seeds that he scatters will grow into a huge harvest and that the sower trusts the process.

The sower doesn't know how the seeds grow and he doesn't need to know how the seeds grow. He just trusts that they will grow. He just trusts in the mystery surrounding exactly how a great harvest will come from such tiny seeds. He just hopes that the seeds that he scatters will grow and bear fruit.

And the same is for us as people of faith. We cannot know that the acts of mercy that we do for our fellow humankind will be returned to us tenfold. We cannot even know if that person wants our help or cares that we are trying to help the out. We cannot know how a gesture or a kind

word will change someone's life. We cannot know how an invitation to church may allow someone to experience God's life-transforming love for the first time. We cannot know how by showing God's love for us to other, lives will be change. There are no guarantees. There are no magic formulas. There is no grand number that needs to be achieved before the Kingdom of God will come here on earth.

The Kingdom of God is mysterious. The Kingdom of God is mystifying. The Kingdom of God holds us in tension as people of faith because we are called to live out the Kingdom of God here on earth while waiting for it to come at some point in the future. And we don't know all the answers to the questions that we have about the Kingdom of God.

We just know and trust in the promises that Jesus gave us as his followers that some day the Kingdom of God will come. We hold to the promises that Jesus gave us that God will use the seeds that we scatter to help bring about the Kingdom of God here on earth. We hold onto the promises that Jesus gave us that God is in control.

The good news and the bad news about this life of faith that we lead is that we cannot know how many of the seeds we scatter will come to fruition. The good news and the bad news about this life of faith that we lead is that we cannot make the Kingdom of God come faster here on earth through our actions. The good news and the bad news about this life of faith that we lead is that we cannot force the Kingdom of God to fruition here on earth.

Just like sower, all we can do is to hold onto the hope that the seeds that we scatter will grow and bear fruit. All we can do is to hold onto the hope that eventually these tiny seeds that we scatter will become great shrubs to provide shelter and security for others. All we can do is to trust that the Kingdom of God will come here on earth and that all will experience God's life-changing love.

And I will be the first to admit that that this parable is frustrating. I will be the first to admit that this parable doesn't really motivate me to go out and work for the Kingdom of God. What's the point? If what I do doesn't matter or bring on the Kingdom of God faster here on earth, then what's the point?

And this parable tells us that the point is that we will never know how our actions work to bring about the Kingdom of God. That we will never know how our words work to bring about the Kingdom of God here on earth. Only God knows when and where the Kingdom of God will come.

This parable frees us as people of faith. This parable stops us from putting so much pressure on ourselves to do so much, be so much, and allows us to simply enjoy and share the blessings that fill our lives. This parable reminds us that it is not up to us to bring about the Kingdom of God. This parable reminds us that God is in control. This parable reminds us that we have been extended an invitation to participate and experience God's Kingdom in our lives.

This parable reminds us that the Kingdom of God does not depend on you and me or our actions. Thanks be to God! The Kingdom of God will come about through God and because of God. And we are invited to participate in the process by scattering seeds here on earth.

This parable reminds us that we are called to a life of faith that will be full of questions that will be full of disappointing moments that will have moments of us wondering what the point is because no one cares. This parable also reminds us that we are invited to a life of faith where we catch glimpses of the Kingdom of God coming to fruition, that we are invited to participate in the mysterious and mystifying Kingdom of God, that we are invited to be a part of the life-transforming experience that is God's grace.

We cannot speed up the process of the Kingdom of God through our actions. But we can participate in the process and know that God will use our seemingly small words and actions and turn them into huge life-changing, life-transforming events. We cannot make the Kingdom of God come here on earth right here and now but we can celebrate and hope that the seeds that we scatter will eventually bear fruit, thanks to God's grace and God's actions in this world. We cannot guarantee that all the seeds that we scatter will grow. We can only hold onto the promises and the hope that Jesus gave us as people of faith that God is in control and that God is continually working in this world to bring about the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God is full of mystery and it is mystifying for us as people of faith. But it is "faith and faith alone that allows us to see the [Kingdom] of God at work in the world...and in our churches."

And we are called to participate by scattering seeds. And we are invited to participate by scattering seeds. We are experience the gift of God's grace in our lives by scattering seeds.

May we always trust that God is in the process as we scatter seeds here on earth and await the moment when God brings in the sheaves. Amen.

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