

Holy Trinity Sunningdale
Sunday, May 15, 2022
Readings – Mark 4:26-29 & Mark 4:30-34

The picture stories or parables used by Jesus are usually about whether we are going to be part of God's kingdom or not. I have a few points for us to consider.

1st, Jesus tells the parables to everyone including you and I through the Bible. The opportunity is therefore available for everyone to come to Jesus for more.

2nd, One of the pictures or images often used to represent people is that of plants or trees. Do you know the expression, "If you don't like where you are, then move.

You're not a tree!" I used it often to chastise teachers who moan and groan about challenges in their schools, but after preparing this talk, I won't be using it anymore! We like to think that we make our own way through life, shaping our world, making our own decisions. A plant can do none of those things. A plant doesn't do much for itself or by itself. It is not in control of its own destiny. Yes, the parables compares us to plants implying God is in control, not us.

3rd, In these parables not only are we plants, we are plants waiting to be harvested. There is an end in view, we are planted here for a purpose – for harvesting.

In the 2 parables read today, people are likened to plants. In the first, someone goes out sowing seeds and the seeds begin to grow. Time passes while this mysterious process of growth is going on. Of course, the farmer can take some actions to support the growth like watering the soil, applying fertilizer, weeding etc., but one thing he cannot do - he cannot make the plant grow. The miracle of growth is just that – it is a miracle! A living seed has all the potential for growth within it to produce a crop – the full head of grain. Finally, it is ready for harvest. All the sowing and growing has been for a purpose - the harvest.

This parable is about the new start when someone comes to know Jesus. Then they grow. The growth happens mysteriously, we cannot make it happen. We can encourage it just like the farmer will feed and water a growing plant, but we cannot make the growth happen. That's a miracle – and miracles are God's department. Then comes the harvest. This parable is about us, and like the farmer, the Lord is coming back with his sickle when harvest-time comes.

In the 2nd parable of the mustard seed, Jesus chooses a different picture. Instead of a field of grain where each plant stands for individual people, here the one mustard seed stands for the whole kingdom. A single tiny seed is sown to become the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches so that the birds can make their homes in it.

This kingdom is something that starts out small and ends up enormous but it takes time to grow. This slow growth is an aspect of the kingdom that the original listeners to Jesus were not ready to accept and today, it still poses a challenge for most of us. We, like the people of Jesus' days, wants a kingdom that is comparable to a hurricane which sweeps in suddenly and flattens everything in its path or an invading army that sweeps through the earth destroying all opposition and resistance, ending with King Jesus enthroned.

The idea that God's kingdom would grow within an evil world, that the harvest will be long delayed, that God's people need a lot of patience and endurance is hard for most of us to take on board. But that is the fact about the kingdom that Jesus taught and is teaching us. God is growing his kingdom, Jesus is growing his church from among every nation on earth. But the harvest is coming. This world will come to an end. The Bible uses the picture of the harvest to make this point.

The harvest is coming, and the way to be ready is to be in Christ, to be part of his great kingdom that is growing to fill the whole earth. But between the planting and the harvesting is the waiting period of the growing. And we must wait!

Last Sunday, in his sermon, Michael spoke about waiting and how frequently the word "wait" appears in scripture. Today, that same theme of waiting comes out strongly. The Psalmist knowing how challenging waiting can be reminds us that our measure of time is not the same as God's. Psalm 90:4 "A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by or like a watch in the night."

On a personal level, is there something you are waiting on God for? Psalm 27:14 says, "Wait for the Lord, be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord." As a church community, we are waiting on God for Transforming Trinity. That is our mustard seed and for the past 5 to 10 years, we have been waiting and although there is nothing yet to see above the ground, we must wait in expectation that God is busy working with people, working with potentials and possibilities more than we can dream of or perceive. We must trust that God is working his purpose out, and somehow, the growth will be more than we can imagine. One of my favourite expression is – "Please be patient, God is not finished with me yet!"

Peace is God's gift for the in-between time – while we wait. As we wait, may the peace of God remain in and guard our hearts and lives. Amen

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