

## **Third Sunday after Pentecost June 13, 2021**

### **Ezekiel 17:22-24; Mark 4:26-34**

The reign of God grows from seeds that were sown and forgotten. Ones planted without much thought or care. It arises from the smallest and most insignificant thing- like a mustard seed- and becomes over time the thing around which life is found.

Friends, we sow everywhere we go and whatever we do.

The question is, what seeds do we sow?

I confess, I do not always sow the seed of the reign of God.

I have had several times in my life, certainly in my ministry, where my own actions or inactions have harmed another. Where they have been emotionally hurt, felt rejected, passed over in favor of another. That is my greatest fear as a pastor and my greatest regret. That what I do and say can damage someone's relationship with God or the church. I have had a reminder of that this week.

A reminder that I am an imperfect being. One in need of God's grace and forgiveness as much as the next person. A reminder that I don't always sow the seeds of the reign of God. None of us do.

Note, Jesus does not talk here about the reign of God coming in with a thunderclap and lightning. It does not arrive all at once, fully developed. Rather, the reign of God is sown a little bit here, a little bit there. It emerges over time.

And these seeds are sown in people, our children. Ourselves. Parents- the reign of God happens/is planted a little bit every day as you go about educating your children. As you bathe them and read them a bedtime story. As you take them to the grocery store and the park. As you make them breakfast.

People of God- the reign of God is what happens/is planted when you drive your commute, when you cut the grass and wash the dishes. It is planted as you speak with coworkers and neighbors.

The reign of God is sown when you say bedtime prayers every night with your child- giving thanks to God for gifts of the day. It is sown when you give them a blessing as they leave – perhaps playful but one that plants its own seed in their hearts. The reign of God is sown when you talk openly about what God would have you do in a particular situation, where your faith drives you to act (or not).

The reign of God is sown in all those little, daily, repetitive things that make up the meaning of our lives. When we read the devotion online. When we stop and pray whenever we hear/see an ambulance or fire truck. The reign of God, as one author put it, is “something you sow inadvertently, and it grows while you are busy going about your business.”

As important as or worship together is, as Sunday School and Youth Group are, the reign of God is best sown a little bit at a time, but consistently. A mustard seed here, a mustard seed there – until over time they grow up and provide the thing around which life is found- for our children and for ourselves – the very reign of God.

Friends, we sow seeds all the time in our lives, what seeds are we sowing? Seeds that will bring life? That will bring forth the reign of God? Or seeds that will bring division, destruction and death?

Another thing we learn today is that while we seek to be aligned with God and God's mysterious work in the world, to plant the seeds of the kingdom, we know that ultimately it is God's work to make it grow. We sow the seed- everywhere and always, regardless of what the soil looks like – on the path, on rocky ground, among the weeds- and trust that God will make it grow in God's own time despite the soil and despite the one who sowed it.

We trust that it is not our own righteousness or lack thereof that will affect the growth of the reign of God but rather that the Holy Spirit will make it grow when and where God wills.

This does not mean we don't sow those seeds- they should be shed from us without even thinking about it as we live out our lives- rather it means that our concern is with the sowing not the growth.

Our text from Mark and the context of the reading from Ezekiel show that God is about inverting expectations. Turning those things that we see as worthless and making them worthwhile, taking what looks like defeat and making it victory.

Nowhere is that more evident than on the cross. And nowhere do we benefit from that than in the Meal. A meal at which all are welcome- especially if you think you aren't worthy. A meal that Jesus served with his own hands to Peter who would deny him and Judas who would betray him. A meal that is given to us messy, broken, beloved people to make us strong in faith and give us energy to go

forth and sow the seeds of the kingdom wherever we go. A meal that feeds and waters those seeds of the kingdom that are within us that they might grow with the same vitality that the corn has around us these past weeks.

Friends in Christ, may the seeds that are sown today find good soil in your hearts. May they grow and produce fruit in you that leads you to spread those seeds to others in your own life. That when the time comes there might be an abundant harvest.