

Connecting with the Sunday Readings

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel Word
Mark 4:26-34

Today's Gospel reading includes the Parable of the Growing Seed, the Parable of the Mustard Seed, and the passage on The Use of Parables. In the passage, it says, "...he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables..." So what we might view as riddles or extended metaphors today were actually clear to the hearers of Jesus' time. He spoke to them with images they could understand.

If we step back from the language, it will make it easier to see the bigger picture — the biggest picture — of the image of a growing Kingdom of God. The mustard seed, referenced in the Gospels according to Matthew and Luke, was also used to demonstrate how faith can grow large from a small seed, like the mustard seed. Seeds and sowing and attentive care and harvest were all daily activities, and so were the perfect images for symbols of something larger. The final harvest could keep them alive all year long. Hope sprouts from these images: nourishment and eternal life with God.

Living the Word

Have you ever planted a seed or bulb and provided all the right conditions: sunny spot, water, supplemented soil — and it not sprout? If the seed doesn't have life in it — it can't sprout. This is similar to any plan or dream we nurture. Our nurturing care and perfect provisions won't make it work unless it has that God-spark. If God is within it, it will bear fruit.

Seeking God's attention to the matter is necessary. The sprouting and growth does not have to be visible. The more we persevere with no indications of growth visible, the stronger our faith becomes — especially at harvest. Only then do we really understand God's plan unfolding right on time. Not only will he sprout it, unfold it, and make it grow, but only he can make it bear fruit.

When changes, disturbance, or alterations occur to this plan or dream, we might get discouraged and tend to doubt. That is the time to maintain faith in what we cannot see. The harvest is to come in God's perfect time.

One-line Prayer

God of the harvest, sow in me a heart of patience and faith.
Amen.