

The Third Sunday After Pentecost
 Proper 6
 Year B
 June 14, 2015

First Reading: Ezekiel 17:22-24

Psalm 92:1-4, 11-14

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:6-10, (11-13), 14-17 Gospel: Mark 4:26-34

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In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
 Amen.

Something most people find of great interest, myself included are mysteries. Books, television shows, movies that deal with mysteries are always great fun, trying to unravel the mystery yourself before you come to the end. I remember when I was in fourth grade we had an assignment once to write our own mysteries. I developed the character of Detective Mike who set about solving mysteries in his community. Upon completion of the mysteries and our teacher reviewing them, we read them to the class to see if our classmates could figure out the end. I enjoyed this assignment so much that I wrote another mystery centering on Detective Mike. Being shy, I decided to read this mystery to a couple of friends before reading it to the entire class. This was a very good decision. Upon reaching the end, neither of them could figure out who the culprit was. However, the reason they could not solve the mystery, was because, as I realized halfway through reading it to them, I neglected to put any clues in it, an important element to any mystery, the absence of which of course made it very difficult to solve. So my second Detective Mike mystery never made it past this first rough copy. Nevertheless I still loved mysteries.

Sometimes an interesting technique mystery writers will use is revealing to the audience the resolution of the mystery at the very beginning. For instance, the guilty party is identified right away or the long lost relative you had been searching for all these years turns out to be your best friend that you've known all of your life. After we read the resolution we are then transported in time to an earlier date and here the story begins. So that while the resolution remains the focal point it is discovering how we get to that resolution that becomes the primary theme. In today's Gospel reading, Jesus employs a similar technique.

Today we hear some of the first of Jesus' parables in the Gospel of St. Mark. Jesus tells the disciples and the crowds two parables regarding the Kingdom of God. Many find Jesus' parables to be mysteries in of themselves as they usually speak around a certain subject and not directly to it. The parables we hear today focus on the Kingdom of God, specifically on its beginnings and its completion. While the disciples get the inside story most of us are left puzzled and perplexed over just what Jesus is trying to tell us regarding the Kingdom. He describes the Kingdom as beginning as something small and seemingly insignificant but that will eventually grow into something large and magnificent. This will happen, Jesus tells us it will happen—however, we do not know how this will happen only that it will. The question we may ask ourselves is, is that the only message Jesus wants us to take from these parables—that the Kingdom of God is coming and we just have to wait for it—or is there something else Jesus is trying to impart to us.

The idea that there will be a time when the Kingdom of God reaches its final completion, a time when we will be surrounded by its magnificence and awed by its beauty, where it will surpass all of our greatest expectations is definitely one thought that Jesus is trying to impart to us through these parables. And it is a wonderful message, a message that He is inviting us and calling us to wait for and to anticipate. However, it is at this time that we find ourselves in that part of the parable Jesus doesn't seemingly tell us that much about. We are in that in between

time where the Kingdom has been planted but has not yet reached its completion. And this can be a difficult time, because we anticipate the Kingdom of God reaching fruition and we anticipate that tremendous event and we go about our lives happy and joyous and filled with the expectation that someday this event will happen and we will all be invited to share with Jesus in the Kingdom and then sometimes, without any warning, we can be reminded of the troubles we face on a daily basis, we can be reminded of the hardships that the world can sometimes present us with, hardships that may at times seem endless. And suddenly the Kingdom of God reaching its magnificent resolution can seem more like a dream or a fantasy rather than of a reality. We become very aware of the fact that the Kingdom has not reached its completion and we begin to think perhaps it never will. And it becomes so hard to anticipate because it seems so unreal or so distant, so far from anything we experience today. And we find ourselves unable to look and hope for a future that seems so improbable. But it is at times like these, when we are reminded that at times the world can be a harsh, cruel and unforgiving place, when we find hoping for and anticipating the Kingdom of God so far off and so hard, where these parables can truly become for us sources of inspiration and hope. Because we must remember that these parables also have a middle and not just a beginning and an end. And it is the middle where we find ourselves today, a middle that Jesus does in fact speak to, a middle that is just as important as the final resolution.

Jesus tells these parables, the parable of the one who scatters seed on the ground and the parable of the mustard seed. Both of these have simple even meager beginnings, but in the end, once they have had time they can become truly magnificent, full and plentiful. We have to remember though, that from the simple beginning to the tremendous conclusion there is a middle part, there is the growth, the work, that takes time. The seeds do not immediately become ripe the day after they are planted, nor does the mustard seed become the greatest of all shrubs overnight, and so it is with the Kingdom of God—the Kingdom will not just burst into creation all at once. My friends what Jesus imparts to us through these parables is that the Kingdom of God follows a pattern much like a story; with a beginning a middle and an end. And during this middle part the Kingdom of God is growing. And with growth sometimes comes struggle, hardship and time. What we must remember is that the while these struggles sometimes seem to push the Kingdom of God away, or make us feel separated and apart from it, that these struggles are in fact a part of the growing process. And we know the growing process will eventually lead to a wonderful end—we know this because we know the ending—an ending which is the Kingdom of God reaching its completion. And if we can see the struggles we face as part of the story then the Kingdom will become all the more real rather than something on the distant horizon and we will be able to feel the Kingdom of God getting closer and closer and we will also be able to see it in the world around us, growing more beautiful and more real with every passing moment.

My friends the seed has been planted, the growth has begun, the Kingdom of God has begun to come into this world all we have to do is look around us to see it. Yes it is still growing, no it is not complete but if we look hard enough we will be able to see glimpses of it all around us. Glimpses we know that will only become bigger, brighter and more real with every passing moment and where one day the Kingdom will become complete, our struggles will come to an end, and we all will find comfort and shade among the Kingdoms many branches.

And now to God be Glory, Majesty, Honor and Praise forever and forever.
Amen.