

Bible Study for Sunday June 13, 2021

Our texts for this Sunday are:

- Mark 4:26-34
- 2 Corinthians 5:6-10 & 14-17

Read Mark 4:26-34

²⁶He also said, “The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, ²⁷and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. ²⁸The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. ²⁹But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.” ³⁰He also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? ³¹It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; ³²yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.” ³³With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; ³⁴he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

What stood out to you about this text? What was most confusing? What was most helpful or meaningful?

Sometimes when I read these parables I feel like it's the first day of a new class and I'm nervous about the syllabus – how are we supposed to understand these parables?

Verse 34 in The Message translation reads as “When he was alone with his disciples, he went over everything, sorting out the tangles, untying the knots.” Do you like that ending better? What *knots* need untying in this parable for you?

Jesus is telling His listeners what the Kingdom of God is like. After hearing these parables, how would you (in your own words) explain the Kingdom of God to someone else?

What is the farmer's job in both of these parables? What is God's job? Could you ask yourself the same two questions about your ministry ... your job and God's job? Can you trust God to do God's job?

What do you make of the seemingly haphazardness of the seed scattering (as opposed to intentional planting) and that the growth happens without him doing anything? How does that make you feel about telling anyone about Jesus?

Have you ever wondered what seeds you may have scattered without much thought and how they may have grown without second thought from you? Is it better to scatter and disregard than staring at the seeds at waiting for germination to happen?

Depending upon the translation understanding, the mustard seed that Jesus mentions could be a ginormous weed plant. Is the Kingdom of God an invasive species that gets into places without us even knowing it? Do you like that imagery? Would you rather see a controlled and cultivated growth?

In a following story (chap 6), Jesus is found preaching to and feeding 5,000 people. There the crowds who were been taught by Jesus were seated in groups on the green grass and are described figuratively as *garden plots* (translated *groups* in the NRSV) — do you find this connection interesting?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:6-10 & 14-17

5For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ²For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling— ³if indeed, when we have taken it off we will not be found naked. ⁴For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. ⁶So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord— ⁷for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.

¹⁴For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. ¹⁵And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. ¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. ¹⁷So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

“Walk by faith, and not by sight.” What does that mean to you? Why would we need the courage, which Paul mentions twice in this reading, in order to walk by faith?

How might “walking by faith” be connected to the seed scattering farmer in the Gospel text?

Is your faith constant even when the spiritual weather patterns in your life are not? Paul said, “We are always courageous.” Is that true? Are you? What does that look like? What helps when you are not?