

Sermon - 06-13-21
Ps 20; 1 Sam 15:34-16:13; 2 Cor 5:6-17; Mk 4:26-34
Planting for the Future

In this fourth chapter of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus tells parable after parable explaining the hidden work of the Kingdom of God. He compares that work to the mystery of seed being planted and sprouting, growing, maturing and bearing fruit – or grain. No human except Jesus has seen the Creator God. It takes us some time and some personal work to begin to see what God is doing in the world – growing the kingdom among humans and even the whole creation. Let today be the day we cross over another threshold to understanding God better through Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Seed of Abraham. He is a then and now and future Seed.

It came home to me forcefully this past week that all love – all compassion and care for ourselves and others comes down to us from God. Rev Carolyn Moore stated very effectively that we do not judge the things of God. Certainly, we do not understand the love of God by our own notions of love. Rather, the Word of God – both the written Scriptures and the flesh and blood person of Jesus prepare our minds and hearts to comprehend – at least in part – the all-encompassing passion of God for God's people. The incredible power packed into a seed is the image God has given us to understand better His deep love for us. (See Jeremiah 31:3)

Even with the benefit of these word pictures – these parable stories – we do not fully grasp what is happening as God establishes His kingdom more and more. Sometimes it seems to be a slow, steady progress. At other times the kingdom moves with explosive speed. Sometimes the seeds of the kingdom quietly sprout and grow. Sometimes the planting suddenly springs up and covers the ground. It happens overnight to our shock and surprise. The Prophet Isaiah says: “The things I predicted have now come true. Now I will tell you of new things even before they begin to happen.” (Is 42:9)

Jesus told everyone, His disciples, the temple leaders and the crowds, that He came “not to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it.” (Mt 5:17) We continue to keep the moral law of the OT – see the Ten Commandments and the social laws of fair and just treatment. We do not keep the ritual cleanliness laws, such as eating only a kosher diet, nor the traditions of the religious establishment of Judaism, like animal and grain sacrifice. The Seed who is our Savior, Jesus Christ, would have us look not backward, but forward to the reality that is sprouting like a field that has been ploughed up and sown with seed.

Jesus gave us our purpose as we await the unfolding of His Kingdom. When He departed the world to return to His heavenly home. He said:

¹⁸ ... “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age.” (Mt 28:18-20 GNT) We are co-workers with God in planting seed for the future. That is our reason for being.

Jesus also said, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” (Jn 14:15) We do not judge the Word of God, rather the Word judges and shapes and perfects us. This is the path of true love. The path is determined by God Himself. When we begin to obey that Great Commandment, we see the mystery of seed sprouting, taking root and becoming fruitful right before our eyes.

Are our lives – is our lifestyle – calling our family and our neighbors to follow Jesus? Are we working with God? The Apostle Paul gives us words for our longing to please the Lord. “We walk by faith, not by sight.” (2 Cor 5:7) No matter what we see in the news or in the marketplace of the world, “The love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore, all have died.” (v 14) Jesus, the Seed of Abraham – the Seed of the future, not the past – has died. A seed must die in order to release the massive power it contains. There is leaf tissue, root tissue, nutrient to sustain both of them packed inside the powerhouse of a seed!

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Joy fills our hearts and minds realizing that Christ's death brought in resurrection to eternal life! When we die to pleasing ourselves alone, we burst out into the new creation. "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." (v 15)

Beloved, do not settle for being a seed so full of kingdom potential just sitting and waiting for...what are we waiting for? "...if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (v 17) Amen.