

Homily notes from Canon Philip Dyson

Sunday 13th June 2021 - 11th Sunday in ordinary time

Readings (Year B): 1st: Ezekiel 17:22-24. Psalm: 91. 2nd: 2 Corinthians 5:6-10. Gospel: Mark 4:26-34.

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The first green Sunday in OT since Lent began. Green I always think as growing time following the celebration of the great mysteries of our faith.

Time for what we celebrated to take root and grow and flourish in our lives. It comes when our countryside is looking so lush and green, the fields and hedgerows glorious in the freshness of growth.

It comes also this year when the G7 leaders are here in our parish, and meeting to address vital issues that affect the whole world, and especially the Covid virus and pandemic, climate change and the care of creation, our 'Common Home,' as Pope Francis reminds us.

Appropriate parables we hear: parables of the Kingdom, for we do pray for the coming of the Kingdom and God's will here on earth as it is in heaven. Creation, nature is a great teacher. Jesus often uses the fields and growing things of everyday life in his parables.

Today's parables concern sowing seeds; germinating; plants reaching maturity and being harvested and fully grown trees offering shelter and shade to wildlife.

The first parable today is found only in Mark. In the other gospel writings we know these parables as the sower/seed parables. Most commentators assume that the seed is the key element in these parables. Mark makes the **earth** his focus: not seed. The seed obviously remains significant because it represents the word of Jesus, of God, that is sown among us. But for Mark, it is not the sowing that is stressed, but the receiving of the seed by the **earth**, and the **earth** represents us: **humanity**.

The earth has to receive the seed, meaning that we have to listen to the word of Jesus. If we listen, then the word will bring forth fruit in our lives.

Without the earth, the seed would remain powerless: without the seed, the earth would never be aware of its own potency.

That latent power may still be thwarted or blocked in a number of ways once the seed has been sown. The seed is just a catalyst that unlocks the potency of the earth, helping the earth to bring forth fruit.

What we learn is that growth takes time. Night and day, when we are awake, when we are asleep, the germinating, the growing is going on.

The focus of G7 is now, but the implementation, the growing does need time.

Following God's gifts at Pentecost, we are to produce the fruits of the Spirit. St Gregory the Great spoke in a homily of 'the maturing grain signifies our increase in virtue. First the seeds of good intentions are sown, these gradually bring forth the blade of repentance and ultimately the mature ear of charitable works.'

When we begin to listen to the word, the full God - given potential hidden within us begins to be fulfilled. Jesus' parables about the seed and the earth, deal with the interaction between ourselves and his word.

Jesus also speaks of the mustard seed, the smallest which grows to a great shrub. We often dismiss whatever and whomever we consider too small, too powerless to make a difference; too insignificant to contribute anything useful. But we are **all** mustard seeds, possessing within ourselves the ability to accomplish God like things if we are encouraged and inspired to do so.

Jesus calls us to embrace the faith of the gospel farmer and the hope of the mustard seed to be willing to plant whatever 'seeds' of gospel hope and compassion that we possess, wherever and whenever we can, in the certain knowledge that it will, in some way, result in a harvest of God's life and love which endure for ever.

Canon Philip Dyson

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