

Sunday Message

ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year B • 16 June 2024 • Psalter Week 3

TINY SEEDS

MARK 4:26-34



Today's Gospel contains two parables about seeds. The Parable of the Seed Growing Secretly is found only in Mark's gospel.

It stresses the mysterious growth of the seed that is beyond human control. The harvest comes about in three stages. First, the seed is sown. Then, while the farmer goes about his normal routine of life, the seed grows and the farmer "does not know" how. Finally, only when the grain is ripe does the farmer come into play again when his skill is called for. The point of the parable is that once the seed is sown, the farmer lets it be and trusts the soil to bring about growth, even though he doesn't understand the process. When the grain is ripe, then he knows he must act to gather in the harvest.

Jesus has sown the seeds of his word. Now, in this present time, those seeds are growing, even though we cannot see anything dramatic happening. We cannot speed up or slow down the coming of the kingdom. But its plentiful harvest will take place. We just need to trust in God.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed deals with the apparent insignificance of the kingdom of God at the time Mark was writing his Gospel. It stresses the amazing contrast between the tiny seed and the vast outcome resulting from its growth. The small seed turns into a great tree in which the birds build their nests. The point of the parable is that all kinds of faithful people will find a home in the kingdom of God and God will protect them. They should not be disheartened by the kingdom's humble beginnings.

The message is clear. The kingdom of God is a mysterious thing. Its beginnings may be modest or even insignificant. It will grow, but its growth does not depend on human action. Like the farmer, God scatters the mysterious seed of the kingdom through Jesus, hoping it will take root and produce a plentiful harvest. ■

REFLECT

Little things we do can make a tremendous difference for good. From tiny seeds, God's kingdom grows.

Group Captain Leonard Cheshire was an RAF pilot during World War II who took part in the Battle of Britain and D-Day, receiving the Victoria Cross for bravery.

After the war, he returned to his country estate unsure what to do with his life. Then, in 1948, a man called Arthur Dykes approached him. Arthur had cancer and he asked Cheshire if he could park his caravan on Cheshire's estate while he recovered. Cheshire agreed, but when he discovered that Arthur was terminally ill, he took him into his own house instead. Leonard Cheshire did his best for Arthur but felt inadequate when it came to caring for him.

He had no nursing experience and wasn't good with soothing words either, so he fell back on the two things he knew he could provide: companionship and availability.

During those last weeks of Arthur's life, a deep friendship developed between them. Arthur was in great pain and found the nights most difficult of all. So Cheshire slept on a mattress on the floor near Arthur's bed. He gave Arthur a little hand bell and told him never to hesitate to ring it should he need anything. Cheshire would always be on call.

How reassuring it must have been for this destitute man to know he had a loyal friend in his final days.

Soon after Arthur's funeral, on Christmas Eve 1948, Cheshire became a Catholic.

SAY

"Lord, help me to build the kingdom of God by being a seed that gives life to my church and my community."

LEARN

The word of God is something alive and active.

All our prayers and good works help the kingdom of God to flourish.

DO

We can sow seeds of God's kingdom in lots of little ways. We can sow seeds of:

- justice: showing up wrongdoing, doing the right thing, exposing evil wherever we find it
- compassion: caring for others, no matter who they are, like Leonard Cheshire did
- forgiveness: being willing to forgive even when - especially when - we've been badly hurt or let down
- tolerance: casting aside prejudice or the tendency to judge - the person in the hijab, the LGBTQ couple holding hands, the newly arrived refugee
- availability: making time for someone who needs a comforting presence or listening ear
- love: letting go of selfishness, of self-interest, to put others first

PRAY

Pray for missionaries and all who work to sow the seeds of God's kingdom throughout the world.

Meanwhile, he began to take others into his house to care for them, too. In early 1949, eight residents were in his house. Six months later, 28. And the numbers continued to grow.

In 1959, Cheshire married Sue Ryder, also a noted Catholic humanitarian, and together they dedicated their lives to caring for others. By the time he died in 1992, Leonard Cheshire had left a string of homes dedicated to the sick and disabled.

From one simple act of kindness in 1948, something beautiful blossomed. As Leonard Cheshire showed, little things we do can make a tremendous difference for good. From tiny seeds, God's kingdom grows. We just need to plant them. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

O Lord, hear my voice, for I have called to you;
be my help.
Do not abandon or forsake me, O God, my
Saviour!

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;

you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;

you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

O God, strength of those who hope in you,
graciously hear our pleas,
and, since without you mortal frailty can do
nothing,
grant us always the help of your grace,
that in following your commands
we may please you by our resolve and our deeds.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 17:22-24

A reading from the prophet Ezekiel.

The Lord says this:

"From the top of the cedar,
from the highest branch I will take a shoot
and plant it myself on a very high mountain.
I will plant it on the high mountain of Israel.
It will sprout branches and bear fruit,
and become a noble cedar.

Every kind of bird will live beneath it,
every winged creature rest in the shade of its
branches.

And every tree of the field will learn that I, the
Lord, am the one
who stunts tall trees and makes the low ones
grow,

who withers green trees and makes the
withered green.

I, the Lord, have spoken, and I will do it."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 91(92):2-3, 13-16

Response:

It is good to give you thanks, O Lord.

1. It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
to make music to your name, O Most High,
to proclaim your love in the morning
and your truth in the watches of the night. (R.)

2. The just will flourish like the palm tree
and grow like a Lebanon cedar. (R.)

3. Planted in the house of the Lord
they will flourish in the courts of our God,
still bearing fruit when they are old,
still full of sap, still green,
to proclaim that the Lord is just.
In him, my rock, there is no wrong. (R.)

SECOND READING

2 Corinthians 5:6-10

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to
the Corinthians.

We are always full of confidence when we
remember that to live in the body means to be
exiled from the Lord, going as we do by faith
and not by sight – we are full of confidence,
I say, and actually want to be exiled from
the body and make our home with the Lord.
Whether we are living in the body or exiled from
it, we are intent on pleasing him. For all the truth
about us will be brought out in the law court of
Christ, and each of us will get what he deserves
for the things he did in the body, good or bad.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

I call you friends, says the Lord,
because I have made known to you
everything I have learnt from my Father.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mark 4:26-34

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Mark.

Jesus said to the crowds: "This is what the
kingdom of God is like. A man throws seed on
the land. Night and day, while he sleeps, when
he is awake, the seed is sprouting and growing;
how, he does not know. Of its own accord the
land produces first the shoot, then the ear,
then the full grain in the ear. And when the crop
is ready, he loses no time: he starts to reap
because the harvest has come."

He also said, "What can we say the kingdom
of God is like? What parable can we find for it?
It is like a mustard seed which at the time of
its sowing in the soil is the smallest of all the
seeds on earth; yet once it is sown it grows into
the biggest shrub of them all and puts out big
branches so that the birds of the air can shelter
in its shade."

Using many parables like these, he spoke the
word to them, so far as they were capable of
understanding it. He would not speak to them
except in parables, but he explained everything
to his disciples when they were alone.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,

he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

O God, who in the offerings presented here
provide for the twofold needs of human nature,
nourishing us with food
and renewing us with your Sacrament,
grant, we pray,
that the sustenance they provide
may not fail us in body or in spirit.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

There is one thing I ask of the Lord, only this
do I seek:
to live in the house of the Lord all the days of
my life.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

As this reception of your Holy Communion,
O Lord,
foreshadows the union of the faithful in you,
so may it bring about unity in your Church.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Behold O kind and most sweet Jesus, I cast
myself upon my knees in your sight while with
deep affection and grief of soul I mentally
contemplate your five most precious wounds,
having before my eyes the words that David the
prophet spoke about you, most sweet Jesus:
"They have pierced my hands and feet, and I
can count everyone of my bones."

Traditional prayer "before a crucifix" to be said
after Communion.