

St Peter's, Mount Park, Ealing
Sunday 14th June 2015
2nd Sunday after Trinity

Family Mass:
From small acorns do mighty oak trees grow

Visual aids: Packet of seeds
Small seedling
Mature plant
A mustard seed.
Pictures of nesting birds.

It is no accident Jesus uses the example of a farmer in today's gospel reading. He was speaking into an agrarian society where planting and harvesting were everyday events and in many cases meant literally the difference between life and death. So the listeners would have understood the basics of horticulture and would have had first-hand experience of sowing seed.

It wasn't the growing of seed that Jesus was drawing our attentions to thought. It was the patience required in growing crops. His description of the event includes an unusual reference to time passing as the farmer gets up and goes about his daily business and then returns to sleep. There was no instantaneous and miraculous production of a crop, yet when the crop was ripe and the earth had done its work the farmer gathered in the harvest. Patience is something we are not very good at these days. We are used to instantaneous gratification and when we can't get what we want here and now we are not best pleased.

If we aren't clear on this theme of patience then Jesus reference to the Kingdom of God being like a mustard seed underlines his message. The mustard seed was considered the smallest seed anyone could imagine sowing. It was also a common crop, grown to add flavour to food. It could be harvested when a small bush, as it is the seed that is required and that can be produced in the first season. To let a mustard seed grow into a tree in the branches of which birds can nest takes time.

If we are still in doubt about the call in the coming of the Kingdom to have patience then our reading from Ezekiel underlines it. The prophet is telling the people of Israel that God is going to begin again with the remnant of Israel. He will take a cutting, a sprig from the old tree, he will plant it and nurture it and it will grow into a new, strong and mighty cedar. If we are unsure if time is the

issue here the first couple of verses emphasise the care and attention taken by God with this new cutting. The listener would also have known how long it would take a small sprig from a tree to take root and begin to grow let alone turn into a new mighty cedar. God doesn't plant a seed that would mature in a season; if a season wouldn't be long enough to wait. God plants a sprig that will take years to grow and mature. Jesus sows a mustard seed that will take a long time to become big enough for birds to nest in.

Neither Ezekiel nor Jesus are literally talking about horticulture of course. They are talking about the Kingdom of God and they are being clear that this is not a five minute wonder.

Patience, waiting is an important theme in the life of the church and the life of faith. Both Jesus and Ezekiel are trying to prepare their listeners for this truth. Because like a seed or a cutting the life of faith needs nurturing and encouraging, feeding and attention if it is to grow. God will grow the kingdom and in this we play our part by nurturing and encouraging the church to grow, the community to deepen their faith and to come closer to God.

Like the farmer, like God and the sprig, we have to play our part in nurturing both our faith and the faith of others. We have to want to see growth, we have to put in the time and effort, we have to feed and tend our faith and the faith of those around us if we want to see the church, the kingdom of God grow. So let's encourage one another, let's look for the coming of the kingdom among us and with patience let's expect the fruitfulness God expects of us for the harvest.

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