

## **Mark 4:26-34**

The Kingdom of God is like...

We know that as soon as we hear this phrase Jesus is sharing a parable. We know as soon as we hear this phrase that Jesus is trying to take the mysterious, mystifying nature of the Kingdom of God and try to explain it words that His audience will understand.

The Kingdom of God is like a sower scattering seeds...I think we all understand this image, but what I find is more difficult is that is all he does, the sower scatters the seeds.

We don't get reports that he checked the acidity of the soil before he sowed his seeds.

We don't get reports that he watered the seeds daily.

We don't get reports that he went out into fields each day to check the growth.

All that Mark reports Jesus as saying is that the Kingdom of God is like a sower scattering seeds. He scatters them in the field, and then goes on with his life. He gets up in the morning and goes to bed each night. Then later, when the harvest is ripe, he goes out into the field and brings in the crop.

And after reading this parable, it left me with a number of questions...

What did the sower do to prepare the fields? What did the sower do to guarantee that the seeds that he sowed would grow? Surely he did something. Surely, he worked daily with this crop. Surely, the work of the sower helped somehow to make the seeds grow.

Mark does, however, give us one more important detail in this parable:

“The seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself.”

What it seems to me is that:

Mark is telling us that the sower can't make the seeds grow faster. Mark is telling us that the sower can't guarantee that all the seeds that he sows will actually grow at all.

Mark is telling us that all the sower knows is that he has the hope that the seeds that he scatters will grow into a huge harvest and that the sower trusts the process.

And, I would suggest, the same is for us as people of faith.

We can't know if the acts of kindness that we do for our fellow humankind will be understood by them. We can't know if a gesture or a kind word can help change someone's life. We can't know if an invitation to church may allow someone to experience God's life-transforming love for the first time.

There are no guarantees. There are no magic formulas. The Kingdom of God is mysterious. The Kingdom of God is mystifying.

The Kingdom of God holds us in tension as people of faith because we are called to live out the Kingdom of God here on earth while waiting for it to come at some point in the future.

And we don't know all the answers to the questions that we have about the Kingdom of God.

We just know and trust in the promises that Jesus gave us as his followers that some day the Kingdom of God will come.

We hold to the promises that Jesus gave us that God will use the seeds that we scatter to help bring about the Kingdom of God here on earth.

We hold on to the promises that Jesus gave us that God is in control.

The good news and the bad news about this life of faith that we lead is that we can't know how many of the seeds we scatter will come to fruition.

The good news and the bad news about this life of faith that we lead is that we can't make the Kingdom of God come faster here on earth through our actions.

Just like sower, all we can do is to hold on to the hope that the seeds that we scatter will grow and bear fruit.

All we can do is to hold onto the hope that eventually these tiny seeds that we scatter will become great shrubs to provide shelter and security for others.

All we can do is to trust that the Kingdom of God will come here on earth and that all will experience God's life-changing love.

Now I'll be the first to admit that what this parable offers is frustrating.

We might think what's the point? If what I do doesn't matter or bring on the Kingdom of God faster here on earth?

What this parable does tell us is that we will never know if or how our actions may help to bring about the Kingdom of God.

So in a sense we could say that this parable frees us as people of faith.

This parable stops us from putting so much pressure on ourselves to do so much, be so much, and allows us to simply enjoy and share the blessings that fill our lives.

This parable reminds us that it is not up to us to bring about the Kingdom of God.

This parable reminds us that God is in control.

But this parable also reminds us that we have been extended an invitation to participate in and experience God's grace in our lives.

This parable reminds us that the Kingdom of God does not depend on you or me or our actions, but we might be able to help a bit.

Because we are invited to participate in the process, to help by scattering seeds here on earth.

Yes this parable probably reminds us that we are called to a life of faith that will be full of questions, that will have disappointing moments, that will have moments of us wondering what the point is.

But this parable also reminds us that we are invited to a life of faith where we can catch glimpses of the Kingdom of God coming to fruition, that we are invited to participate in the mysterious and mystifying Kingdom of God, that we are invited to be a part of the life transforming experience that is God's grace.

We can't control the process through our actions. But we can participate in the process and know that God will use our seemingly small words and actions and turn them into huge life-changing, life-transforming events.

We can't guarantee that all the seeds that we scatter will grow.

The Kingdom of God is full of mystery and it is mystifying even for us as people of faith.

But it is through our faith and trust that we see God at work in the world...and in our churches."

We are called to participate in our own small way, and we do experience the gift of God's grace in our lives by doing so.

May we always trust that God is in the process with us as we scatter our seeds here on earth, and have the patience to wait for the moment when God brings in the harvest. Amen.