

The Parable of the Seed
Mark 4:26-32, Trinity Sunday VI
July 7, 2013

Beloved of the Lord.....In the Old Testament when the Children of Israel traveled through the wilderness there was a cloudy pillar which led the way. When it stopped they stopped. When it moved they moved. During the night this cloudy pillar changed into a fiery pillar. It gave light to the congregation in the midst of darkness. On top of all this, early on when Pharaoh and his army first pursued the Children of Israel so they were trapped at the Red Sea, "The angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness *to them*, but it gave light by night *to these*: so that the one came not near the other all the night." This means God was the pillar who stood between Satan's host, and God's beloved children. The same fiery pillar which gave light to the Israelites, gave darkness to the Egyptians.

There are in the Sacred Scriptures, thousands upon thousands of visual pictures such as this, whereby God impresses upon us many precious truths. God in His Word is always present with us, protecting us from the devil's host. Psalm 46 says, "God *is* our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Also "God *is* in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, *and that* right early." In a similar manner, today's sermon simply contains two pictures, two parables written for our learning. The first teaches us the power of the Gospel seed to work and do all God wills. The second teaches though the devil has placed his host against us to silence Gospel preaching, this Church will never perish. Satan loses but you win. As the Apostle Paul said, so we believe, "If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth."

I. What is a parable, and why did Jesus speak in parables?

Now before we speak of the two parables in particular, let us ask the question, why did Jesus speak in parables, and why didn't He always speak in a straightforward manner? The answer to this question has to do with the holiness and sacred character of the Word of God, faith and unbelief. When His own disciples asked Jesus why He spoke to them in parables, Jesus answered, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand." Mt. 13

If anyone then is to truly understand any parable the Holy Spirit must first give the gift of faith. Believers alone understand "the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven", because the Spirit gives such the understanding, but unbelievers cannot. To those who stubbornly refuse to believe in Christ, the entire Bible remains a dark and mysterious book, yet this is not God's fault. What can God give them who refuse to believe? Yet it is all different for God's children. Though we resisted the Spirit just the same as all unbelievers, God by the power of His Word yet gave us faith. To us IT IS GIVEN, "for whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance." This abundance is to increase and grow over time in the knowledge of God's Word of grace. While we may not understand every parable or passage Jesus spoke, if we "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the Word", God will give us more. Let no Christian thus ignore their Bible so they never open it or read it. Such will soon cease being a Christian and they will cast themselves away.

Yet if you search the Scriptures daily, rest assured the Holy Spirit will help you to spiritually mature, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." When Jesus spoke these parables to His disciples, that is the very thing He was doing, helping them to grow. A parable then is a scene from nature or human life, whereby God conveys a heavenly and higher truth. For the believer it is much like the cloudy pillar, which at times was a fiery pillar between the children of Israel and the enemies of the Lord. The parable gives light to the believers so they see and know God is near, but it gives darkness to the enemies of the Lord. In this way, God prevents the unbeliever from seeing that which is sacred. For the unbeliever He does not allow His precious pearls of truth to be desecrated by the touch of their unhallowed hands. At the same time for his own beloved children, He sheds and gives His light. The same light which shows the way to the one will blind the eyes of the other. (Riddervold/Ylvisaker, pg. 225). Rejoice then dear believer, when the Holy Spirit causes you to see something you did not see before. Such is proof the Light dwells in you.

II. The parable of the seed. In our first parable, the parable of the seed, God gives us an example of nature to teach God's Word shall not return unto Him void. Jesus thus teaches His disciples the Kingdom of God is like a farmer who casts seed into the field. After planting he sleeps peacefully at night and works during the day, without worry. He knows it is only a manner of time, before the seed springs up and grows. This is because God's Word has promised, "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." God then in His goodness feeds all the world, both the good and evil, by His incredible invention of the seed. Yet let us learn better to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Of course Christ is not teaching His disciples to be farmers, though that is indeed an honorable profession, but Christ here is teaching His disciples who are future pastors.

This is a calling we should encourage our own sons in, for by this calling God casts or sows the seed of His Word. Day and night, at the pulpit or from house to house, pastors are to preach and teach the Word wherever they go, without worry concerning the fruit of harvest. Thus Saint Paul writes, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

It does no good then when pastors worry about their preaching (as long as they have preached the truth), or they are stressed about their sermons, or they wonder if anyone is listening. That is foolish and a waste of time, and also a lack of faith. God alone causes that seed to germinate and grow in someone's heart. In like manner since every Christian is a priest, it is also your calling to teach the Word to those around you, casting the seed, yet you are to do so having the faith God's Word will not return unto Him void but God will give the increase. You are not to be a farmer who goes to bed and night worrying "Gee, I wonder if any of those seeds I planted will grow?" The germination and growth is God's business and glory. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it." In your teaching of the Word don't be a foolish pastor who preaches the Word expecting immediate results, saying, "Where's the corn? Where's the harvest?" Some plant and some water and we enter into the labors of others, but the fruit and harvest is God's business alone.

II. The parable of the mustard seed. Our second parable now is the mustard seed. Its beginning is very small and insignificant, but when it grows it becomes one of the largest garden plants, almost treelike in proportion. Even the birds find rest and lodging there. This miraculous growth from very small to very large is a heavenly picture of the Holy Christian Church. On the night of the first Holy Communion, Jesus had only 12 disciples gathered there, yet from this small number and great persecutions, this Kingdom of God has grown to a much greater number today. Even today we have many more than twelve who will commune, and how true believers will commune throughout the world? Yet God through this mysterious Sacrament will increase and cause to grow the faith of many giving strength to obtain a holier life.

This Kingdom of God then is truly an amazing and special creation of God. No devil or man can injure or hurt His Bride, His Church, she which He has clothed in His own righteousness. Broken sinners who are like tired and weary birds, will always find peace and rest and safety here. The tree of the cross is our refuge. The wounds of Christ heal every sin. No matter what Satan does, or his minions, this Kingdom shall endure and multiply. Heaven's numbers only increase and never decrease. When Satan breathes out threatening and slaughter against us, we have the sure promises of God which cannot fail, "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be

removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, *and* not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And all thy children *shall be* taught of the LORD; and great *shall be* the peace of thy children." Notice here not only does God promise to preserve His Gospel among us, but it is preserved also among our children, for "thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children." This means He will preserve those future generations whom we love so dearly.

And though it is true, some children do fall away, remember again God's Word does not return unto Him void. As long as they live His Word still has power to bear fruit, and Jesus said, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost". "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up *that which was* broken, and will strengthen that which was sick." Wasn't it just a week or two ago where Jesus taught us the parables of the Prodigal Son, the Lost Sheep, and the Lost Coin? And if you understand these three parables, and if you understand today's parable of the seed, and the mustard seed, doesn't that prove to you the Holy Spirit has given you understanding? Can't you see, indeed you do see, God has planted the seed of the Word in your heart, and even now He is causing it to grow in grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

What more can be added to this? What more can be said? It is now certain God has called you by the Gospel and enlightened you by His gifts because now you see and know Jesus has justified you by His blood, and who shall separate us from this love of God, this love which surpasses all understanding? For the glory of His name then, as long as you have life and breathe, do not be afraid to speak His Word and plant the seed, or water, for God will surely give the increase. Though Satan should encamp a large host against you, God has put his cloudy pillar inbetween. His Church shall never perish. Amen.

...and now may the PEACE of God which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen."