

A Visual Cornucopia

Eleventh Sunday of Ordinary Time

Mark 4:26-34

The gospel for this week is a rich example of how Jesus filled his teachings with images from the natural world. **“This is how it is with the kingdom of God; it is as if a man were to scatter seed on the land and would sleep and rise night and day and through it all the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how.”** Could there be a better illustration of the kingdom of God than the basic farming production of grain from planting to harvest?

“Of its own accord the land yields fruit, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the grain is ripe, he wields the sickle at once, for the harvest has come.” The kernel (no pun intended) of truth that lies at the root of this story is that God works night and day in and through our lives. For us to grasp this mystery it takes a cornucopia of visual concepts which Jesus presents as parable.

“To what shall we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable can we use for it? It is like a mustard seed that, when it is sown in the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth. But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants and puts forth large branches, so the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade.”

God, therefore, is God who animates and empowers the world. God’s work is done in secret beyond the understanding and comprehension of humanity. We are not the ones in control. We are not the Master of the Universe. Jesus’ teaching this week illustrates that beyond our comprehension and control lie the mystery of God. God’s power expands outward to the far reaches of the universe. God’s power reaches deep within every human heart to expand and illuminate truth.

Scripture scholars believe that Mark might have written this text as a way to support and sustain his small struggling Christian community. The early Church faced persecution and prejudice as it struggled to take root and grow. Might this be a good example for us this week as we face a time in the Church with, not only fewer priests, but fewer members who practice the Catholic faith? Is it not an excellent time to celebrate and embrace the rich, image-dense reality of our sacramental way of life? We celebrate God in sign and symbol because the fullness of God cannot be comprehended.

Our role is to be faithful to what Jesus has commanded. We are called, by baptism, to seek meaning in His Word and grace within the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, bearing witness to the profundity which is the Mystery of God.

Blessings!


Sue Schettler