

### **3 after Trinity 16 June 2024**

**(I Samuel 15.34 – 16.13)**

**2 Corinthians 5.6-17**

**Mark 4.26-34**

For the gardeners amongst us (and that's probably most of us at some stage of our lives) planting seeds and watching things grow out of them are one of life's great pleasures. There is a sense of wonder that anything remotely green can come from such an insignificant bit of nature, let alone flowers and fruit.

Today's Gospel from Mark gives us a parable, and not just one but two parables from Jesus in the space of so many seconds. Parables are very familiar to us, including I suggest to people who are not regular churchgoers. They are the vehicles Jesus uses, in figurative language, to allude to and explain the nature of God, e.g. the parable of the Good Samaritan, or of the Prodigal Son.

Today's parables are also familiar because they deal with the theme of planting, growing and harvesting. In particular the parable of the mustard seed crops up in three of the four Gospels. But the first of today's parables deals with the issue of planting and harvesting in a slightly eccentric way; Mark being a matter-of-fact type of reporter makes the whole process sound as if plants sprouting from a seed are a rather secret event, with very little effort being put into it by the farmer, who as it were wakes up one morning to find his crop ready for harvesting – he has no idea how it has all come about, but he gets on with the harvest.

It all sounds very humdrum – which it is ! It is just that sort of event which we often take for granted without ever giving God a passing thought. Yet he is behind every good thing that happens to us, whether in the natural world or in our human one, like the birth of a child. So it is

good if we accustom ourselves to remembering how God works – sometimes in secret (as it were) and sometimes much more openly.

The parable of the mustard seed is significant because it gives us an example of a very small seed producing a large plant with branches for birds to make nests in. So small things can produce surprisingly large results.

This figurative language used by Jesus was his usual way of talking to the crowds who followed him. Probably not many of them understood what he was driving at, and we know that his own disciples didn't either, until the message was explained to them later by Jesus. It is a little mystery as to why he was not more explicit to larger numbers of people.

For us though the message is not so mysterious, because we know that Jesus is referring to the seed of faith and belief in him as the Son of God. This seed is planted in each one of us, something which we are often unaware of or choose to ignore – perhaps for the whole of our lives. But if we allow the Spirit of God – the God of love and justice and peace – to take root in us and to influence our lives, then we will be astounded at what we can achieve with his help.

All the time human seeds are being planted and with God's help after nine months they come to fruition. Their names are legend, either a little girl or boy who have been brought to church by their parents, together with their godparents, so that they can be baptised into the Christian faith. Then whoever is baptising them will be praying for the Holy Spirit to come down upon them and enable that faith to take root. God will then do his work, either in secret or much more openly, and the seed which has been sown will begin to grow and manifest itself in the way that God has ordained.

In my experience one of the most wonderful and auspicious names for a child to be given is Melissa. It is Greek in origin and means "honeybee" and recalls as it does the valuable insect which is responsible for

pollinating the many seeds which blow all over the place, especially at this time of year, in addition to producing honey. We pray that all the Melissas and all the other children, and the seeds which they pollinate in their lives, may flourish in a similar way and bear fruit – not only in them but in all those who come into contact with them during the course of their lives.

PBW – 14.6.2024