

Ordinary B-11  
2018

In many ways parables are brainteasers. They force us to stretch our imaginations and to make connections we would not ordinarily make. Jesus used this teaching device to open us to the reign of God, that great mystery which seems to belong to another world yet is within our grasp here.

Two parables for us to ponder: the seed growing secretly and the mustard seed. Here are two seasonal images drawn from daily life.

We should not fixate only on smallness of the seed, but we should value its might its promise, and its possibility. By the way, the first sprout to emerge from a seed is what will become its root; it is called the “radical”, from the Latin, “radix”, root.

The seed germinates and grows, and reaches harvest in its own due time. The sower goes about daily routine, going to bed and getting up. The seed sprouts and grows without the sower knowing how it happens. The seed needs the soil to grow and mature until it is ripe for the harvest.

We cannot force a plant to grow faster by yanking on it nor can we force the growth of grace in our own lives. When it comes to the reign of God we are in it for the long haul. We walk by faith and not by sight.

But keep in mind that there’s not much about agriculture that is laid back. Tending the land is a full time occupation from sowing to harvest.

The reign of God will be a problem to anyone who wants to maintain control. There is unruliness about God’s reign that will surprise us and amaze us as we may discover that what God has in mind can be beyond our wildest dreams. The cedar tree, for instance, does not grow on mountaintops nor does it bear fruit, but that does not keep God from accomplishing what is new and transformative.

One of the greatest challenges the gospel offers is that we let go our expectations and be open to the possibilities of the reign of God. We root ourselves in in God’s radical embracing love, God’s desire for what is right and good and just.

As we live this and bear witness to this it is as if WE go about planting small seeds along the way, seeds that will grow quietly into something likened to a great shrub, with strong branches to hold everyone, without exception.

So it is with the reign of God. It takes root and shows it itself in ordinary circumstances and settings, urging us to move forward and transform the world, sometimes in bold and selfless ways, more often in small and quiet ways.