

## June 17, 2018

Ez 17:22-24; 2 Cor 5:6-10; Mk 4:26-34

One day I was having a conversation with an elderly man. He was telling me about working on his family's farm as a teen. He said something that has really stuck with me. We were talking about the process of planting and growing crops and he shared with me a revelation he had out in the field one day. That day, while he was looking over the field, it occurred to him that although he put the seed in the ground he actually didn't make it grow. Then he turned to me, and looked me right in the eye and very seriously said that he realized right then, it was God who actually was responsible for the growth. There was something happening that he didn't do, and that he had no control over. Standing there decades ago - having spent his whole life to that point involved in the yearly cycles of nature - he had a powerful revelation of the presence and action of God. Now in his mid-90's he still vividly remembered that moment.

Jesus tells us today that this is the way it is with God's action in the world. He says in the Gospel: *This is how it is with the kingdom of God; it is as if a man were to scatter seed on the land ... the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how.* We do a lot of things trying to do good, trying to care for our families, honoring God in our hearts and in worship, trying to be loyal to our friends, trying to build a life for ourselves, trying to secure a legacy, or sometimes trying to act in vengeful, angry, or selfish ways. Some of these things are part of our participation in the Kingdom of God on Earth, some of these are works to build up our own "kingdom," and some of these are doing things that work against God's Kingdom on Earth. God wants to fill the whole world with a Kingdom of peace, love, and justice. Coming to us in the flesh as Jesus Christ he gives us not just a direction, not just a teaching, not just some sort of social philosophy - he gives us supernatural assistance in spreading that Kingdom. The presence and action of God moves through the world, and just like that power that made seeds grow for the man I spoke about - this power causes things to happen that we could not do on our own.

God has been calling us to be part of this action since the beginning. God's earliest command to humans in Genesis is *be fruitful and multiply* - God does not want to suppress but to bring life. But not just the type of life that the world tells us is worth having, Jesus will say in another place: *I came that you may have life, and have it abundantly*<sup>1</sup> - there is an abundant life

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1:28; John 10:10

for us in following the ways of the Lord - a life that is superior to what the world offers. In moving our heart to love God and others, and by accepting and acting in faith to what the Lord has revealed, we participate in the spreading God's Kingdom of love, peace, and justice to the world. God wants us to allow him to plant us where we can thrive, and then make us mysteriously grow and be strong. Listen to the first reading: *I, too, will take from the crest of the cedar, from its topmost branches tear off a tender shoot, and plant it on a high and lofty mountain ... It shall put forth branches and bear fruit, and become a majestic cedar.* We are called to be planted by God, to bear fruit and multiply the good things God has given, to be strong and secure in the Lord like a tree, and to have life abundantly as a result.

It does not take a lot to get it started - remember, God really does the work. Like Jesus says in the Gospel: *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.* We just have to open ourselves up to the power of God and allow the unseen power of God that comes to us in the Eucharist today be the fertilizer that helps us to grow and bear fruit. This fruit becomes seed, like the mustard seed, that no matter the size can grow into great things. If we pray to God for an increase in our spiritual growth, and maintain a desire to live in God's kingdom existing in this world - we can become more open to let God show us the way. Through weekly Mass, personal prayer, reflection, and study we can discover where God is trying to plant us in this world, and where God wants us to scatter our seeds. Like a tree that takes years to grow from a seed, it will take time, but the results are worth it - both for us and for those we encounter.

As we said earlier on, we can participate in the Kingdom of God on Earth, we can work to build up our own "kingdom," or we can do things that work against God's Kingdom on Earth. The life of the Church that Jesus established and that we are able to participate in, Jesus' act of sacrifice which provides us with the Eucharist we will receive, the teaching and revelation of God handed down through the millennia - all of these are there to help us to live in God's Kingdom on Earth, to grow and be fruitful and strong, and to share in the eternal joy of God's kingdom in the next life. We heard in the second reading: *we walk by faith, not by sight.* Let us open ourselves in faith to the unseen power of God in the world to begin to live now in the Kingdom of love, peace, and justice that exists perfectly and forever in God's Kingdom in Heaven. Ultimately, it is there that we are meant to have life and have it with abundance.