

*The wisdom of the mustard seed is that heaven is now*

## 11th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle B

Ez 17:22-24 , 92:2-3, 13-14, 15-16, 2 Cor 5:6-10, Mk 4:26-34



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6/13/2021

Good morning. Once again, within the church calendar, we find ourselves in ordinary time. The high feasts are behind us leaving us to celebrate the ordinary, everyday sacraments of life.

In our Gospel today, Jesus asks, “To what shall we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it?” Cynthia Bourgeault in her book, *The Wisdom Jesus*, understands the parables of Jesus as an invitation to a wisdom beyond ourselves. The parables are part of a Jewish collection of sacred poetry, stories, and proverbs meant to teach wisdom. By studying the parables, we open ourselves to the possibility of a deeper meaning. The parable asks us to look at something with fresh eyes and heart, to understand something anew. “To what shall we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it?” Jesus wants to teach us about the kingdom of God and shares the familiar parable of the mustard seed. We hear that although the mustard seed is small it grows much larger providing shade and shelter.

We are created in the image and likeness of God. The mustard seed is simply the divine image that we carry as children of God. As children, we easily live out of that divine image with laughter and joy. Our grandson Oliver, at two and a half, is fond of running through the woods carrying a motorized bubble blower. With laughter and bubbles spewing everywhere, Oliver announces that he is watering the trees and plants. Honestly, it reminded me of our Easter sprinkling rite. Oliver’s joy makes for a fine blessing. God and I both smiled.

The divine image is obscured when we are treated as something less. We lose sight of the fact that we are children of God. That is the tragedy of abuse. It blurs and diminishes our identity and sense of goodness.

The spiritual journey is a reclaiming of our divine image. There is some gardening to be done in care of the mustard seed. Creating time for prayer and contemplation is how we water the mustard seed. Many are the weeds that we find along the way but our busyness and indifference are most invasive. These need uprooting to provide room for growth. As we water, weed and stir the soil the mustard seed grows and we recover and live out our divine image. *“Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Matt 18:3* Put another way, unless you connect with the divine image you knew as a child, it will be that much harder to know the kingdom of God. In living out that divine image, we respond to the needs of those around us. We become the branches that offer shade as we listen to another’s story. By our presence, with a smile or a nod, we remind each other that we are indeed valued children of God. In loving each other, the kingdom of God that Jesus speaks of becomes more real, not only in the afterlife, but now. The wisdom of the mustard seed is that heaven is now. Through our spiritual gardening, Jesus reveals that we are already there.

My grandmother knew these things. As a child of six or so, I remember watching her water the gardens. After the heat of the day she would roll out the garden hose and quietly stand there watering her flowers. She would retreat into the moment. I remember clearly the smell of the water and the cooling mist. Looking back, I think it was the first time I saw anyone in what we would now call centering or contemplative prayer. Grandma found the inner room that we hear of. As in life, the flowers on the fringe seemed to almost panic. What am I doing way back here? Will I be missed? Will there be enough? Although grandma was absorbed in the moment, she would gently flick the nozzle back and forth to catch even those flowers at the back of the beds. God is like that.

Grandma watered the flowers as she watered life itself. She gave her heart freely to family and those on the fringes. As she worked her garden beds in quiet contemplation, she nurtured the mustard seed within. She had put it together. She had made the connection. Of course, I was only a child, but when grandma finished watering, the flowers seemed to stand a little taller and straighter. We all did.

The parable of the mustard seed is about recovering and nurturing our divine image. It moves us from the question of, “Will there be enough for me?” to the wisdom, that in the great abundance of creation, there is enough for all. When humanity learns to live from that image, our compassion will become the branches that shelter and shade.

All of nature requires water. Physically, we require water to replenish our bodies. For this reason, we are deeply attuned to the sound of running water, as life cannot exist without it. The prayerful whisper and gurgle of our baptismal font reminds us that there is life here, in abundance.

As the deer thirst for running streams, we thirst for the Creator’s voice. Like Grandmother watering her flowers, God showers us with grace in the everyday sacraments of life so we might stand a little taller and straighter. We may hear that voice in the silence, a birdsong, or our spouse’s heart. We hear the sacred voice in our children and grandchildren. Then, with joy, we realize that we are in the kingdom of God.

In our reception of the Eucharist, may the Lord touch our senses opening our heart and mind to the mystery and wisdom of the mustard seed.

## Bibliography

All scripture quotations are taken from. (1987). *The New American Bible, Revised edition*. USCCB.

*I welcome your questions and comments. My email is [fsila@sttomskazoo.org](mailto:fsila@sttomskazoo.org). (n.d.).*