

June 13th, 2021
11th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Cycle B

1st Reading: Ezekiel 17:22 – 24

God is the salvation of exiled Israel.

Psalm 92:2 – 3, 13 – 14, 15 – 16.

God it is good to give you thanks and praise.

2nd Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:6 – 10.

Faith allows us to lead courageous lives.

Gospel: Mark 4: 26 - 34

God's Reign is described in farming images

God is good, **all the time**. All the time, **God is good**.

Friends, today we finally again are celebrating a Sunday of Ordinary time, even though we have been in it since Pentecost. I don't know about you but for me it seems like anything but ordinary, although it feels like we are moving in that direction. I am still not remembering to mask up all the time.

Today's readings take us into a deeper reflection of the age old mystery of our Faith: what is the Reign of God or the Kin-dom of God. Truly it is a "mystery," and just when we have it figured out, we discover we don't have a clue. Surprise! God keeps us guessing! I like St. John's (1 John 3:2) analysis the best when he describes "What we are now is God's children; but what we will be, has not yet been revealed."

The prophet Ezekiel, whose means "God will strengthen," basically gives us the message we often hear in the Hebrew Scriptures: God is God, and we are not! Surprise! It's God who makes the great cedars grow. It is God who makes the sun shine, the rain fall, the shoot root. Truly we are reliant on God for everything in spite of what we may think and how we may act. I was reminded of that this week as I read psalm 49 in Tuesday's evening prayer, "I know God will rescue me, save me from the grip of

death.” Clearly, our psalm today reminds of what our response should be, “Thank you!”

St. Paul reminds us that this Faith is what gives us cause to be happy in our life, not drooping our heads or dragging our feet. It is what we trust in but don't yet see that keeps us going. Simply put the only thing that matters is pleasing God and placing all of our trust in God's saving grace. Surprise! If that is not cause for hope and Thanksgiving, then someone help me better understand.

Then we come to our Gospel for today, a real treat from Mark. Two farming parables that Jesus, a carpenter's boy, uses to describe the reign of God. The first one is pretty straight forward. The seed is planted and that is the last thing in the farmer's control. My wife has an expression that says, “first it sleeps, then it creeps, then it leaps.” Our Gospel says something similar: “first a green stem of grass, then a bud, then the ripened grain; and then the farmer wakes up to do the harvest. Throughout God is really the one responsible. This is very much in line with Ezekiel's message. God's presence is all around us. Surprise!

Then Jesus goes on to liken God's kin-dom to a “mustard seed.” This really puzzled my mind. I grew up in a farming/fishing community and don't know a farmer who would ever plant a highly invasive weed. So if it wasn't a mistake on Jesus' part, what was he shooting for? Deacon Frank has a whole theory on the mystery of the mustard seed you should read his homily for today, far too deep for me. It seems to me that Jesus might have been describing how the seed (the Word) of God will grow and spread, if we but plant it: wild and out of control. Surprise!

The parable of the growing seed and the parable of the mustard seed both call to mind God's grace in our lives and in the building of the kin-dom of God; God's grace that moves mysteriously in ways that we cannot comprehend or grasp. We plant seeds through our words and actions, but we need to remember that God is in control and not us. We are collaborators but it is God who is the master builder/gardener. Yet, the kin-dom of God grows mysteriously, and we are called to trust in God's presence even when times are dark and difficult and pandemic focused.

We are called to go beyond calculations, forecasts, tangible results, and to surrender to God's plans and not be so tightly caught up with our own so we can open our hands and receive God's grace. We are called to place ourselves in God's loving hands and to allow God to use us as God sees fit in the building of the Reign of God in peace, justice, and love. We might be frustrated and even often discouraged by continued racism, oppression, hatred, violence, intolerance, inequity and so on; but we must not give up. If we are truly committed to living out the gospel values in our lives, then even though we might not see the results, it is possible that we have no idea of how our words and actions our smiles and gestures of kindness, are germinating and aiding the kin-dom of God in its growth. Today's readings encourage us to continue to be faithful and to trust in God who cares and loves us like crazy. This is what brings me hope, knowing that another name for God is SURPRISE.

God is good, **all the time.** All the time, **God is good.**