

Kingdom of God Mark 4:26-34 4th Sunday after Pentecost June 17, 2018

With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? Mark 4:30 Kingdom of God

Dear friends in Christ, so how would you describe the kingdom of God? How do you tell people about it? Perhaps you say that Jesus died on the cross to forgive sins so that those who believe in Jesus will live with God eternally. Not a bad summary. We tend to focus on the eternal glory with Jesus in eternity when we think about God's kingdom. And we say we can only imagine the golden streets, the river of God, the tree of life, and praising God eternally.

But we leave a lot out when we describe the kingdom of God as what happens to us after we die. Theologians speak of God's kingdom in three ways, and these are ways scripture does talk about it. Now one way is this way, the kingdom of Glory, where the church and his angels praise God in heaven, where we praise him in his eternal kingdom. This is the one we tend to focus on. But it is also the kingdom of power, that God created the world and still orders and sustains it. That he sends the rain on the evil and the good, that God acts in the world. And there is the kingdom of Grace, Christ active in his body the church here on earth, forgiving sins. All these are the kingdom of God. And these are good for categories, but they still leave the question, what does it look like?

So how would you describe the kingdom of God? How many of you say that the kingdom of God is like a man who scatters seed on the ground? Anyone? Well, Jesus does. All the man does is scatter the seed, he doesn't work or toil, and yet it grows until it is time for the harvest. He doesn't describe a king dispensing justice or grace or life, but planting seed. And so the kingdom of God isn't so much about doing great things or personal morality or visions or legislative victories. He corrects a view that says the kingdom will come when people do enough to deserve it. It is like planting seed. It grows in the background, and yet it grows. Just look out the window, me at my house or at least of your car as you drive, and you will see it. The fields are growing, and so the kingdom of God.

Now we can see hear the third article explanation, I believe I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts sanctified and kept me in the true faith. We cannot cause the kingdom of God to grow, God does. That is true for pharisees who thought that their works and preaching would bring God's kingdom, and it is true for us when we think our social interactions, that being nice enough, will expand God's kingdom. God's kingdom comes through his work.

But do note, especially you farmers. How do you spend the winter, do you not do everything you can so your equipment is fixed and ready, your fields are ready, so that when it is warm enough, you can plant the seed? Do you not spend all winter preparing? And when planting time comes, nothing stands in the way of planting the seed. I know, because church attendance goes down. The seed in the parable brings the kingdom. It is Christ and it is his word. If we care so much about planting the seed in our fields, how much more his word in our hearts. Planting time is here, read scripture, go to church, go to bible study, let the word be planted in you. And care about others. Planting time is here, invite them to church, tell them what you have seen, tell them pastor talked about planting this week, that Jesus was planted so his kingdom would come to you.

You see the kingdom of God is where the king meets his people. His reign is where he is. Be in it as he comes to you in his word and sacrament.

So how would you describe the kingdom of God? How many would say like a mustard seed. Jesus does. God doesn't come to us with angel choirs. He comes to us through a seed of his word. And that seems small, especially when it is your neighbors, your friends, your children don't seem to hear. But though it is the smallest of all seed, it grows. It gives life to all believers and still calls sinners to repent, and there is nowhere other than his word to take shelter from the wrath and judgment against sin.

We shouldn't expect legislative victories and we surely shouldn't depend on them. We should not hide in fear. The word of God is sure, and a mighty fortress is our God. He protects us. Invite others in to also share the grace and protection he gives.

God comes with his kingdom. He comes in his son. He comes in his word. His kingdom is growing, and he desires all to be saved, not by their efforts or worthiness, but by his word. God comes and saves his people. Thy kingdom come. Hear the word and spread the kingdom. Preach the word and spread the kingdom. Amen.