

## **Provoked by the Parables**

### **The Growing Seed**

**January 9, 2011**

**Psalm 29 & Mark 4:26-29**  
**(Hymns – 412, 634, 530, 563)**

“The Kingdom of God is like this.”

That’s a phrase we are going to hear a lot of this year.  
Most of the parables,  
in one way or another,  
are focused on this most important focus in Jesus’ teaching.

This is what life is like  
when we are increasingly aware  
that we live in the caring presence  
of the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier  
of the whole universe.

This is what life is like  
when we are increasingly aware  
that our choices about flourishing through faith in Jesus Christ,  
about living intentionally and conscientiously  
with this God for his kingdom,  
are the most satisfying and delightful ways to be fully human.

So, what does the parable of the Growing Seed  
teach us about life with God in Jesus Christ through the power of the Spirit?

There are two things worth noting about this parable this morning.

First, the parable really isn’t about the seed itself,  
but about the whole process of nurture and growth and harvest.  
This is a parable that puts us human beings in our proper place.  
We do not create or bring about the kingdom.  
God does that in God’s own time and can be trusted to complete his work.  
We have a role to play,  
but the coming of the kingdom is God’s work.  
We have a mission to fulfill,  
but the harvest is created by God’s Spirit.  
We have a story to tell,  
and the story is about ripening as a blessing in the service of God’s kingdom.

Second, this is a story about faithful resilience,  
about hope and determination  
in the face of things that seem to contradict the coming of the kingdom.  
God's work of bringing about peace and well-being  
may seem slow, or stalled, or fanciful dreaming.  
Many ignore or dismiss it.  
It does not seem to be happening in ways that make sense to us  
or be meeting our needs as quickly or in the ways we want.  
We are tempted to give up on it,  
to dismiss it as wishful or delusional thinking.

Many commentators think this parable teaches patience.  
I disagree.  
I think patience is too passive a virtue for this parable.  
I think this parable teaches resilience  
in the face of a process of growth that can be slow and confusing.

Resilience in the faith  
is a crucial set of attitudes and behaviours for Christians today.  
It involves being strong  
in our work and witness for Christ's presence and power.

Resilience is the process of adapting well  
in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats,  
and significant sources of stress. It involves behaviors, thoughts, and actions  
that can be learned and developed in anyone.

Here are 10 ways to be resilient.

- 1. Make connections with people in ways that bless them**  
Establishing good relationships with others to both help and be helped strengthens resilience.
- 2. Don't view crises in life as insurmountable problems**  
You choose how to interpret and respond to the things that happen to you. You can, with the help of the Holy Spirit, see anything as an opportunity to grow in your faith.
- 3. Accept that change is a part of life**  
Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on the circumstances you can change. Find positive potential and pursue it.
- 4. Do something to move towards realistic goals, one step at a time**  
Ask yourself "What's the one thing I can do in this moment to move forwards in fulfilling my calling to be a blessing in Jesus Christ?"
- 5. Take actions that are decisive, consciously choosing to use your gifts**  
You always have the freedom to decide how to use your strengths and talents in the service of Christ's kingdom. Use that freedom to flourish faithfully.

- 6. Look for opportunities to grow in your appreciation of life in Jesus Christ**  
Enjoy the teachable spirit God has given you in Christ, exploring with the Spirit all the positive possibilities that exist in the midst of challenges and crises.
- 7. Nurture a positive view of yourself as a beloved friend of Jesus Christ**  
We were created in God's image, male and female, to be a blessing in God's name. Accept the dignity of that calling and live with confidence in your God-given abilities to overcome the barriers to flourishing in the faith.
- 8. Keep things in their proper perspective, trusting God's providential care**  
Even in the face of painful events and fearful feelings, remember God's providential care and don't blow problems out of proportion.
- 9. Maintain a hopeful outlook, again trusting that God is in charge**  
A hopeful attitude helps you provoke love and good deeds. (Hebrews 10:22-23) Try visualizing the good you want to accomplish rather than worrying about what you fear.
- 10. Take care of yourself, working with God in the whole process of growth**  
Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Nourish your body, mind, heart, and soul. God wants you to take care of your whole self so you are strong in being a blessing in situations that require resilience.

Listen afresh this morning to the words we sing and read  
as we celebrate the Lord's Supper.

This is one of means of grace provided by God in Christ  
to be resilient in implementing the process of growing the kingdom.

Let us rejoice together in the resilience nurtured at this table.

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