

**Third Sunday after Pentecost:**

**Proper 6**

**June 13, 2021**

Year B RCL

Ezekiel 17:22-24; Psalm 92:1-4,11-14; Mark 4:26-34

**“It is like a mustard seed”**

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Jesus uses metaphors and images that are well known in the rural and agricultural world, he talks about ground, seeds, sprouts, and growth. This kind of language is familiar to the Israelites, take for example today’s first lesson where the prophet Ezekiel talks about taking a sprig from the lofty top of a cedar and plants it, on the mountain to produce fruit.

This natural language is common for those who are connected with the natural process of the earth and the constant cycle of new life. However, this agricultural language seems unfamiliar to those who are disconnected from the land and its ordinary processes. This disconnection far from pointing to our human ignorance shows how we humans have inverted the order created by God. We don’t need to be perfect farmers or specialists in agriculture to

understand that we are part of the creation as stewards, helpers and custodians.

Here is where our reflection needs to begin. In what moment we removed ourselves from the natural life to live disengaged from the creation? Each year as Christians the liturgy of Ash Wednesday reminds us of this foundational truth, “remember that you are dust and to dust we shall return” (Genesis 3:19). We are a vulnerable and transitory part of the creation; we are born to live in obedience and faithfulness to God. Instead, all too often we try to live as the owners of our own lives, and some are so foolish that they believe they own the land.

When we put things in the gospel perspective, we discover that Jesus knew perfectly well why he uses parables or comparisons from the agricultural and farming world. Some scholars mention how the rural environment of Jesus’ time influenced his teaching and preaching as a limitation. While today, other scholars recognize that Jesus’ wisdom goes well beyond cultures and time. Jesus knew that as humans we are, and going to be, always dependent and linked from the natural and agricultural world.

Yes, we can be sophisticated and technologically advanced, but our food, water, and air quality and overall health is ultimately dependent on the simple process

of the seed who transforms into a plant, and eventually flower and fruit. This natural development is the only way we know to maintain life upon the earth. The denial of this natural processes brings disruption and chaos not only for some, but ultimately for all human beings. We can attest that the contamination, deforestation, manipulation and exploitation of natural resources for selfish interest and economic growth is destroying and changing the planet earth.

It is no causality that Pope Francis choose as one of his first documents to write the Encyclical document, *“Laudato Si”* (Praise be to You). In it he mentions how the destruction of the environment by our own human hands, affects the present and future of the whole human race. This destruction is visible in all the expression of the human relationships: people with nature, people with others and ultimately, people with God.

The Bible teaches that the more we respect and are in concordance with the harmonious natural cycle of life, the more we will understand our own human environment. Ultimately, the history goes back always to the beginning, God as Creator has the power of life, and he constantly displays his power through love. God’s restoration is visible and becomes real in the small sprig of the cedar tree that blossoms until becoming a noble cedar that offers fruit and shade for every kind of bird.

In a similar statement of natural wisdom, today's gospel reminds us that the earth itself brings out the harvest. After the seed is scattered, the growth and developments depend on the natural process of the earth more than the human efforts. The farmer knows that the outcome of the seed is out of his control. For this reason, the gospel mentions how the life of the farmer continues: "Sleep and rise, night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how." The difference from our human ignorance is that God knows and allows this cycle of life to repeat over and over.

Jesus in talking about the Kingdom as a mustard seed, makes clear that the Kingdom is a reality that transforms and has the potential to be a place that allows other creatures to live. This capacity of become something bigger and beautiful is rooted in the mystery of the Kingdom of God who is always at work.

In the same way the seed eventually becomes a great tree with large branches that provides space for the birds of the air. Our own Christian development is rooted in the capacity that we must allow the seed of the gospel to grow within ourselves. Only when we become a space of safety, shelter, hospitality, justice, and love for others, will we discover that our mustard seed is becoming something also that God is doing in our lives. To experience this transforming mystery, it is necessary to live in harmony and peace with the creation and the

Creator. Only then we will know, that the Kingdom of God is our ultimate reality that is already among us. Amen.