

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

I have a memory of planting a seed of some sort, I suppose it was a flower, in a Styrofoam cup during Sunday school or maybe at vacation Bible school, a long time ago when we still lived in Bemidji. As a child I pretty much was expecting quick growth, results that I could see after bringing it home to my mom. The idea that it would take a while was apparently a foreign concept to me. We started with leaving it on a window sill where it got some sunlight, putting in a bit of water now and then, and finally one day my mom called me over and said look at this, a tiny little green shoot. I admit I was expecting more than this, but at any rate my interest in this new thing was once again aroused and I began checking it more often. Of course the growth came slowly and I lost interest again, but then it got to the point where it was quite visible, then to the point where leaves and a bud were beginning, and after what seemed to be years, a flower opened.

Jesus talks in parables now about the reign of God, about the kingdom of God. Not a geographical location as we might usually associate with the idea of a kingdom, but instead God's reign. The Christian faith started small, in a manner that most folks back two thousand years ago thought was quite insignificant, if they thought about it at all. It was invisible or nearly so, but growth came as people went about their everyday business, had anyone been watching for growth, they would have given it up as a boring task and found something else to occupy their time.

The kingdom of God can be compared to me planting a seed and the growth came when I was not looking. I imagine I could say I participated in it, but only by planting the seed. Growth came, but it was not under my control, nor subject to my desire for more speed in the process, there was not anything I could do to make the growth happen. The seed produced the results inherent within it.

You and I scatter the seed of God's reign in many ways and in many places. As you can readily imagine, the results vary, sometimes a bumper crop, sometimes it does not look like there will be a crop at all. We are sometimes pretty quick to take credit when the results come, or to blame poor soil when there results are poor. One of the messages of our parables this morning is that we should neither take credit nor assign blame for the coming of the kingdom. All we have to do is be faithful in scattering seeds, in planting, God will bring it to harvest in God's own time.

There are so many ways we sow the seed of the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus. Maybe it is in some of our social ministry, feeding the hungry whether donating or serving food, clothing those who would be without adequate clothing, we sow seed in our welcome of the stranger, in the visits we make to those who cannot leave home or nursing facility. We offer care and love to those who maybe do not receive it otherwise. It would pretty hard to believe in a loving God when your life has been one of rejection and going without the necessities of life.

Share the love of God with those in need and you are sowing the seeds of the kingdom of God. We scatter seeds far and near when we care for each other, within our congregation and community, and in the greater community "out there." Do you realize how unusual it is when a group of people genuinely care for each other and for those often considered outsiders or marginalized.

We sow seeds when we share our walk of faith with others, even if we are hesitant to share things we sometimes consider pretty personal. We want to protect ourselves, and of course we do not want to offend other people, but our faith is our greatest treasure and it is to be shared, seeds of the kingdom are meant to be scattered by you and me. And the thing is, the more we give the seed away, the more we scatter it, the more we have.

As we scatter seeds through our witness, that is, through our lives and our living, we can do even more, supporting mission outreach, missionaries and disaster relief through the ELCA, supporting evangelists and church planters as we call them. We still have the responsibility to sow the seeds of the kingdom as well, but with the kind of support I mentioned, we can also be involved in sowing distant fields. We sow, scatter seeds of the Kingdom, and we cover them with prayer, lots and lots of prayer. We offer the seeds that we have planted to the only one who can bring about the harvest, trusting in God, to accomplish the work that he began as the first dawn shone a long, long time ago.

Trusting God is hard work, because our tendency is to want to take credit when the sprouts begin to emerge. But we must keep in mind that it is not our seed and it is not our doing that brings about the harvest. We have nothing to do with it whether there is growth or whether there is no growth, but we as servants of God, scatter the seed that has been entrusted to our care. It is God's power, not our power, that makes the seed sprout and grow.

You and I have met the Lord of the Harvest, we know the eternal faithfulness of our Lord Jesus who has arisen. God's creation comes to its fullness in Christ and someday it will all come about, but until then we only have to be faithful in our sowing the seeds of the kingdom, the Gospel, we only have to be faithful in trusting our God of the harvest. AMEN