

June 14, 2009

Sermon of the Seeds, Mark Pederson

Proper 6 1 Samuel 15:34-16:13, Psalm 92, 2 Corinthians 5:6-10, Mark 4:26-34

Mary's nephew Dayton, his wife Nancy and their four year old grandson Charlie were watching a television program recently of a Broadway Show Production. Liza Minnelli was part of this show and when she came out for her part, Nancy exclaimed "Why, she is older than dirt." There was a pause in their household and then Charlie turned to his grandfather and said "Who is dirt?" Obviously there was a missing connection for Charlie. No real connection between Liza Minnelli and dirt. How could that stuff he had to wash off his hands and feet, the stuff he could walk on be a person.

Charlie isn't the only one who has trouble with understanding dirt. In a dust storm it is cursed. I remember driving from Denver north to Wyoming in a dust storm. The car windows were rolled up as tight as possible. When I got to Cheyenne I was pretty much out of the storm so I stopped, checked into a motel and took a shower. Spring of the year is usually a time when our thoughts about dirt and suddenly it looks rich and productive. We see people in town, down on their hands and knees digging into the dirt, planting a tomato plant, a flower, or just a seed.

We can of course read books and articles that explain scientifically, what goes on and what will probably happen to the plants and seeds. That scientific explanation never seems to adequately explain the magic that occurs with those plants and seeds. We still don't quite know how it all happens. We go to bed and while we sleep, changes occur without human help or interference. We can reach down and take a pinch of dirt between our thumb and finger and we can feel it. We can't, however, feel individual particles of dirt because those particles accept a seed and turn it into a plant producing a delicious tomato or beautiful flower for our enjoyment at our table. Dirt is not limited to tomatoes or flowers, it works with all kinds of weird and strange seed. It is as if dirt says, "give me your seeds and I'll show you what I can do with them.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells two parables: one about seeds growing secretly and one about a tiny mustard seed. In the first parable it is about the amazing change of seeds while the planter is sleeping, he knows not how they change.

In our practical world it is easy to overlook the dirt/seed combination. We accept it and go on with all of our more important activities. We run the risk of missing the wonders of God's creation, the Sun, Moon and Stars and especially dirt. Dirt because we overlook that tiny insignificant things can produce amazing outcomes.

The mustard seed parable is also about amazing mystifying growth. How such a tiny seeds becomes a big plant. Other plants with bigger seeds don't grow to the height of the mustard plant which usually grows to about 10 feet or larger around Lake Gennesaret. A contemporary comparison would be a corn seed with corn growing 8 maybe even 12 feet while a smaller maple tree seed turns into a 70 or 80 foot tree.

In Mark's Gospel, it is suggested that a parable is like a riddle. Something that requires looking into very carefully to discover real meaning. The obvious may not be the

real meaning. The obvious may not be the real meaning. Little things are important and can be creators of significant growth.

Many of us come to church to reinforce our faith. We may conclude that our faith is small and it may be. It is not likely that any of us will be adequate in faith. We look at giants of faith like Thomas Aquinas, St. Dunstan, Hans Kung and Archbishop Ramsey to name a few. We then end up believing we are part of that community of "little faith."

We forget that the original Christian community was insignificant in its world. We forget that it took 300 years to become accepted in Rome. We forget that it took centuries to reach Northern Europe. We forget that Christianity didn't reach much of the third world countries until well into the 19th century. Like the unexplainable growth of seed in today's Gospel, the unexplainable growth of Christian belief through the seeds of people with little faith is a mystery to us. That is, until we realize that it is through the guidance of the Lord for millions of people with little faith that this amazing growth has occurred.

2 Corinthians, Chapter 5, verse 17 has these words of Paul. "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation." These words seem very appropriate with today's Gospel of seeds. Every seed produces a plant with new seeds. Each new seed is a new creation. Like a daily kind greeting, an expression of concern for those in distress, words of comfort for those grieving, words of joy for those celebrating, comforting words for those at peace - all coming from our little seeds of faith that can produce unexplainable growth. We know not how or why.