

Sunday, June 17, 2018

Rev. Robert W. Brown

SERMON

*Seeds of Subversion*

**SCRIPTURE READING – Mark 4:26-34**

**INTRODUCTION:**

When we baptize young infants, we do so with great hope. We are totally trusting that God has given them the blessing of life and will never abandon them. It's like we are planting a seed of faith and hope that it will grow strong and healthy. We promise to help nurture it, but really it is only by God's grace and power these seeds grow. We are simply invited to help, as we are able.

In the two parables I'm about to read, Jesus uses the power of story to reveal how God's presence and providence is the driving energy that is constantly on the move here on earth as it is in heaven.

Hear this good news from the Gospel of Mark Chapter 4:26-34.

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**SCRIPTURE:**

[Jesus] said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how.

The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come."

He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

The Word of God leading us to be a people of God...

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*May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be pleasing to you, our Rock and our Redeemer. – Amen*

It is the middle of February, sometime after Presidents day. The snow is piled high and the forecast calls for record cold and yet another 6 inches, and it is here, in the gray overcast, bleak mid-winter that hope arrives in our mailbox. Delivered right to our frozen front door, comes Annie’s Heirloom and of course the always reliable Burpee Seed catalogue. Even as the snow falls, Natalie begins plotting her planting strategy. About a month later, she tenderly buries the first tiny seeds in nutrient rich potting soil and tucks them under the grow lights in the warmth and shelter of our basement. Quietly, persistently, lovingly, life is encouraged. And then, one day, a tiny green blade pokes through the soil. A delicate stem forms to support the plant and distribute nutrients. As the days roll by and the threat of frost is diminished, Natalie gently transplants the seedlings into a cold frame outside in the garden. Before long we are harvesting a robust crop of organic lettuce, kale and kohlrabi.

When these seed catalogues arrive in February I always think that they are the welcomed seeds of subversion. Against the obvious brutality of the climate outside we know there is a better day coming.

This is why we continue to plant the hope for a new world in the face of the ongoing pain and evil. This is why we continue to believe that a new creation is growing. We have a subversive faith that believes that the God who created once has promised to recreate. We may not know the hour of the harvest but we continue to believe that it will come.

Clearly in the midst of the suffering of this world, signs of struggle seem more prominent than signs of the coming of God. But, like the seed germinating invisibly below the surface of the soil, the rule of God is always at work below the surface of today’s news cycle. This is why we will always continue our planting seeds of goodness and forgiveness. This is why we wait in hope and trust in God’s promise. This is why we baptize infants. The growth cannot be stopped. The kingdom may not come as quickly as we’d like it, but thanks be to God, we will always plant our seeds of subversion. AMEN.