

**Mark 4:26-34**

Jesus said to the crowds: 'This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man throws seed on the land. Night and day, while he sleeps, when he is awake, the seed is sprouting and growing; how, he does not know. Of its own accord the land produces first the shoot, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the crop is ready, he loses no time: he starts to reap because the harvest has come.'

He also said, 'What can we say the kingdom of God is like? What parable can we find for it? It is like a mustard seed which at the time of its sowing in the soil is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet once it is sown it grows into the biggest shrub of them all and puts out big branches so that the birds of the air can shelter in its shade.'

Using many parables like these, he spoke the word to them, so far as they were capable of understanding it. He would not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything to his disciples when they were alone.

Jesus seems to be saying that if the farmer does not know the ways of the humble seed, how can any of us fully know the ways of God? If growth in the natural world is mysterious, how much more mysterious must be the growth of God's kingdom? With the parable of the seed growing secretly, Jesus says that the kingdom of God can be growing among us in ways that we do not fully understand. The spreading of God's reign is ultimately God's work and that work is always under way, even when we do not see it or understand it. We have a part to play in the coming of God's way of doing things among us, just as the farmer has a role to play in the coming of the final harvest. In the second parable, there is a stark contrast between the tiny mustard seed and the large shrub that grows from it. Insignificant beginnings can lead to a wonderful result. The kingdom of God is like that; it often finds expression initially in what is small and seemingly insignificant. We can feel that our own faith is insignificant, as small as a mustard seed, yet Jesus assures us that the Spirit is working in and through such faith.

**ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN  
ORDINARY TIME**

**Year B**

**13<sup>th</sup> June 2021**



In our readings today the message is one of growth, and in the words of a famous Australian song about the indigenous struggle for land rights and reconciliation, "From Little Things, Big Things Grow". In the Bible there is a strong emphasis on the way God uses little things to make big things happen. It warns us against looking down on small beginnings, insignificant events and people which may lead to the fulfilment of God's purpose. Whereas success and power trump failure and weakness according to the logic of popular culture, it is vulnerability, powerlessness and smallness that win the day in the Kingdom of God.

**Opening Prayer**

O God, strength of those who hope in you, graciously hear our pleas, and, since without you mortal frailty can do nothing, grant us always the help of your grace, that in following your commands we may please you by our resolve and our deeds.

### **Ezekiel 17:22-24**

The Lord God says this: 'From the top of the cedar, from the highest branch I will take a shoot and plant it myself on a very high mountain. I will plant it on the high mountain of Israel. It will sprout branches and bear fruit, and become a noble cedar. Every kind of bird will live beneath it, every winged creature rest in the shade of its branches. And every tree of the field will learn that I, the Lord, am the one who stunts tall trees and makes the low ones grow, who withers green trees and makes the withered green. I, the Lord, have spoken, and I will do it.'

Spiritual renewal is the gift of God, through the Holy Spirit and through prayer. As Ezekiel, surely a keen gardener himself, puts it graphically, it is God who does the fundamental planting of his people. The sprig from the cedar's lofty top is planted on a high mountain, and for a noble purpose. In our tradition, God's favoured tree is the holy Catholic church, called to be a welcoming family, source of both enlightenment and comfort to people of all nations. This tree, of God's own planting, must be there "so that it may produce boughs and bear fruit, and become a noble cedar" providing shade for creatures of all kinds.



### **Psalm 91(92):2-3,13-16**

*It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to make music to your name, O Most High, to proclaim your love in the morning and your truth in the watches of the night.*

*The just will flourish like the palm tree and grow like a Lebanon cedar.*

*Planted in the house of the Lord they will flourish in the courts of our God, still bearing fruit when they are old, still full of sap, still green, to proclaim that the Lord is just. In him, my rock, there is no wrong.*

### **Corinthians 5:6-10**

We are always full of confidence when we remember that to live in the body means to be exiled from the Lord, going as we do by faith and not by sight – we are full of confidence, I say, and actually want to be exiled from the body and make our home with the Lord. Whether we are living in the body or exiled from it, we are intent on pleasing him. For all the truth about us will be brought out in the law court of Christ, and each of us will get what he deserves for the things he did in the body, good or bad.

When it comes to rediscovering spiritual priorities in our lives, we can be encouraged by today's hope-filled words from St. Paul. In the middle of all the turmoil and tension he felt in dealing with dissent in Corinth, he holds on to his confidence in Christ, as his invisible, ever-present friend. Paul can be serene even at the prospect of his own death, when he will be more "at home with the Lord." He then adds a guiding principle valid for each one of us: "Whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him." Without giving up on all hope for collegiality and dialogue in our Church, these are secondary to our basic trust that it is and will remain the Church of Jesus Christ, whose Spirit will stir up whatever is needed to make his Church grow and thrive.

**Alleluia, alleluia!** I call you friends, says the Lord, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father. **Alleluia!**

*(Gospel overleaf)*

### **Prayer over the Offerings**

O God, who in the offerings presented here provide for the twofold needs of human nature, nourishing us with food and renewing us with your Sacrament, grant, we pray, that the sustenance they provide may not fail us in body or in spirit.

### **Prayer after Communion**

As this reception of your Holy Communion, O Lord, foreshadows the union of the faithful in you, so may it bring about unity in your Church.

(Gospel reflection continued)

Sometimes we have to learn to be content with the small seeds that we can sow, trusting them to bear fruit in ways that will surprise us. The kingdom of God is something very humble and modest in its origins. We may not feel called to be heroes or martyrs every day, but we are called to put a little dignity into each corner of our little world. There are little seeds of the kingdom that all of us can sow, a friendly gesture towards someone in trouble, a welcoming smile for someone who is alone, a sign of closeness for someone who is in despair, a little ray of joy for a heart full of distress. God's reign comes in power through the seemingly insignificant actions from each one of us.