



GOSPEL GOSSIP

Jesus said, 'The Kingdom of God
is as if...'

St Mark 4. 26-34

Sunday 16 June 2024

Sometimes we can be too familiar with Jesus' parables, and as a result they lose their 'bite'. The gospel reading set for this Sunday has two, linked, images. One is about seed being scattered on the ground, and without human intervention or activity, it would germinate and grow. The other complements the first in that not only does the seed grow, but from something insignificant comes something which cannot be overlooked or ignored – a tree, in fact. One way to look at this parable is to consider the miracle of life and how it is God's gift alone which we can assist or hinder, but cannot be stopped. The other way is to understand it within the context in which Jesus told it: the kingdom of God.

We talk about the 'kingdom of God' but sometimes are a little vague about what it means in general terms what it means to us as individuals. Let's have a think about this.

- What do **you** think Jesus means by the 'kingdom of God'?
- Is the kingdom of God 'pie in the sky when you die' or a reality to be worked towards on earth?
- What are, where are, signs of the kingdom?
- Is the kingdom a global principal or a personal reality?
- Who is, or will become, a member of the kingdom?

It is noticeable that Jesus talks of the kingdom in this passage and elsewhere in the gospels in the present tense, and not the future. He says 'is' not 'will be'. That suggests that the kingdom is in the here and now, but as Jesus will 'come again in glory' then also its full realisation is to come. The seed is sown and growth is its inevitable result. It may be overlooked or dismissed, but growth will continue until unmistakable evidence of life becomes apparent. Think of the number of instances where the Christian faith has persecuted, particularly under communist regimes, where Marx dismissed it as 'the opium of the masses', and in the former Soviet Union and China it has emerged once again as a dominant and vibrant force.

- How can **you** help or hinder the kingdom?
- How is the kingdom evident in your lives and behaviour?
- What do you do when there is an apparent conflict between values or culture – 'one cannot serve two masters'?
- How can you make others aware of the attraction of the kingdom?
- Are you possessive or protective about the kingdom?

The kingdom of God should be at the forefront of our lives and witness, as Christians believe that it is 'of God' and therefore does not reflect the transitory values or nature of earthly kingdoms, however benign they appear. The kingdom of God is something which is unstoppable and will come about. If we overlook or ignore what it is and means to us and to others today, we run the risk of being excluded from it ourselves, and unable to enjoy its benefits as it emerges.