

Closing Prayer

O God,
at whose bidding the seed will sprout
and the shoot grow towards full stature,
hear the prayer of your assembled people.

Make us trust in your hidden ways,
that we may pray with confidence
and wait for your kingdom now growing in our midst.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Opening prayers. Ordinary Time 11, Year B²

CPL • LBC Year B Proper 06.odt • 2021-05-26

² *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999.*

Proper 6

Sunday between 12 and 18 June, inclusive

Principal Service readings

Ezekiel 17.22-24 Prophecy of a fruitful tree
Psalm 92.1-4,12-15 [*or* 92.1-8] The song of the upright
2 Corinthians 5.6-10 [11-13] 14-17 Ambition to please Christ
Mark 4.26-34 Parables: the growing seed; the mustard seed

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

Parables: the growing seed; the mustard seed

Such a large crowd gathered around Jesus that he got into a boat and began to teach them using many parables. ²⁶Jesus said, 'The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, ²⁷and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. ²⁸The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. ²⁹But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.'

³⁰Jesus also said, 'With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? ³¹It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; ³²yet 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.' ³³With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; ³⁴he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

Mark 4.26-34 NRSV¹

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Comments and Questions

The two parables in this passage are both explicitly about the kingdom, as they are introduced as such. They make similar points about the nature of God's kingdom: there is a strong contrast between small beginnings and great results; something is happening in the present (the process of growth), and the process is mysterious to people.

Their message is one of hope for the discouraged followers of Jesus and for persecuted Christians. It affirms that, despite the rejection encountered and opposition to the 'word' of Jesus, the seed is sown and grows mysteriously, moving towards the fullness of God's kingdom.

A christology emerges that continues the portrait of Jesus as the one who teaches with authority (1.27; see 4.1-2), and also proclaims the death and resurrection of Jesus as the mystery of the kingdom. The power of Jesus may now be hidden but it will ultimately be made manifest in his control over the chaotic powers of nature that are beyond human fathoming. Just as the seed has its own power and dynamism that is finally revealed at the harvest, so too does the mystery of the kingdom of God. The power of Jesus is seemingly hidden and absent on the cross, but it will spring up with glory when he returns (13.26-27; 14.62).

Quotations

1

The kingdom, Jesus taught, is right here--present yet hidden, immanent yet transcendent. It is at hand--among us and beyond us, now and not-yet. The kingdom of heaven, he said, belongs to the poor, the meek, the peacemakers, the merciful, and those who hunger and thirst for God. It advances not through power and might, but through missions of mercy, kindness, and humility. In this kingdom, many who are last will be first and many who are first will be last. The rich don't usually get it, Jesus said, but children always do. This is a kingdom whose saviour arrives not on a warhorse, but a donkey, not through triumph and conquest, but through death and resurrection. This kingdom is the only kingdom that will last.

Inspired: slaying giants, walking on water, and loving the Bible again
/ Rachel Held Evans. 2018

2

When God wants to sort out the world, as the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount make clear, he doesn't send in the tanks. He sends in the meek, the broken, the justice hungry, the peacemakers, the pure-hearted and so on.

The challenge of Jesus: rediscovering who Jesus was and is / N. T. Wright. 1999

3

When we pray "Let your kingdom come," we aren't asking God to bring history to an end and whisk us to realms of glory, or to wave a magic wand and solve all the problems we face in our life. Rather, we are making a radical commitment to live our life in the world ("on earth") in such loving abandonment to God that the values and principles, the perspectives and dynamics of God's realm of life and wholeness become incarnate in and through our being and doing. Here too we are utterly incapable of actualizing the kingdom in this way. We can, however, through loving abandonment, allow God to incarnate kingdom life in and through us in the circumstances of our daily life.

The deeper journey: the spirituality of discovering your true self
/ M. Robert Mulholland Jr. 2006

Related topics

For further study:

Hope; reign of God; faith; conversion; discipleship; Jesus Christ; mystery of suffering; paschal mystery; evangelisation; kingdom of God