

11th Sunday: ***Features of the Kingdom and our role in establishing it.***

How is the Kingdom of God like? And what does it mean “*to walk by faith and not by sight*”?

Paul, as a disciple, had been looking not for earthly gains, but eternal gains. He had seen the risen Lord, but now he feels ‘absent from the Lord’ and desires to see Christ again. Paul asserts that we can be confident in all circumstances, whether we are ‘at home’ or ‘away’. Because, our belief is our faith, and “we walk by faith, and not by sight’. He suggests that we are to make our place on earth as much like Heaven as we can. Because our real citizenship lies in the Kingdom of God, and we are here on earth merely as travelers. Our call is to make the place/space/-area around us a little more like Heaven.

Death is a source of anxiety and fear for most people. Yet, for Christians, we are reminded by Paul that death is not the end and that we can have confidence in the hope of resurrection. It is this hope that gives us courage in the present, which means that amidst the weaknesses and sufferings, we could hold on to hope for the future. Belief in resurrection *is not just a concept, but it shapes our reality*. Paul wants to please the Lord in everything, wherever he is. Likewise, he is instructing us to live a life that pleases the Lord, by living in the light of the resurrection day by day, walking by faith.

Spring is the time of sowing and planting for many of you. Jesus resembles the Kingdom to the seed in the gospel. The parable of sowing and harvesting is a story about natural progression and fruitfulness. This teaches us not to dwell too much about the outcome of our sowing as we cannot control what happens after the seed is sown. Seemingly, the result is not as important as the effort. This parable of the seed teaches us to have faith and patience in the plan of God. God will manage the harvest; means judgment belongs to God alone, and we are accountable to Him only.

Today’s second parable illustrates the growth of the Kingdom from something hidden and minute to something fully visible. God’s kingdom will grow from the smallest seed to the largest of all shrubs. It grows mysteriously on its own, and not according to our timeline, but according to God’s timeline. Jesus was not the messiah that people expected, like a king or mighty soldier but he was a simple

carpenter, a lowly mustard seed. However, it is this mustard seed that changed the world.

Similarly, in our life too, our expectations and calculations may go wrong in our endeavors. Sometimes we may feel that all our efforts are in vain; but know that the seed is sprouting underground. And it doesn't matter when the tree bears fruit or how much it bears; what matters is that *we have done our work faithfully and well.*

On this Fathers' Day, some fathers might have experienced that, after having done everything, they did not receive what they expected from their children. Here, Jesus words should bring you strength and hope; "after having done all that I was supposed to do, I will remain grateful because I have done only my duty". I know that God is the one who gives me the fruit. Amen.

Prayer by Alden Solovyev

Every act is a seed: Every laugh, every smile.
Every song, every dance.
Every outstretched arm, And every open heart.
A seed of holiness. A seed of redemption.

Every act is a seed, A seed of grace.
A seed of loneliness. A seed of isolation.
A seed of despair. A seed of failure.

How many seeds have I planted, God of Old,
Seeds that hurt, Seeds that heal?
How many seeds have I yet to plant,
Seeds that hurt, Seeds that heal?

God of Old Grant me the grace and strength
to plant seeds of holiness and grace
In my life and the world.
Let me be a source of wholeness,
Let me be a source of thanksgiving,
So that my life yields a garden of blessings
In service to Your Holy Name. Amen.