A.M.D.G. 3rd Sunday After Pentecost – B Text: Mark 4: 26-34

 June 14th, 2015

**Mark 4: 26-34** 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.

**种子发芽生长的比喻**

**26**耶稣说：“　神的国好象人在地里撒种， **27**他夜里睡觉，白天起来，种子发芽生长，自己也不知道怎么会这样的。 **28**地生五谷是自然的，先长苗，后吐穗，最后穗上结满了子粒。**29**庄稼熟了，就派人用镰刀割下，因为收成的时候到了。” **30**又说：“我们要把　神的国比作甚么呢？我们可以用甚么比喻来形容它呢？ **31**它好象一粒芥菜种，刚种下去的时候，比地上的一切种子都小， **32**种下以后，生长起来，却比一切蔬菜都大，长出大枝子，甚至天空的飞鸟都可以在它的荫下搭窝。” **33**耶稣用许多这样的比喻，照着他们所能听懂的，向他们讲道； **34**不用比喻，就不对他们讲。只有单独和自己的门徒在一起的时候，才把一切解释给他们听。

**倾斜地"道出真理** **Telling The Truth ‘Slant’"**

I am a little behind this year in getting my garden in order. I’m still putting the finishing touches on it. And I have been surprised at what survived over the winter – and is sprouting again – all of its own accord. Not surprising, I suppose – given the winter we had this year.

今年我打理我的花园有些滞后了。我还在弄，就快完工了。我惊讶于严冬后幸存的植物，它们又发芽了，自成一体。不过我想也不用太惊讶，因为今年的冬天太暖和了.

So, with gardening already on my mind – it was fertile ground to hear these parables from Mark once again about seeds and growth. This collection of parables in Mark, chapter 4, comprise what the gospel writer saw as the heart of Jesus’ teaching about the Kingdom of God. But before we explore the readings for what God may be saying to us today – I’d like to talk a bit about parables themselves – and the difference between a *fable* and a *parable*.Both are stories – but differ in intent. A *fable* is primarily ‘didactic’ – a story meant to offer some insight and instruction about life. It’s handy when you want to give kids some good advice or teach them some moral or practical lesson. Think of Aesop’s Fables, and the story of the ‘Tortoise and the Hare’. What lesson does it teach us? (*slow and steady wins the race*). Or what about ‘The Boy Who Cried Wolf’? (*honesty is the best policy*).

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脑子里想着我的花园，心境正好与今天我们读的马可福音里这段关于种子生长的比喻相契合。福音书的作者认为：马可福音第四章里的这些比喻，构成了耶稣诠释神国的核心。不过，在我们去探究神透过这段经文要对我们说什么之前，我想先谈谈什么是比喻，以及寓言和比喻之间的差别。寓言和比喻， 都是讲故事， 但讲故事的用意是不同的。寓言，主要是为了说教，是通过故事来教导一些对人生的看法和戒命。寓言便于我们用来给孩子们一些好的忠告，或是进行道德和实践教育。想想伊索寓言都教导了我们些什么呢？“龟兔赛跑”，说的是不懈努力终得胜。“喊狼来了的孩子”，说的是诚实方上策。

A parable, on the other hand – doesn’t just teach us something – but actually causes us to think – and think hard. It’s been said that as soon as you think you understand what a parable *means* – you probably don’t! I don’t know if Emily Dickinson had parables in mind when she wrote her poem on telling the truth ‘slant’ – but she just might have:

而比喻呢， 它不仅仅是教导我们一些东西，它实际上是要启发我们去想、去思索。俗话说：你刚以为弄明白了这个比喻的意思，马上却意识到其实不然。我不知道艾米丽.狄更斯在写“倾斜地道出真理”这首

诗时，脑子里是否想着耶稣的这些比喻，但是也许她真的是想着这些比喻。

 **Tell all the truth but tell it slant —
 Success in Circuit lies
 Too bright for our infirm Delight
 The Truth’s superb surprise
 As Lightning to the Children eased
 With explanation kind
 The Truth must dazzle gradually**

 **Or every man be blind —**

 要说出一切真理，但倾斜地、
 迂回地说才能成功。
 我们病弱的快乐承受不了
 真理耀眼的光亮、美妙的惊喜。
 如同给孩子们
 舒缓地、温和地解释闪电，
 真理必须逐渐地炫目于人前，
 每个人都会被真理的强光弄瞎了双眼。

Jesus describes the coming Kingdom of God in parables because he knows the reality it introduces is unexpected and that his hearers can’t really take it in all at once. Parables, as Eugene Peterson has said, are in this sense like narrative time bombs. You hear them – *tick* – wonder about them – *tick* – think maybe you’ve got it – *tick* – and then as you walk away – *tick* – or over the course of the next day or so – *tick* – all of a sudden the truth Jesus meant to convey strikes home – ***boom!*** – almost overwhelming you with its implications or, as Dickinson put it - blinding you with its vision.

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耶稣用比喻描绘正在到来的上帝的王国是因为他知道现实是异乎寻常的，而且他的听众不能一下子全盘接受。，就像Eugene Peterson所说的，在这种情况下就像定时炸弹。你听到他们-响一下-想着他们是什么-响一下-想着也许你懂了-响一下-然后当你走开时-响一下-或者完成第二天的课程- 响一下- 突然间耶稣想要传递的事实打击到- 嘭的一声爆炸了！- 它的意义几乎使你无所适从，或者像Dickingson所说-用它的视力让你失明。

Jesus conveyed just such truths in today’s two parables on seeds and growth. But in order to hear them as Jesus intended – he not only had to tell them *‘slant’* – we need to hear them *‘slant* – with an attitude of openness and curiosity – prepared for them to change us in some way. It is, of course, exactly

where the disciples got all tangled up – wanting Jesus to tell them exactly what he meant, and what they should do. But *he* wanted them to think about it – and let it grow slowly in their hearts and minds.

Eugene Peterson – who was Professor of Spiritual Theology at [Regent College](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regent_College)  until retiring in 2006 – has a wonderful paraphrase of this passage in his book ***The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language.*** He writes:*With many stories like these, Jesus presented his message to them, fitting the stories to their experience and maturity. He was never without a story when he spoke. When he was alone with his disciples,*

*he went over everything, sorting out the tangles, untying the knots".*

耶稣用种子和生长这两个比喻来传递这样的事实。 但是为了想要如耶稣所愿听到他们-他不仅不得不隐晦地说- 我们也要隐晦地听- 带着开放和好奇的态度- 准备让他们在某种方面改变我们。当然，这就是他的弟子们完全搞错的地方- 想要让耶稣告诉他们他说的究竟是什么意思，以及他们应该做什么。但是他想要弟子们好好思考- 并慢慢在他们心里和思想里生长。Eugene Peterson-是Regent 学院的神学教授，他2006年退休了- 在他的书***The Message：The Bible in Contemporary***里对这一段有非常精彩的诠释：他写道：就像这些一样的许多故事里，耶稣向他们呈现他的信息，让故事符合他们的经历和见识。当他说话时从来没有离开过故事。当他单独和弟子们在一起时，他复习所有的东西，理顺思路，解开疑团。

Jesus begins the first parable by saying, *“The Kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground.”* You notice that Jesus uses the word ‘*scatter*’ rather than ‘*sow*’. The Greek word literally means that the seed is cast here and there – with no thought to where it may fall – on fertile earth or barren ground. And then the man simply walks away and waits to see what happens. I found it interesting that here - the Greek word used in the original text can be transliterated as ‘’*automated*’ or ‘*automatic*’ – emphasizing a complete lack of manipulation or control of the results. The man simply waits until the

grain is ripe – letting nature take its course – and then harvests it.

耶稣开始第一个比喻上帝的王国就像有人向地里撒种。”你注意到耶稣用“撒”这个字而不是“播”这个字。希腊语中从字面上的意思是种子被撒到这儿和那儿-没有关注它会落到哪儿-是在肥沃的还是在荒芜的土地上。然后那个人只是走开，等着看会发生什么。我觉得在这儿很有意思-在原文中的希腊词汇可以被直译成“自动的”-强调完全没有摆弄和操纵结果。那个人只是等到粮食成熟-让大自然来操控-然后收获。

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What, then, are we to make of this parable? What do you think Jesus was trying to say? Again – if we try to hear the truth ‘slant’ – we must approach it with curiosity and openness. It *might* be about the wonder of faith and the need to be ready to bring in the harvest. *Or* – it might be about our inability to control everything – especially God – and that life and faith can only be received as gift. More like falling in love than making a decision.I don’t know about you – but that leaves me feeling a bit anxious. Truth be told - I *like* being in control. And to give that up means I have to trust – without a safety net to catch me if I fall.

And that’s easier said than done!

什么，我们创造了这个比喻？你认为耶稣想要说明什么？再说一次-如果我们想要隐晦地听到事实-我们必须带着开放和好奇的态度接近它。这也许是对信仰的困惑，和对收获的准备。或者-这也许是关于我们无法控制所有的事-特别是上帝-而生命和信仰只能象收到礼物一样。更像坠入爱河，而不是下一个决定。我不知道你怎么想-但这让我觉得有一点焦虑。说实话-我喜欢被操控。要放弃意味着我必须相信-如果我坠落的话没有安全网接住我。说起来容易做起来难。

We live in a time of great anxiety – increasingly violent weather patterns, new strains of deadly diseases, conflicts on a local *and* global scale – not to mention more pressures at home and in the workplace. And if you’re like me – you *want* to trust that God has everything under control. But *just in case*  - we often end up ‘hedging our bets’ – doing everything we can to keep anxiety at bay ….Like expecting perfection of ourselves and others; or living our lives with constant ‘shoulds’ – I *should do* this or that – or *be* this or that. Or trying to manipulate, manage and control everything and everybody in our lives.

我们生活在充满焦虑的时代-不断增加的恶劣气候形态，新的致命疾病，本地或全球的争端- 还没有提到家里和工作中的压力。 如果你们像我一样-你想要相信上帝控制一切。但是只是万一- 我们经常会‘两面下注’-我们竭尽所能压制焦虑…就像希望别人和我们都很完美；或者一直活在“应该”中-我应该做这个或那个-或是这个或那个。或者想要操纵，管理，控制生活中的每件事和每个人。

So – perhaps this first parable is inviting us to let *God* be in control – and stop trying to be the next Messiah. To trust that God is at work always and everywhere – even when we cannot see it – and that

God will be with us to bring about something good – no matter what happens in our lives.

因此，也许这第一个比喻是邀请我们让神来控制我们，不要期待下一个弥赛亚的降临。 要相信上帝是一直在做工，无处不在。即使我们无法看到它，上帝也会与我们同在并带来好的事情，无论我们的生活发生什么。

The second parable Jesus told, about the mustard seed, draws us into an even more difficult truth. *Perhaps* it is about how God can grow even the smallest of things and ideas into grand ones. Or maybe – just maybe – it might be about how faith demands more than lip-service – about God seizing hold of our lives so that our faith influences everything we say or do.

第二个比喻是耶稣说的有关芥菜籽，把我们带到一个更难懂的真理。 也许它是关于神如何把最微小的东西发展成为很庞大的东西。 也许，仅仅是也许--可能是有关信仰的需求不是一个空头支票，而是关于神抓住住我们的生活，使我们的信仰会影响到我们说的每句话或做的每件事。

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After all – the little mustard seed might *seem* like a sweet little image – as if it’s the underdog – the tiny seed that survives and flourishes against great odds. But mustard – as any farmer will tell you – is a lot *less* like a flowering shrub we might plant around the edge of our property – than it is like an invasive weed – starting out small and then taking over everything. If that’s the case – maybe Jesus is suggesting that faith should come with a warning. That – when taken seriously – it can invade and seize hold of you – and turn your life upside down. The writer, Annie Dillard once put it this way: *Why do people in church seem like cheerful, brainless tourists on a packaged tour of the Absolute? … Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT. It is madness to wear ladies’ straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews. For the sleeping god may wake someday and take offense, or the waking god may draw us to where we can never return.”*

 *— Annie Dillard, Teaching a Stone to Talk: Expeditions and Encounters*

*Maybe* our second parable this morning is reminding us that following God and Jesus can be dangerous

because you just don’t know where it will take you – or what it will expect from you.

毕竟，小小的芥籽可能看上去是一个可爱的很小的东西，就像处于弱势的弱者--小粒种子，生存和蓬勃发展十分困难。 但芥菜，任何农民会告诉你——它并不像我们种在房子旁边的可欣赏花的灌木，它更像是一个侵入性杂草--从小最后长到非常大的灌木，长得遍地都是。 如果是这种情况，也许耶稣是在说我们的信念应该有一个警告。 ——当认真对待信仰，它可以侵入并抓住你——将您的生活翻转过来。 作者Annie Dillard曾经这样写到: 为什么教会里的人看起来开朗、看起来像包价旅游的呆头呆脑的旅游者。有没有任何人有概然不知的想法关于怎样的权利我们毫不在意地调用呢？或者，我想问，没有一个人会相信？ 教会孩子在地板用化学试剂混合了一批TNT炸药。 带着草帽或天鹅绒帽子来教会是愚蠢的：我们都应该戴上防撞头盔。 教会门厅处应该给我们救生工具和信号灯，他们应该责骂坐在殿堂椅子上的我们。对于沉睡的神唤醒可能有那么一天，并采取进攻，而醒来的神会把我们拉到我们永远不会返回的地方。」---- Annie Dillard 《教石头说话---探险和邂逅》。

可能是我们今天上午第二个比喻是提醒我们，跟随上帝和耶稣可能是冒险的，因为你不知道它会把你带到哪里，或者你也不知道它对你的期望是什么。

And those birds that are attracted to its shade? I used to assume this was simply a cute picture - a bush large enough to shelter woodland creatures. But now I’m not so sure. These birds might be the undesirables - the folks decent people avoid - the ones we prefer to keep on the other side of our street and, preferably, outside our homes. Yet across Mark’s Gospel it just these people who flock to the kingdom Jesus proclaims.

这些鸟被灌木的树荫吸引？ 我曾习惯认为这是一个可爱图片--- 灌木丛足够大可以给森林的动物遮阴。但是现在我不是很确定。 这些雀鸟可能是一些不受欢迎的人，体面的人不喜欢和躲避的人。我们喜欢的人要在街道的另一边，并且最好是在我们的家的外边。 而马可福音中，描述这些人聚集到耶稣所宣告的王国里。

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We who have achieved a relative amount of education and position and income and status don’t like much to think about this, but the original followers of Jesus were, in the eyes of the culture, all pretty much losers – lowly fishermen, despised tax collectors, prostitutes and criminals, lowlifes loathed by the religious establishment. Maybe that’s the way the followers of Jesus have always looked to the rest of the world – those people desperate enough, lowly enough, to find hope in Jesus’ message that the kingdom of God has come near.

我们已经取得了相关的教育程度、职位、收入和地位，不喜欢为这个思考太多。但耶稣的最初追随者中，在有文化的人的眼里，这些追随者很多属于失败者，地位低的渔民，被人藐视的税吏、娼妓和罪犯，下层人并且不喜欢所建立的宗教。 也许这就是耶稣的追随者一直期望的另一个世界，这些人绝望、地位太低，在耶稣福音中看到希望，神的国将降临。

So here’s the thing: I don’t know how these parables sound to you. But I do know how it will sound to everyone – established or not, longtime member or first time visitor – who is struggling, who does not feel accepted, who wonders about the future, or who has experienced significant loss or rejection.

所以这就是：我不知道这些比喻我听起来怎样。 但我知道每个人听起比喻对他们意味着什么，无论是已经被认可的还是没有被认可的、无论是教会的长期成员还是第一次来教会的拜访者，他们都在纠结中，他们感到没有被接纳，或着在忧虑未来、或有些人经历了巨大的损失和抛弃。

Because in these parables Jesus reminds us that the Kingdom of God is not dependent on us – on how good we are, or how well we manage the life we live. The Kingdom Jesus proclaims has room for everyone. It overturns the things the world has taught us are insurmountable and creates a new and open – and for this reason perhaps a bit frightening – future. This is, in short, a threatening word for any and all who believe they are “self-made” men or women - but at the same time, good news – perhaps the *best* news – for anyone who can admit his or her need. It’s certainly something to think about anyway – isn’t it?!!!!

因为在这些比喻耶稣提醒我们：上帝的王国并不取决于我们----不取决于我们如何如何的好，或者我们如何很好地管理我们的生活。 耶稣宣布在上帝的王国里我们每个人都有位置。 它推翻了世界是不可逾越的，并创建一个新的开放的王国，这好像有些害怕-- 对未来的恐惧。但是这个只对那些认为他们很“自我”的男人和女人会有恐惧感。而且同时的好消息--- 上帝的王国，让任何承认他或她对上帝的需求的人来说也许是最好的消息。这当然是一些需要思考的事情，不是吗?!!!!