

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time B2024

In today's Gospel, our Lord speaks of the Kingdom of God in a set of two parables. A parable is a short and fictitious story used for pedagogic reasons. In other words, a parable is a way of speaking that uses images and symbols in order to communicate a truth. Each parable has its context through which our Lord spoke it to the crowd or his disciples.

The global context of these parables is this: One of the problems the disciples faced at their time was that, in spite of all the signs performed and the work done, our Lord's teaching was not accepted by everybody. Humanly speaking, it was as though our Lord and his disciples failed in their mission because the result did not follow at all. In the end, that could just lead to discouragement and despair.

In these two parables, our Lord tries to answer their concern by showing a contrast between human attitudes and God's efficiency that is performant even where it seems to be a failure. It is in this contrast that we find the truth our Lord wants to communicate and the point of these two parables.

When our Lord says that the kingdom of God is like a man who scatters the seed and which sprout and grow, yielding fruits and grain until harvest, without the man knowing how, he wants us to realize that nothing can stop the growth of God's kingdom. The growth of God's kingdom is inevitable; it does not depend on human attitudes.

Because God is behind everything that exists, the growth of his reign is under way regardless of what people can do. It does not depend on human efforts, as important as they might be, but on God alone. That is why the growth of the kingdom may be like that of a plant, imperceptible from day to day, but over the years grows and becomes very productive.

It does not mean, however, that because the growth depends on God alone, we have nothing to do about it. If we dwell in such an attitude, we will destroy the sense of our mission as disciples of our Lord and the work of evangelization. Of course, no one can make the seed grow, but we should not forget that, like a farmer who tills the soil for a good harvest, we can create the conditions in which the seed can grow well.

All that brings us to human attitudes we should have with regard to the growth of God's kingdom. The first attitude is patience. This is a very important attitude. Because we live in a culture of fast things, the temptation is strong to look for an immediate result in the work of God. And yet, God works according to his time and his calendar, sometimes very slowly. What I am saying here is true for God's work as well as for our human undertakings. We really need to be patient, to take the time for ourselves to work and to give time to people to adjust their lives to the values of the kingdom of God.

That being said, we need also the attitude of hope and not despair. Hope means that we anticipate God's crowning of what we do because he is behind every work we do. However, it does not mean that we have to be naïve or idealistic by thinking that everything will be ok, because God is in control. We have to be realistic and play our part. What it means is that we have to give the best of ourselves in everything we do with the firm conviction that God will reward us and everything we do in his name. That is why, confidence in God is also important.

Because of all above-underlined attitudes, we have to know that the growth of God's kingdom is gradual and not spontaneous. That is what the parable of the mustard seed would like to say, namely that the humble beginning will become one day a great work.

There is a big truth in this consideration when we look at our own lives. We were just small babies and today we have become these great and respectful adults: fathers, mothers, grandparents, great grandparents, etc. How nice is all that! Imagine, for instance, that all the big ideas and the inventions that have transformed our lives have started from an individual and from him to the whole world.

Another example can be taken from music. It has just eight notes, but from these notes we can have song, hymn, symphony, opera, concerto, sonata, etc. The same is true about literature. We have just twenty six letters of the alphabet, but from them we have a variety of literature: novel, drama, movie, history, etc.

The point I want to highlight here is that the small acts of daily life make a difference when it is about the work of God. We should never be tired of repeating them or discouraged to start again. We need patience when we start something. We need courage to keep going when we face difficulties. We need to hope that from the small beginning will come one day a big enterprise. We need to trust God, whatever might be the conditions of our work. That is true for God's work as well as for our human work. Let us pray, then, that the Lord my give us the necessary attitudes we need to work for him and for our fellows.

Ezekiel 17: 22-24; 2 Corinthians 5: 6-10; Mark 4: 26-34



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