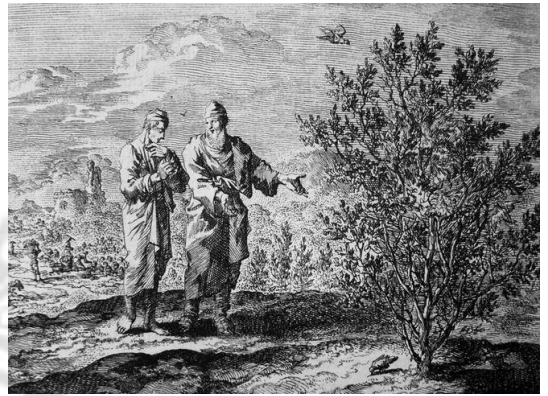


(Food for thought)

Gospel: Mark 4: 26-34.

The Smallest Seeds



There are thirteen parables in the Gospel of Mark. Two of them appear in today's Gospel. And Jesus introduces today's parables by saying, "This is how it is with the kingdom of God...." "Let me tell you about the kingdom of God..."

Parables are stories; they are not theological arguments. Jesus is trying to describe for us a way of seeing our lives through another lens, through the lens of the parable. The parables reveal the way Jesus would have us look at things. They opens us up to His perspective and we need to listen carefully.

Both parables begin in ordinary, insignificant and inconsequential ways: seed is scattered; a tiny mustard seed is planted. In the first parable the farmer does very little work - if any - while the seed grows to maturity. "On its own accord the land yields fruit." Then, at the right time the farmer re-enters the story to do the work of harvest.

One thing is sure: Jesus wasn't trying to teach farmers how to plant their crops. Even if we have only planted a small backyard vegetable or flower garden we know we don't just scatter seed. After planting, there is weeding, watering, fertilizing, thinning, etc. -- then, if we're lucky, a harvest.

What Jesus seems to be saying in this parable is that despite our efforts - or lack of them - and despite our failures and successes, there will be a harvest nonetheless – it doesn't all depend on us. We can trust that while we are simply "scattering seed" there is set in motion an unavoidable force that will come to fruition.

Ordinary people like us spread God's reign and that reign has the power to transform the world in extraordinary ways and surprising places. Today, the Lord tells us that the reign of God is not far off, but is as close as every backyard and that it will spread no matter what.

Jesus didn't choose a perfect band of apostles, but they trusted in his word and did their best. We, too, have been chosen - and neither are we perfect. It will take the rest of our lives and beyond to realize what a gift the Gospel has been to us.

