

11th Ordinary Sunday
June 13, 2021
“Small Beginnings”

Ez 17:22-24
2 Cor 5:6-10
Mk 4:26-34

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

Despite our summer heat, there are many blessings that come with living in our small city. We are far from the maddening crowds of the large cities. And people here are, generally, polite and helpful in most situations. This is probably because our city has a high percentage of people who believe in God – and who try to follow the way of Jesus. Of course, we are still affected by world and national problems – Most are unhappy with the rule of our State government. Nevertheless, we have not lost the ability to have a positive outlook – And we hope for better times someday.

This was not the case for the Chosen People whom Ezekiel addressed in the Old Testament reading for today. They had almost totally rejected God. They continued to sin over and over again. They had turned to pagan gods and the gods of sex, money, and power. Eventually, they lost everything and were exiled, far away! God had allowed them to be punished severely – Nevertheless, He still had a special plan and destiny for those few who always remained faithful.

The small shoot, taken from the large tree, grows to become the greatest tree of all. This is a symbol for what the future would bring for all those who would remain faithful to God. From a small remnant would come a truly great kingdom that would be universal.

We know, with hindsight, that Jesus, as the Son of God, came and established the Kingdom of God. It was a reign that no other power could overthrow. Moreover, all would be invited. All could benefit from the wonderful gifts that Jesus came to share from his Father!

Jesus takes up this same theme in the Gospel of Mark. Often, the plan of God starts out in a very small way. But because it's God's plan, it continues to grow, strengthen, and spread. Moreover, God is always there watching it – and He will claim it and take it to Himself when it matures and the time is right!

This same scripture passage also points out that a person must have faith – and be truly open to God – to understand the parables of Jesus. Jesus, often, cloaked his teaching in parables so that the leadership – with hard hearts and closed minds – could not condemn him prematurely. However, Jesus explained the parables to his disciples so that there would be no misunderstandings.

In his Second Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul could see that he would, eventually, be killed. Paul was planting the seed of Gospel Christianity far and wide. He met with serious resistance, as did Jesus, in the many countries that he visited as a missionary. Paul truly believed that the Second Coming of Jesus – and the fullness of the heavenly kingdom it would bring – would come before he could be killed. This is the reason for his wish to be taken out of his physical body. Paul longed for the new existence that the risen Jesus enjoyed in the kingdom of heaven.

Most people are grateful for their physical life, here, on this Earth. Yet, we know that we are missing something much more. This is the fullness of life in the presence of God. Consequently, Paul urges us to be patient with life's unfolding and courageous in our faithfulness to God. Furthermore, we must aspire to please God in all that we do – and wherever we find ourselves at each moment.

I mentioned earlier that most consider themselves blessed to live in a small city like our own. One of our blessings is that there are true believers – and authentic disciples – all around us. Most people, here, are kind and considerate. Most do what they can for others – and not to be a burden to anyone. Moreover, it's truly amazing how a kind word – a smile – or a simple gesture of courtesy – can lift a person's heart. It's also wonderful how having the right attitude and spirit – when things go wrong for us, personally, – can, truly, help others. It can help them do their job – and help them get through an, otherwise, rough day!

Brothers and Sisters, these are all small things – seemingly insignificant things. Yet they can have a great impact for the future after the present moment has passed. But this is the way that God often acts. God sent His Son, as a tiny infant, to a tiny, resistant nation. And from that Son's work as Jesus, the message of salvation has encircled the globe!

So, let us pray, today, that we each do our part to spread that message – even in the small things we do – in a Christ-like way.

Amen.

June 13, 2021

Msgr. Russell G. Terra