

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 260

Sunday 16th June 2024

‘Virtually Church but with some way to go...’

Welcome

Welcome to Cutting Edge Camelot this Sunday.

Scripture Passage

Mark 4: 26-34

Jesus also said, “The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, ²⁷ and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. ²⁸ The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. ²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.”

³⁰ He also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; ³² 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.”

³³ With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; ³⁴ he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

Reflection

This reflection begins with an illustration connected with the growth of children. The reason for this is that the whole theme of children's physical and spiritual growth seemed very relevant to me for a baptism which I conducted this morning.

However, the spiritual principles which underly the parables of growth in this gospel reading apply much more widely. These parables illustrate the way that the Kingdom of God grows. However, their underlying principles can apply not simply to the growth of children but also to the growth of a relationship, a project or indeed any calling or vocation.

So, if you use a measuring chart in order to plot the increase in your child's height or weight, you may well find yourself surprised.

Sometimes there are periods of very obvious growth which seem to take place almost before our eyes. On those occasions, we are not surprised if our chart confirms to us that there has been a significant increase.

On other occasions, however, nothing much seems to be happening outwardly. The routines of life go on, day by day, week by week, month by month. But when it comes to the time to measure your child again you are amazed when the chart records a quite different mark or number to the one that came before. How did that happen? We never noticed this.

Or we can look at a photograph of a child taken one or two years apart and it seems (although we know this is not true) that this is a photograph of a completely different child. And again we ask ourselves how did that happen without our even noticing it?

And although trees normally grow at a much slower rate than children, there is a similar principle at work there. Indeed, throughout the natural

world we can see examples of this same principle of slow and indeed hidden growth and development.

So, in these two parables of Jesus which have been read to us this morning, the way that trees and plants grow are compared to the way that growth takes place in the kingdom of God.

In our second parable, Jesus draws our attention to the example of the mustard seed. It is the smallest of all seeds. But if it is sown in the ground, it will grow up and become the greatest of all plants putting out branches large enough for the birds of the air to make nests in its shade.

From this analogy we learn that it is natural for God's work to grow even if we cannot see or understand all the time what is happening or what God is doing.

So does this mean that we have no part to play in the growth and development of God's kingdom other than to sit back, watch and admire what God is doing?

But any parent will tell you that this completely passive approach is a recipe for disaster so far as looking after and nurturing children is concerned. And any farmer or gardener will likewise tell you that sitting back and doing nothing will not result in the production of healthy crops or plants.

And when we look at both parables more closely, we will indeed find that there is work for us to do. We have a part to play not simply in the healthy growth and development of our children but also in the growth and development of the kingdom of God.

The first and most important role that we have is the one of sower. The mustard seed needs to be sown before anything else can happen. Once sown into the ground, God is the One who ensures its miraculous growth so

that it becomes the largest of all the plants. But all this growth depends first on the simple act of sowing.

And in the other parable again the starting point is for someone to scatter seed on the ground. But at this point does the sower just sit back and do nothing? It is true that the parable does not mention the need for any activity between sowing and harvest. However, the normal routine of life continues, the sower sleeps and gets up each day so there is no reason to suppose that no attention is being paid to the tending of the crop which has been sown.

Nevertheless, the emphasis is on the miraculous and mysterious work of God. It is this which enables the crop to grow. The seed sprouts and grows in a way which the man does not understand. The earth produces of its own volition, stalk, head and then the full grain. So in the process of growth the way that God works through the processes of nature works is miraculous and beyond our understanding. We do need to let this happen rather than anxiously working away at the ground in which the crop has been sown. We might inadvertently damage the roots of the crop and so harm rather than help its development.

However, there will come another point after sowing when rather than waiting for God and the processes of nature to have their way we will need to take some very intentional and definite action.

That time is the time of harvest. It is no use sitting back when the harvest is ready and leaving it all up to God. If we do this, then the crops will simply go rotten in the fields. No, this is the time for action. When the grain is ripe, at once the farmer goes in with his sickle.

So, it is a matter of timing. If we harvest prematurely then the crops will be unripe and nothing will come of the harvest. On the other hand, if we delay in harvesting, then the crops will go to seed. The experienced farmer will

know the precise moment when to begin the urgent work of harvesting, the moment which lies between these two extremes. And in the spiritual realm, this knowledge comes through prayer and the increasing wisdom which we are given as our life with God develops.

The agricultural metaphor highlights to us the importance of seasons and of taking the actions which are appropriate to the seasons of the year. There is a time to sow and there is a time to harvest. Both are times of intense activity where we must not let the window of opportunity pass us by. But in between sowing and harvest there is also a long period where we go about our normal business and in which the crop quietly grows not needing drastic or intense action at this stage.

So just as there are seasons in the natural and agricultural year, so also there are spiritual seasons in God's kingdom. Some seasons are ones where we need to be very active. But others are ones where we need to wait, in quiet trust and confidence for God to do an unseen, yet miraculous work.

It is important to know which spiritual season we are in because this will determine the response that is required of us. If we sit back and wait either at the time of sowing or of harvest, the crop will fail or even never be sown in the first place. On the other hand, if we busy ourselves with frantic activity at times when we should simply be waiting for God to work, we risk damaging the crop which we should quietly be allowing to grow by itself in the field.

So which season are we in? That is a matter between ourselves and God. But if we seek God with humility in prayer, then I believe that He will show us what we need to do in whatever spiritual season we find ourselves in.

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- Knowing what spiritual season we are in and responding to God's guidance accordingly
- General Election
- For continuing and new conflicts including those in the Ukraine, Israel, Gaza and Iran
- Those whom we know who are facing illnesses of all kinds and have recently been bereaved
- For Elliscombe House in Higher Holton and its residents
- For teachers and children of North Cadbury church school

Hymn

One hymn set for this Sunday is 'The church's one foundation.'

Services for this week and next

Sunday 16 th June	9.30 am Communion, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 16 th June	11.00 am Sunday Worship, North Cadbury
Sunday 16 th June	11.00 am Morning Service, Maperton
Sunday 16 th June	6.30 pm Evensong, Yarlington
Sunday 23 rd June	8.00 am Communion, Blackford
Sunday 23 rd June	9.30 am Communion, South Cadbury
Sunday 23 rd June	9.30 am Matins, Compton Pauncefoot
Sunday 23 rd June	9.30 am Morning Worship, North Cheriton
Sunday 23 rd June	11.00 am Communion, North Cadbury
Sunday 23 rd June	11.00 am Sunday Worship, Yarlington
Sunday 23 rd June	6.30 pm Evening Service, Galhampton

Excalibur online

The June edition of Excalibur has now been published online at camelotparishes.co.uk. It contains details of Camelot people, a record of baptisms, weddings and funerals undertaken through the church in the Camelot Parishes.

The Parish Office

If Rob is not in the Office during normal office hours please contact him via email (office@camelotparishes.org.uk) or on 01749 850934.

Growing as a worshipper, a servant and a family

*We pray that 'we might live in love,
as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us'*

(Ephesians 5: 2)