

Good morning everyone,

*Our readings this Sunday, the Second Sunday after Trinity, help us to counter the thinking of much of our society and working environments today where efficiency and immediate results are expected. Just as a plant or a tree needs time to grow, so human relations cannot be built, nor our problems solved overnight. People too need time to grow and change. The good news is that God is patient with us, but we must work with God by becoming patient with one another and, with God's help, give people and the Church and God's kingdom of justice, love and peace the time needed to grow. We are to be sowers of the seed who then wait and pray in hope. If it is good seed that we sow, it will certainly grow.*

**Ezekiel 17: 22 – 24.** It is worth reading the whole chapter to understand this short passage which concludes it. The context is the early years of the Jewish Exile in Babylon. Chapter 17 contains a mixture of precise historical and allegorical details with verses 1 – 10 and 22 – 24 in the form of a poem, while verses 11 – 21 provide an explanation in prose.

The 'sprig from the lofty top of a cedar' (v.22) represents a future king from the house of David; 'every kind of bird' that will live under the cedar represents many nations. 'All the trees of the field' are the kings of the surrounding nations who will come to know that God humbles the mighty and raises up the lowly to power from nothing. This lesson is repeated in chapter 31. Ezekiel is looking forward to days of hope, growth, and blessing for Israel under a future king, a Messiah.

Jesus may well have been drawing on this passage in today's Gospel reading (hence its selection as a related reading, along with his status as God's Messiah), encouraging his disciples to look beyond the limitations and confrontations of their own day and grasp the amazing growth potential of the kingdom of God.

**2 Corinthians 5: 6 – 10.** Paul has already written that the risen life of Christ touches the Christian now and will one day embrace us finally and fully (last Sunday's reading). Being a rather spiritual lot, some Corinthians are becoming casual and complacent in this hope and feel that this bodily existence is an obstacle to union with Christ. Paul counters this by saying that whatever the Christian's longing, the future judgement will involve an assessment of how we lived here and now, in this earthly bodily form. Our present existence is very important (after all, Christ came and shared it!) and we must please God with the whole of our life.

**Mark 4: 26 – 34.** In common with Jesus' other parables about seeds, the first one today about the growing seed stresses the contrast between the smallness of the seed and the greatness of the final harvest. The harvest is the future consummation of the kingdom of God, but the kingdom is already present like a seed and its growth. What the seed will become is inevitable; it will one day reveal the form and purpose for which it was planted.

The second parable compares the kingdom with a small seed that grows into a great shrub. The smallness of the mustard seed is contrasted with the greatness of the shrub, once again representing the small beginnings of the kingdom and the great result of its full and final arrival. The seed grows to become the greatest of all the shrubs, producing large branches,

'so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.' What has begun in Jesus will surpass all hopes and expectations. The kingdom of God will gather in people from far and wide and there will be room for them all.

The seed originally means the message of Jesus, the gospel, but then it includes the recipients who must from their small beginnings go out to live that message and participate in the work of building the kingdom of God on earth.

The Collect for this Sunday:

*Lord, you have taught us that all our doings without love are nothing worth: send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love, the true bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whoever lives is counted as dead before you. Grant this for your only Son, Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

Wishing you a blessed Sunday, and a fruitful week to come.

Love and prayers,

John

