

“Be Seeded”
Sermon on Sunday, June 13, 2021

Dear church,

Add seeds to the number of items that can be difficult to get at the tail end of this pandemic, a time when many sectors of the economy still complain about supply shortages: wood is expensive, a global shortage of catalytic converters has kept the automobile industry on hold and inspired the wrong kind of entrepreneurs: thieves. There are many other items in short supply. To be clear, seeds aren't badly affected. But it is true, a few varieties are harder to get this year. For instance, I could not find Chrysanthemum seeds anywhere, and they are among my favorite flowers. Someone told me it's because more people discovered gardening last year; seeds were suddenly in high demand. With nothing much to do and few exciting vacation destinations in 2020, more people started growing veggies and flowers.

Jesus said, “Pay attention to those tiny seeds. They can teach us a lot about the kingdom of God.” The main lesson related to creation's life starters may sound counter-intuitive to many people in our culture and even to people in the church. I would call it the “Don't do too much” approach. What does a seed need but good soil and some sun and water? It's pretty simple... At a certain point it takes care of itself. We won't get a bigger sunflower by cheering it on. Maybe a little bit of fertilizer will go a long way. Other than that? All the instructions are encapsulated in that little seed. It's on autopilot. It's been designed by the creator to grow.

The kingdom of God? Jesus says: don't do too much. Don't turn it into an engineering project or a dissertation. The biggest trick in the spiritual world is to allow God and human nature to find one another, to mate, to fall in love. Allow the Word of God to be seeded in you. After that? Just let it grow, let it do its thing. I know, we are not used to that kind of message. We are more used to hearing from people, including ourselves sometimes, “You didn't do enough. You need to work harder... if you don't work harder, the competition will kill you. Here is another project for you!” It is quite the opposite in this gospel reading. Our Lord takes the luxury to pause and pray and say, “Thank you God, for letting your kingdom grow among us!”

It sounds contrary to everything our culture values, our schools teach and our parents taught us: “Work hard!” Is that not what we were told, what we are told? When I sat together with Cate and Ben to help them complete their confirmation project about Environmental Justice, I asked them this question: when we pray the Lord's Prayer and we say, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done,” what does that mean in terms of Environmental Justice? What kind of world are we praying for? Perhaps we are praying for a world less tampered with, less exploited, a world that will be around for future generations to enjoy. In this 21st century the survival of the planet is no longer a certainty. And because our leaders in the world have been so slow to act or re-act, bound to the interests of their constituents, and sometimes unable to grasp the enormity of change fueled by human consumption on an eight-billion people planet, we are in a difficult spot. That's what scientists tell us and have told us for some time. How difficult a spot? So difficult that God had to call a Swedish teenager with a touch of Asperger's Syndrome to speak up, for example. No doubt,

it will take some action to right the ship, to change course. It will take work, innovation, creativity, new industrial designs, new ways of building homes and cars. It's a lot of work! And is that not contrary to what I said earlier about not doing too much?

I will call it a paradox. Our faith is full of paradoxes. The life of faith is lived in the give and take of opposite poles - like action and contemplation, hard work and prayer, high ethical standards and grace. In the gospel reading for this morning, Jesus emphasizes the beauty of creation in its simplest form: a seed that needs little but soil, water and sun. And I feel he is saying to us, the people of this century: before you go to work on these important matters, first learn to enjoy and appreciate the gift given to you in every seed, every rose bush that blooms, every tree that provides shade, every bee that desperately tries to find a fertilizer-free spot to nest and multiply and pollinate the plant world. Don't forget that you too are part of creation, every cell in your body is. And before you fight for goodness, contemplate the goodness around you and in you. "Pay attention to those tiny seeds. They can teach us a lot about the kingdom of God." And as a person of faith, be seeded, be firmly seeded in creation's marvelous garden where goodness is grown all the time! And then watch out, watch out, for nothing is impossible for God. We didn't hear that from scientists. But we hear it from our creator. Can you hear it?

Amen.

Confirmation Speech: Caring for the Earth, Cate and Ben

Cate

Hello, my name is Cate Kroznuski and I am presenting this together with Ben Clark. We want to talk about Environmental Justice today. That's a big topic. But we believe it's one of the most important topics of our time. And here is an example why... Recently, scientists found micro plastics in the placentas of babies for the first time - 12 different micro plastics in six human placentas. The long term effects on human health could be devastating and we need to start speaking up about how serious this is. The environment gives so much to us and the fight to provide clean air, safe drinking water and safe living environments should be continuous. For when the earth suffers, we all suffer and the fight to rebuild the environment is vital and needs to be acted on.

Ben

In Psalm 24 we read: "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it; the world and all who live in it." Recently the environmental crisis has made us realize that we can't take God's earth for granted and it is our duty to protect it. And that leads us to justice. Is it JUST that the poorer countries suffer from a crisis created mostly by rich countries? Is it JUST that the animal kingdom gets robbed of its natural environment because of human expansion? We think not.

Cate

It's not just our generation saying this. Listen to what our church, the ELCA, said as long ago as in 1993: "We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are deeply concerned about the

environment, locally and globally, as members of this church and as members of society. Even as we join the political, economic, and scientific discussion, we know care for the earth to be a profoundly spiritual matter.” (Caring for Creation, 1993)

Ben

When we pray with Jesus in the Lord’s Prayer: “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done” – what kind of a kingdom, what kind of a world are we praying for?

It would be a cool world with constant temperatures.

It would have lush forests and bio-diversity.

Its oceans would be full of crystal clear water without waste.

Cate

I want earth to be a healthy and safe place to live and plants, animals and humans to prosper. I also hope that people stand up to the environmental crisis and make changes.

Ben

Let us pray: Dear heavenly Father, you gave us everything that is around us. You created the beautiful planet that is home not only to us but also to animals of all kinds. We have abused our privileges and caused our earth to suffer. Give us the strength and knowledge to correct our ways and care for the planet and everything else that You gave us. Amen.