



**June 13**

## ***THE NEW SHOFAR***

*How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!*

*My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways*

In Jesus' parables on the *growing seed* he continues teachings preached by **Isaiah (55:6-11)**. For the prophet the sequence of establishing the Reign of God on earth, in human history is set in place by God. The Kingdom will unfold and achieve in creation that which God wants... *it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.* This is the point of reassurance from which we move out to live as Christ's disciples in our world. We live faithfully (in Christ) and God will accomplish what He desires. In His way. According to a divine timetable. As Paul reminds us – we do the *planting* of the seed but it is always and only *God who does the growing.* Herein is our hope and our salvation.

*the farmer will then “sleep by night and rise by day”*

As Jesus stresses, the Kingdom grows without the input of the farmer. He goes about his daily activities, his normal life in the community. While he is doing that, the seed is growing. Unseen. By means he neither knows or understands. This is what is happening all around them. The Kingdom has come in Jesus, a way they had not expected, which they do not understand. Despite their failings, sins and weaknesses.

Mark reinforces this message in the way he structures the verse. In the Greek, the order of words is important, with the first words the most important. The clause would read, literally – *for by itself, the earth yields crops...*The word *by itself* has the meaning...*something that happens without a visible, obvious cause.*

In this case it is God who causes the growth and this is the key point Mark is making for his Church and for ours.

*Who then is Apollos? What is Paul (1 Cor 3:5)?*

In Baptism we commit ourselves to a life of seed sowing. We do this by living lives in accord with the witness, teaching and preaching of Jesus. It is as we strive to imitate Christ in the world, the seeds of the Kingdom are sown. More than likely, we do not even know our words and deeds are deeds of sowing. However, the growth and success of that sowing is not dependant on us. Our task is to be faithful in our discipleship, to grow as collaborators with Christ in the saving works of God.

Paul understood this as he struggled with the disappointments and sufferings of the fledgling Church in Corinth. He reassures the faithful in Corinth, those who have not wandered away, had not compromised their faith and gone over to the ways of the world that they must remain hope-filled that their sowing is not wasted. They (we)

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are but ministers, bearers of the seed of the Word. We have been called by God, gifted by God to be like the farmer in the field. Sow without fear. Trust without doubting. Get on with discipleship and leave the growing to God... *So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.*

### ***There are no shortcuts in mission and evangelism***

If we look at verse 28 we see the way Jesus further describes the growth of the kingdom. He uses another analogy: *first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head.* He is not making an agricultural observation here. The point He makes is the way the Kingdom unfolds in creation in *an appointed order for growth.* In other words, God has His own plan for the growth of the kingdom, and He grows it in accordance with His plan. This is what we need to absorb as we undertake our own pastoral planning and parish reflection. God has a plan. There is a plan. We do not need to do anything more than collaborate in that divine strategy.

And what does this “collaboration” look like? According to John in the Book of Revelation, that partnership in mission can be described as *persevering in faithfulness.* *Faithfulness* to our baptismal promises; to our vocation to be in the world as Jesus was in the world; to be in the world as Christ continues His ministry in the world. It is *persevering* in the teachings of the apostles (Acts) and not being tempted to compromise what God has revealed to us.

This begins to take shape in the form of *praying always; doing this in memory of Me (Eucharist);* being baptised *in water and the Spirit.* It is living daily the Sermon on the Mount proclaimed by Jesus in Matthew chapters five to seven. Matthew again outlines it for us in chapter twenty-five. Jesus demands there that we feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty; that we welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, visit the sick and those in prison. That we live among and do to all other people knowing that Christ is living in them, that they are so precious to Him that He willingly and freely died an horrendous death on the cross for them.

### ***Father, your Kingdom has come – may it be revealed in me***

We must be content to be faithful to do what God has required of us and to trust that He will accomplish His own purposes while we minister away and await our Lord’s return. And this leads us to the last part of the parable.

As we go about our daily routines, God’s Kingdom is present and is working away in us and through us. We do this knowing God’s harvest with His judgment will most surely follow at God’s anointed time. We do not bring in the Kingdom. We are servants of the Kingdom, not its cause. Paul sets out our challenge with characteristic clarity: *...the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him.* <sup>13</sup>*Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.* <sup>14</sup>*But how then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent (Romans 10:8ff)?* This is the future calling to us as disciples – growing as individuals and communities through whom God bestows His abundant riches on a hungry, struggling and rootless world. God has a plan and God’s Word does not go out and return empty. Only ours does that.

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