

“THE ‘ALREADY THERE’ MIRACLE!!”

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—B

PROPER 6; Lectionary 11

June 14, 2015

THE SUNDAY FUNNY:

A church secretary takes a call. "Is the head hog at the trough there?"

"Please Sir," says the secretary. "Do not refer to our pastor as the head hog at the trough. That is very insulting."

"Oh, I'm very sorry," says the caller. "I meant nothing by that. It's just a local phase we use in this part of the country. The real reason I called was to donate \$50,000.00 to your building fund."

"Hold on!" yells the secretary. "I see the 'Big Oinker' coming through the door right now!"

TEACHING POINTS:

- I. "The Kingdom of God"—where God rules
- II. The "Already there" seed miracle.
- III. The responsibility to tend, give the opportunity for the seed to release its power.
- IV. What is the "mustard seed" in us wanting to do, if we'd let it?

THE MESSAGE:

It was a normal Wednesday afternoon. 7th and 8th graders had crowded into the room for their religious studies class. They were full of energy and a buzz of conversation — the game, a dance, and a sudden change in the outdoor temperatures. One student was munching on some cookies found "unclaimed" in the church kitchen. A young lady, complaining loudly, was secretly basking in the teasing she was receiving from a young man. Yet another was talking about her fears regarding her grandmother who was in the hospital. It was a normal Wednesday afternoon.

The topic for discussion was the second petition of our "Lord's Prayer" -- "Thy Kingdom Come". So I opened the first teaching segment of our class with the question, "So, just how would you describe the Kingdom of God?"

Their ideas unfolded rather quickly. "Oh, it's way up there in the clouds", said one. "Everything in the kingdom is white", added another. "God is probably sitting in some kind of a room on some kind of a throne." "God is really big, but God's face is a bit hazy", concluded another.

Then I inquired, "How would you respond if I said the kingdom of God is right here in this room?"

“Here in this room?” came an instant reply. “I don’t see it!” “Where is it?” There was a combination of awe, fear, and wonder in the idea. There was a strange feeling about the kingdom, here.

You see, the “kingdom” of God is where God rules. The “kingdom of God “ is where God extends God’s power and reign. It is now, here, but not quite yet — up there. The Kingdom of God is here!

Today, we have “kingdom talk” from the lips of Jesus. Today we have talk about how God’s power is reaching and finding its full potential because of the “already there” miracle — the seed miracle.

Jesus speaks of it thus: “the seed grows “the farmer knows not how”. The miracle is in the seed, not in the soil. The miracle is in the seed, not in the tending of the farmer. The Kingdom is in the “already there” working of the seed. What matters is that the seed has an opportunity to do what seeds do. Mark is the only Gospel writer to include the story this way. In other places, a similar story, finds the power in the soil. But here the power is in the seed.

The application to life is that faith is like a mustard seed. All that needs to happen is for the conditions to be right for the spiritual oak to grow. All that needs happen is that the opportunity be given for God to release the “already there miracle” of the seed.

There is a little animal in Tanzania called the “rock hyrax.” It is about the size of a rabbit. But, I’m told, it is a distant relative of the elephant. Both animals come from the same ancestor, but one stayed a midget, the other becomes a mammoth mastodon.

The same happens among people. We’re all of the same cloth, of the same roots. But in some the kingdom seed grows to build a giant of a spiritual person. For another, faith remains a midget. For some, the Lordship of Jesus grows to bear much fruit. For others, there little or no response.

What makes the difference? It’s the miracle of the kingdom. The already there miracle of the Kingdom. Where God rules, the seeds grow and mature and produce fruit. Where God rules, God can use God’s free hand to multiply the seed. What matters is not the size of the seed. What matters is not even where the seed is. What matters is the “already there” miracle of the seed. That it grows, we know not how. That it becomes mighty, “we know not how.”

HYMN OF PROMISE:

In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree;
In cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter there’s a spring that waits to be,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

There’s a song in every silence, seeking word and melody;
There’s a dawn in every darkness, bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future; what it holds, a mystery,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

In our end is our beginning; in our time, infinity;
In our doubt there is believing; in our life, eternity,
In our death, a resurrection; at the last, a victory,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

(HYMN OF PROMISE. Copyright © 1986 Hope Publishing Company. 380 South Main Place, Carol Stream, IL 60188. (800-323-1049) Used by permission. *Words & Music*: Natalie A. Sleeth_(1930-1992), 1986.)

Natalie Sleeth wrote this selection in February 1985 as a choral anthem, and later adapted it as a hymn. She wrote that she was “. . . pondering the death of a friend (life and death, death and resurrection), pondering winter and spring (seeming opposites), and a T. S. Eliot poem which had the phrase, ‘In our end is our beginning.’ These seemingly contradictory ‘pairs’ led to the thesis of the song and the hopeful message that out of one will come the other whenever God chooses to bring that about.”

Natalie captures the “already there miracle.” Extended to faith, the “already there miracle” is that in every life there is a seed. The “already there miracle” is that in the seed God is working. God is accomplishing the miracle that only God can accomplish, that only God’s power is able to. God wants the seed to grow and mature, to bear fruit and multiply. God wants the seed to do what seeds do—grow and bear fruit.

I remember an old story about a man who bought a house with an overgrown garden. The weeds had long since taken over the garden and it was a mess. But slowly the man began to clear the weeds, till the soil and plant the seeds. Finally, he had made it into a showcase garden.

One day the minister came to visit, and when he saw the beautiful flowers and plants, he observed, "Well, friend, you and God have done a marvelous job on this garden." To which the homeowner replied, “You should have seen it when God had it to himself.”

In every life, there is a seed—even a mustard seed. That seed contains a miracle, the “already there” miracle of growth.

What is the “mustard seed” in you wanting to do, if you’d let it?

What is the already there nature of faith trying to accomplish for the fruit of the kingdom?

It was a normal Wednesday afternoon when the idea that God’s Kingdom is right here was presented. They grew to capture to the idea.

On this normal day, maybe you can see the kingdom growing in our midst. Maybe you can be the kingdom in this place. When you are, we will all reap the harvest of “the already there” miracle.

Amen.