PASTORAL PRAYER

Lord, in this season of growth, send us your wisdom that we may grow in your word. Send us your patience that we may wait upon you in our growing. Send us your peace that we may be conficent that you have caused all things to happen in their time.

God, send your holy Spirit that you may have control over this service and over each person whever it is seen or heard.

As we come before you God, we are aware of how far apart of your standard for us we have fallen. We are keenly aware that we have not always acted like your people and have harmed our witness and those around us. Forgive us our sins, and restore a right heart within us that we may receive you anew. Strengthen us that we may become the people you are calling us to be.

Wse thank you that you are a forgiving God, full of patience, mercy and grace.

Make our hearts ready to receive your word to us this day.

Open our hearts to grow in your love. Help us to truly trust in your creative process in our lives. We look around and we see the springtime beauty of your world,

Yet we also see the sadness and sorrow that has invaded the world when systems of injustice and hatred lay claim to people’s lives. We recognize that everywhere there is pain and injustice, that is a place the church universal has not been effecgtive in bringing the good news of your Gospel and the bondage breaking power of your word and presence.

Prepare us, O Lord, to become ambassadors of peace and hope. Help us to place our trust in you, so that when we are serving others, they may come to know your abiding love and power. Give us courage and great joy as we serve you.

Hear the deepest longing of our hearts.

Where there is sickness send your healing.

Where there is apathy, send your great concern and caring

Where there is pain send your joy

Where there is loneliness send your presence

Where thee is mourning send your comfort

Bless your churches all over the globe that we may truly preach, teach, and demonstrate your word, love and power. Make us to be your people.

In Jesus Name, AMEN.

FOCAL SCRIPTURE

Mark 4:26-34

New International Version

**The Parable of the Growing Seed**

**26**He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. **27**Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. **28**All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. **29**As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

**The Parable of the Mustard Seed**

**30**Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? **31**It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. **32**Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”

**33**With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. **34**He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

On this eve prior to our regathering in person, which is indeed a blessed event, it is good to look back on why we gather.

Why we worship, and upon why the church as a body is important.

Our scripture today is a familiar one to us, we have studied it on at least two Pandemic broadcast mornings. And so it is where God brings us again, as we emerge from our protective pandemic bubbles to a hearty regarthering.

Christ spoke to those around him in parables

Those stories that had secret meaning for those with ‘ears to hear’.

Stories that ultimately were and are destined to be revealed in its fullness (Mark 4:21-22) and to produce the harvest that God intended it to.

In our First scripture reading from 1st Samuel, we find a curious event.

Isreal has demanded and God placed Saul king over Isreal.

See, Isreal had one idea of what it thought it should be. It wanted to look like the other kingdoms with an earthly king ruler. It had one idea of it’s mission and it’s destiny and thought they knew how to get to the place they wanted to be.

God heard their requests and though did not like it because He, himself, was supposed to be their ruler, and the people were supposed to follow Him and His rules he gave them.

God answers their prayer and God chose Saul to become their “wanted” king.

God answered their prayer with exactly what they wanted that they might see it’s always better to seek God’s will and God’s will alone.

God gives them their king in Saul, and we are told that Samuel grieved over Saul, because he was such a bad king, and even the Lord said he was sorry that he had made Saul king over Isreal (1 Sam 15:35)

And God understanding that the people needed what He was going to send them sends Samuel off with very specific instruction s to bring back the man who would become king.

Each of the men that were brought before Samuel, Samuel judged by his human standards, only to find his human judgement wasn’t what God had chosen.

It’s a stark lesson for Isreal. That God knows what their nation and their people need better than they do.

God understood Isreal’s mission and Isreal’s journey ahead.

God in His all powerful way knows what the end i9s supposed to be in our lives, before we can even figure out the beginning.

And it is with this backdrop that jesus teaches in His Mark parable this morning, that there is something mighty in the Kingdom of God that only God can produce.

He is the ultimate planter and gardener, who knows even how every seed is planted and sprouts, because He alone can provide for it’s growth, it’s nurture, and tend to it lovingly from the moment of preparation of soil to the moment of harvest.

Mark 4 says what can we compare the Kingdom of God.

It is like the mustard seed when sown upon the ground is the smallest seeds on earth, yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs.

The gardener alone knows the time for the planting, the harvesting and knows what the tiny seed needs. The seed, so small, does not know any of those things.

God and God alone knew what His people, the Isrealites of old needed and it was not King Saul. God knew they needed Him.

They needed God to rely upon and to lead them into the destiny He had prepared for them.

Likewise, the point of the Christ’s story of the little seed is not how to harvest and grow, but how to rely on God rather than seeking after our own understanding.

We are a part of God’s kingdom here on earth. God has called the faithful to be here in this moment as the Church, Christ’s body and hands.

Like the seed, he has prepared the soil that we find ourselves in.

The pandemic that we have emerged from has just been the soil that we where planted in as a faith community.

Consider that the manure that we needed to grow big and produce big fruit that our little seeds may become rooted in fertle ground.

God prepares the soil, and the seed just like he prepares his community to produce a ripe harvest when the time comes.

The seed that is planted is planted in the dark, and in the dark the root structure begin to form. In the dark, hidden away, the seed receives nourishment. In the dark the roots are formed so the plant will get strength to stand the elements that will be around it when it emerges from the dirt.

Sometines humans don’t see the darkness we are in as having a purpose. God does. God says that he can make anything, any situation bend and be used for a prupose that brings Him glory and brings us whatever we need for our journey.

The dark days of king Saul were not wasted. God used it to show Isreal that it is really God they should seek, love and follow.

The darkness of the soil provides much that the seed needs to produce a harvest worthy of the gardner.

Even in the dark there is still room to praise God because He is still worthy to be praised!

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Indeed, the Psalmist of Psalm 92 was right It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to His name, because He is indeed The Most High, and He is faithful to us night and day.

In the dark of night and in the light of day He is worthy to be praised!

God puts His hands upon our lives and makes the righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow strong and tall like the cedar.

Those righteous saints are planted in the house of the Lord and they flourish in the courts of our God, producing a harvest of fruit even in their old age (Psalm 92:14)

So what’s the point? We have tarried with the seed as the Kingdom of God.

CONCLUSION

We too, as the Kingdom of God have been unseen in terms of our gathering because it was what was safest for the pandemic times the world found itself in

The church didn’t stop being the church. We just changed how we were doing what we are called to do. But that time away from one another as a group may have felt dark for some for a time, but we are ready to emerge.

Will we have learned the lessons God taught us in the last year?

While we delight greatly in the fact that next Sunday we will return to in-person worship, it’s a good time to ask God to show us what He wanted us to see during that season of pandemic.

And as we film this I can hear the cicadas happily singing outside and a flood of birds and wildlife who are happy that the cicadas have returned. And it is here that I will conclude my sermon, with the 17 year cicada brood.

Cicadas, although loud and annoying are not here to hurt or to harm. People who study wildlife say that they are not totally dormant while they spend their 17 years underground.

They are busy doing their cicada things and when they emerge from their habitat they are focused on being about their mission. To extend the life of their community.

When the cicadas emerge, their time underground has made them rich sources of life giving to the animals and other insects and plants around it.

What they become is rich food in it’s community. Feasted upon by birds, and squirls and other insects. In other words the cicadas bring new life where they live.

As we emerge from our pandemic restrictions, as Christians will we bring new life to the community in which we are located?

Will we become singularly focused on our God given Christian mission, to go and make disciples?

Will we make this isolated time that will lead to a harvest for the Kingdom? Will we emerge as a people dedicated to following God instead of searching for something to replace Him in our lives?

Will we emerge ripe and ready for the harvest?

BENEDICTION

Our Benediction this morning is found in Colossians 3:15-17

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Go in peace knowing you are God’s beloved child.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ, AMEN.

Announcements

IN –PERSON WORSHIP RESUMES

FATHER’S DAY

JUNE 20TH 2021

11:00AM

10308 LIBERTY ROAD / RANDALLSTOWN MD 21133