

Service for Week 10th -16th June 2024

by Chaplain Andy

Our Opening Prayer.

Loving God, we thank you for the wonder of the universe and the infinite beauty of this world. We praise you for the loveliness that surrounds us, the inexhaustible splendor of creation.

Forgive us for becoming over-familiar with it all, and taking it for granted. Help us to rejoice in all you have given and to act as a faithful steward of all you have created, we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Prayer inspired by Prayerfully Yours by Nick Fawcett

The Lord's Prayer

*Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom
come, Thy will be done, on earth, as it
is in heaven.*

*Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass
against us.*

*And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.*

*For Thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory for ever and ever.*

Amen

Bible Reading Mark 4:26-34

The Parable of the Growing Seed

He (Jesus) also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil

produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground.

Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade."

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

Holy words, Holy wisdom,

Thanks be to God

Reflection.

As the weather is slowly improving, I have started to get out into the garden again to attempt some gardening.

Well, my gardening is mainly cutting things down -any actual planting is done very well by my wife. But I do get to see the results of her labours and it is very satisfying to see strong plants and vegetables growing and producing flowers and things we can eat! Especially when they have started off from being tiny seeds or small seedlings in a tray -it is the wonder of nature but it also needs our attention

and care to make it happen. Our reading today about growing seed reminds me of the story of the man who had a very nice garden. He was out in it one day when a woman walked past and said to him "Oh what a beautiful garden! Isn't it wonderful that God created such beautiful flowers and shrubs" "Yes said the man, but he had more than just a little help from me to make it so wonderful!

Jesus in his parable (a story with a message) talks about the Mustard Seed. I always think that it would have perhaps have a stronger message for us today if it had been a different type of seed because our experience of mustard seeds is mustard and cress that you buy at the supermarket. In this country mustard seeds don't grow into the largest of all garden plants-but in Judea they do.

Jesus was, in his parable, talking about something that they would have been very familiar with at that time and in that place. He was describing the 'Kingdom of God' which is the spiritual realm over which God reigns as king and how it develops and grows. What does that mean and how does it grow?

It means that if you put God, and the way of life that he has shown us through Jesus Christ and other spiritual leaders first, then you are carrying the Kingdom of God within you and you

can develop it, make it grow and make it spread.

The basis of a way of life where God comes first is the Ten Commandments (given to Moses by God in the desert) but it is much more than that and encompasses Jesus' teachings. Teachings such as loving your neighbour as yourself and loving our enemies. The 'kingdom of God' has been described as the fulfillment on earth of God's will.

But as the man with the wonderful garden pointed out God may have provided the seed, and sent the rain and the sun to make it grow but that is not enough to make it fully develop. Weeds, if allowed to grow, will choke the plants (that's in another of Jesus' parables) and strangers may break in and destroy the garden, so the plants need help to develop and grow.

In the same way God needs our help in developing the 'Kingdom of God' and we can do this by what we say, what we do and how we relate to other people. In other words, how we live our lives.

This summer -enjoy the garden!

Amen

Closing prayer

Loving God give us the courage to spread your 'kingdom of God' through our lives. In our relationships with those we live with each day and those we meet. **Amen**