

Ezekiel 17:22-24
Psalm 92:1-4, 12-15
2 Corinthians 5:6-17
Mark 4:26-34

Sermon June 13th, 2021

*God is at Work in the World:
Even if We Cannot Always See It!*

Jesus encounters many people in his travels. People living in poverty. People with a mental or physical illness that has resulted in them being marginalized by their communities. People who are perceived as sinners or as enemies of Israel.

Jesus encounters a diversity of people who struggle with a diversity of issues. And yet, there is something the people share in common. They desire to see where God is at work in their lives and in the world. Or in other words, they long to experience God's healing and redemption from their suffering.

This past year and a half we have faced a diversity of struggles as the pandemic and other social issues have profoundly impacted us. We have all experienced these struggles in different and unique ways. What we too have in common is this desire to see where God is at work in our lives and in our world. Healing and redeeming us from our suffering.

Well, in response to our desire, Jesus shares with us a couple of parables to reassure us that God is at work in our lives and in our world even if we are unable to see it.

Like the crop that grows while we are sleeping (**Image**), God's healing and redeeming love is happening in us and in our community during this pandemic.

We have not arrived at the harvest yet. We have not seen the fullness of God's healing and redemption in our lives and in the world. But God's healing and redemption is happening. Helping us grow into the bountiful harvest Christ promises us we will become.

Whether it is the creation of new ways of connecting with one another, or more awareness of the trauma some people in our society face, or realizing how important community and human connection is to our well being (**Image**), or doing more to help marginalized people reconnect with their communities, or making the good news of Jesus more accessible through online platforms (**Image**), or being the church in ways we never thought possible, so to, meet the needs of our communities.

There are things happening in our lives and in our world that show us that God's healing and redemption are present. We just have to find a way to see through all the trauma this pandemic, and these social issues have caused us.

For the disciples, they are witnessing Jesus' acts of hospitality and healing where ever they go. In fact, everyday the disciples are witnessing peoples experience of God's healing and redemption from their suffering. Something new and exciting is happening here.

But, the harvest isn't here yet. They don't see the full measure of transformation and new life that comes out of God's healing and redemptive work in their lives and in their world. Or in other words, they can't see the fields of fully grown wheat, flax, barley, canola **(Image)**.

They only see fields with partially grown crops at this point. They still worry about the possibility of hail or flooding rain or drought **(Image)**. They still deal with trauma that comes with living as a marginalized people in the Empire. They still struggle to find hope in Jesus' promise.

So, Jesus gives them another parable about a seed, that is really small, but grows into something big when planted.

Jesus is reassuring the disciples and us that every act of healing and redemption that we do as the church, as followers of Jesus, is important in the growing process.

Eventually all these little acts will become the largest shrub in the garden. Where there will be a place for every bird to come and rest from the hot sun **(Image)**. Where there will be a place for every person to come and rest from the sufferings of this world. "Have hope" Jesus says. We will witness this large shrub. We will witness the harvest. The Empire. The pandemic. Will not have the final word about our fate. God's kingdom will. This is what Jesus is saying to us, to his disciples, through these parables.

As, we see the light at the end of the tunnel **(Image)** we have begun to reflect on what impact this last year and a half has had on us. We know the world will not be the same going forward. Events as massive as these change things. But, before we get hyper focused on all the things that will be different, we are invited to look back and see where God was at work during this pandemic. We are invited to look at the here and now and see where God continues to be at work in our lives and in our world. Healing

and redeeming us. We are invited to hope for a future where we will witness the harvest. The full measure of God's healing and redemption for our lives and the world.

Because as Jesus says, God's healing and redeeming love gives us life, helps us grow. Even when we have trouble seeing it. Even when we are asleep.

Because as Jesus says, one day we will see the harvest. We will see the fruits that come out of these acts of God's healing and redeeming love. We will see God's kingdom come in its fullness.

Because as Jesus says, one day we will perch on the largest shrub. We will find rest from our suffering in this kingdom come.

All we need to do is hope!

Let us pray, loving God, when we struggle to see your healing and redeeming work in our lives and in our world. Open our ears to listen to the words of your Son. Give us reassurance in these words that even when we can't see it. You're healing and redeeming work is changing us. Is transforming our world into your world. **Amen.**

© copyright, 2021, Wallace Bornhuse. All rights reserved.