

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

1 Samuel 15:34 - 16:13; Psalm 20; 2 Corinthians 5:6-17; Mark 4:26-34

When does a miracle become invisible? It becomes invisible when it becomes commonplace. The parable in today's Gospel talks about the miracle of growing seed. A farmer plants a hard, dead seed in the ground, and a few months later returns and harvests a crop.

Imagine our ancestors pondering the power of the zucchini or the tomato. The seeds are small; a person can carry hundreds of them in his or her hand. Yet those small seeds can produce enough fruit to feed a family, and in the case of zucchini, an entire town. Certainly, the seed contains some power within it, which enables it to accomplish this great feat.

Even those who have degrees in agriculture can still marvel at the miracle that takes place. They may be able to explain the chemical reactions that are involved in the germination process, but they can also be amazed at the number of variables that consistently occur in order for the seed to sprout and grow. The seed contains a force, which is difficult to label or describe. But that force is released, when the seed is planted. That force accomplishes its purpose, the seed becomes a plant, and the plant bears fruit.

Similarly, in and through the lives of those who are allowing God's reign to control their lives, that seed of faith, that seed of grace, that seed of salvation is sprouting and growing. When we are living under the reign of God we may not see this growth

happening every day, but it is happening! And when we look back on our lives a year ago, or five years ago, or ten years ago, we will see how much Christian growth and maturity God has caused to happen in our lives through our living under His reign!

There is nothing more exciting than this!

We should always be asking ourselves if we are living under the reign of God? If not, it is never too late to allow Jesus to be the Lord of our life, it is never too late to allow God to take complete control. We are never too old to be born again! Just as nature's growth is inevitable so is the growth of the Christian who is living under the reign of God! And this growth can, and will, make a difference, not only in our lives, but also in the lives of those around us because there is nothing so powerful as growth.

So, what does this have to do with our lives today. It is simply this: like the planted seed, God's Word has great power when planted in our lives. It grows within us, changing us into God's image, and producing within us the fruit of the Spirit, the characteristics of God.

This parable teaches us, and reminds us, how the Word of God, the power of God, acts in our lives. It proclaims to us that growing in our faith is not working hard to please Jesus. It is not every day trying harder and harder to be like Jesus. We grow in our Christian faith, as the Word powerfully works within us. This is good news for those of us who are tempted to reduce our Christian lives to a list of "have to's". We have to be kind. We have to read our Bible. We have to pray.

This parable is good news to those of us who look at our lives and wonder if being a Christian has made much of a difference.

There doesn't seem to be much new in our lives. We don't appear to have many God like characteristics, and we are well

aware of those areas of our lives that do not glorify God. Christian growth has more to do with allowing the Word of God to be planted in our lives, than it does doing great things to be like Jesus. God's Word is planted in our lives when we worship. Personal devotions and Bible studies enable God's Word to be planted in our lives. Regularly gathering for fellowship and service expose us to God's Word, too.

Once we begin living, really living in Jesus Christ, our lives sprout and take root! We find that God begins using us to bring others into His Kingdom or reign. We find that God begins to lift some of the old sinful habits and addictions which used to plague us, off of us. We find that we are drawn to the reading of God's Word and that through the reading of God's Word we are fed with meaning, and purpose and hope! We find that we not only enjoy, but we also need, the fellowship of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Worship becomes real and active and alive, we begin treating people differently and looking at people in a different light, with a love, the kind of love that God has, and one day, as a result of living under the reign of God, we find that our lives, which once seemed so small and insignificant, have grown and become a witness so that others can see what God has accomplished in us!

This is what it is like to live under the reign of God. We are able to live in this very difficult and often painful world, and not only live through it, but be victorious over it through the power of Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit, changing us, molding us, causing us to grow and mature in love from the inside out! God wants us to experience the abundant life that is ours because of Jesus' death and resurrection. God wants us to be strong, fruitful, loving Christians. God invites us to rest in His arms, and allow God's Word to work in our lives. It is God's gift

to us.

AMEN.