

“Seeds”  
Mark 4:26-34  
June 13, 2021  
Rev. David Hutchinson

The last 8 years of my life have been filled with blessings.

Most of them are things I don't totally understand.

Blessings happened, but I'm not completely sure how they happened.

For example...

Whatever you think of my sermons, for me, these have been some of my best.

Maybe I've been inspired by you all to greater clarity.

Maybe I'm just more experienced after doing this for 30 years.

Maybe it's the time and freedom you have given me to prepare them.

I'm not really sure how they happened, honestly.

But they did.

Another example...

Our trip to Menaul School and our Habitat for Humanity partnership are some of the most successful mission and service projects I've ever led. / I was chair of mission for the Presbytery and led trips to Cuba - - and that was amazing. / But by comparison these more local adventures ROOTED in this congregation in ways like that nothing I've ever done before.

This list goes on...

I had a friend and jazz pianist as church musician here! / We were able to try some creative things I'd never done before. / I'd been part of bigger jazz groups in front of bigger crowds. / But never have I had the creative freedom Kathy and I had.

And then there's Margaret who is truly gifted and has expanded her repertoire.

Margaret did not resist my musical sensibilities, she improved on them!

Margaret added the sacred and expanded the jazz.

And - - the things we have done with this choir have amazed me.

I've sung with bigger choirs at St. Olaf College and Westminster.

And they were unsurprisingly grand.

But at Plymouth we exceeded our goals almost every Sunday.

I was never NOT amazed by how God pulled things together.

Mostly though - - all of you have been a blessing because of your kindness.

We have been through a couple of minor conflicts and that convinced me of it.

It was how we lived through those conflicts that convinced me of your kindness.

That kindness is the core of - - my experience - - here.

So there have been blessings - - abundant blessings.

And honestly - - I'm not sure how they all happened.

They were not because of some push or pull from me.

They may have been because of your history as a community.

But I think it's something else...

In Mark's gospel, a farmer scatters seeds. / And he is blessed!

The Bible says that - - his seeds grow into a harvest.

And the Bible says that he rises night and day to tend the seeds.

But - - it says - - HOW they sprout and grow - - he does not know!

But they DO!

The answer to the question of HOW and WHY they sprout is there, however.

The clue is in what Jesus says at the very beginning.

Jesus does NOT - - JUST say - - that a man scattered seeds.

Jesus says that the Kingdom of God is LIKE - - this man who scatters seeds.

A man scatters seeds - - and they sprout and grow - - and he does not know how.

THAT - - is like the Kingdom of God - - according to Jesus.

God - - makes the tree grow.

We - - are just in charge of the weeds and the seeds.

That's an old saying - - but it's still true.

The wisdom in this is to let God be God - - instead of trying to figure it all out.

The story of the farmer is NOT about - - doing nothing.

The story of the farmer is NOT about - - being a fool.

It doesn't say the farmer was a lazy fool - - but the seeds grew anyway.

It says he was a conscientious - - steadfast - - farmer...

...AND the seeds grew - - anyway.

IF the farmer had waited until he understood the science of seeds - - to plant them - - he would have never experienced the blessings of the harvest. / Instead he just planted seeds...

And of course - - we know that - - Jesus is talking about MORE than farming - - right?

Jesus said at the beginning - - this is about the Kingdom of God.

Seeds - - of the Kingdom.

What are these seeds for us?

Are those blessings I described at the beginning - - seeds?

Or are those blessings BECAUSE of seeds?

Are those blessings - - the seeds - - or are they the harvest?

Maybe - - they are - - BOTH...?

I'd like to think that some of the blessings of the past 8 years are the harvest of seeds planted at Plymouth Church - - over the decades. / And I'd like to think that some of the blessings of the past 8 years are seeds - - for the future.

And maybe - - some of them - - are one in the same.

Who is to say - - about cause and effect.

All I know for sure - - is that this ancient text seems to say - - trust God.

It doesn't say - - be a fool or lazy.

But it ALSO doesn't say - - it's all on you to know everything.

It doesn't say - - YOU are single handedly responsible for the Kingdom of God.

There is an old joke about bird seed.

I bought some bird seed today.

I wonder what kind of birds I'll grow.

The funny thing is - - this is the first year Nancy and I have used our greenhouse to grow starts from seed - - in years. / And it's also the first year we have found a scrub jay nest with four eggs - - and waited for them to hatch. / We didn't put out any bird seed - - but in our year of seeds - - we also got a bird. / I don't know how...

Maybe the two things have NOTHING to do with one another.

And maybe THAT - - doesn't matter.

God will grow - - what God will grow. / I'm sure of it.

God - - makes the tree grow.

We - - are responsible for the weeds and the seeds.

And if we plant a seed - - and God grows a bird - - well - - ok then!

I guess what I'm saying is - - no one knows the future.

My crystal ball - - is cracked and cloudy.

And even if it were - - clear as a diamond - - I'm not sure I'd trust it.

What I trust - - is my experience of these unexpected blessings over the past 8 years.

The challenge - - is to keep on sowing.

The challenge - - is to keep going into the field - - night and day like the farmer.

The challenge - - is to believe in the seeds - -

- - when you don't know how they grow.

The thing is - - this congregation is blessed - - with LOTS of gardeners.

You know how things grow.

And you tend to this church yard and the plants around the church so well.

Maybe the next time you look at the church garden you will see just a little bit more.

Jesus - - suggested - - that we can learn about faith - - from our gardening.

So as you keep gardening - - keep scattering the seeds of faith too.

Believe in the seeds - - that's the challenge .

Believe that God will make them grow. / Into - - who knows what!

Whatever it is - - the challenge is - - to believe in the seeds.

I think that IS a challenge we can meet.

So my encouragement is - - keep scattering seed.

Keep - - harvesting whatever grows.

The TINY mustard seed - - is Jesus choice.

Be a mustard seed church. / Be a mustard seed farmer.

And then - - just watch out for all the birds - - nesting in the branches!

As we try to hear this text today - - I also want to say THANK YOU.

I thank you for some of my best years in ministry.

I thank you for being an excellent supportive faithful congregation.

I thank you for your kindness to Nancy and me.

There are all kinds of thoughts and emotions in me today. / Probably for you too.

My decision to retire early was done after a lot of prayer.

I believe it is the best thing for my future and feel called to it.

We have all summer to figure out the details and plan for the future.

I hope I am leaving Plymouth Church in a good place.

I believe we have planted some seeds that will keep growing

And - - remember God makes those seeds grow.

So - - you all - - just keep weeding and watering in faith and in hope...