

ALL IN TO BUILD FOR OUR FUTURE

“The God of heaven Himself will prosper us: therefore we His servants will arise and build...So we built...for the people had a mind to work. A good person leaves an inheritance for their children’s children...” **Nehemiah 2:20; 4:6; Proverbs 13:22**
(NKJV)



This Week’s Thought – August 13, 2017

“He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.” Matthew 13:31-32 (NRSV)

Jesus talks a great deal about the Kingdom of Heaven. For Him, this has less to do with our traditional thoughts of “going off to heaven” and much more to do with the in-breaking of God’s rule and reign in the present. It is the longed for age of justice and righteousness which we will one day see and experience perfectly, and are given a taste of in our own day. This is a massive concept that is not easily grasped or understood, and for this reason, Jesus tells us stories to help us enter into this great mystery.

Parables take the familiar, everyday “stuff” of life- food, work, gardening, fishing- and use these things to move the hearer from a place of certainty into a place of wonder and mystery. They feel at the same time both deeply familiar and yet notably foreign. They challenge us and shake us out of our comfort. Their message is not always clear, causing us to search and seek out their hidden meaning. They are, in the words of T.S. Eliot, “*hints followed by guesses.*”

When Jesus speaks of a mustard seed, growing from a tiny seed into a tree that gives rest to the birds of the air, His original audience would have immediately heard in these words a deeply seated and well-known Jewish image from the Old Testament. Throughout the Bible, trees are closely linked to God’s rule and reign, growing “*great and strong*” and “*visible to the ends of the whole earth.*” (Daniel 4:11) Likewise, birds of the air are often linked to God’s oppressed people who are in search of home, a place of rest. The promise of God is that under His reign there is peace, justice, and rest. There is shelter and shade for those who are vulnerable and searching for a home.

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Under His tree “*every kind of bird will live; in the shade of its branches will nest winged creatures of every kind.*” (Ezekiel 17:23)

This parable reminds us that our hope is in a Kingdom coming, a day when the goodness of God will cover the earth and invite everyone who is tired and weary to come and find their true home. Let us long for that Kingdom, and give thanks for the countless ways the Lord gives us His rest, love, and care in our own day.

“*Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.*” (Matthew 11:28)

Prayer of reflection you might pray this week: “Dear God, I gain true peace of mind when I realize that wherever I am, and whatever I do, Your presence is always with me. I am calm and confident as I acknowledge Your constant, unfailing protection. Whenever a situation occurs in my life that causes me to feel worried and stressful, I pause for a moment and center my full attention on You. As I focus my concentration on the truth of Your presence, I am reassured of Divine protection. Nothing can separate me from Your all-powerful presence and love. I trust in You, God, to take care of me and everything that concerns You. This is my prayer in the matchless, wonderful and compassionate name of Jesus, Amen!”

“*And then God answered: "Write this. Write what you see. Write it out in big block letters so that it can be read on the run. This vision-message is a witness pointing to what's coming. It aches for the coming—it can hardly wait! And it doesn't lie. If it seems slow in coming, wait. It's on its way. It will come right on time.*” Habakkuk 2:2-3 (MSG)

Yours in Christ, Pastor King