

All By Itself

Mark 4:26-34

The Third Sunday after Pentecost, June 14, 2015

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

The Kingdom of God requires absolutely no effort on our part to grow.

The Kingdom of God grows because the Lord of the Kingdom sends forth His word. When the Lord of the kingdom sends forth His word, the Kingdom grows.

The Lord of the Kingdom sent forth His word long before you and I were born. He will be sending forth His word long after you and I are dead. He does not need us to send forth His word. He will send it forth anyway. When the Lord of the Kingdom sends forth His word, the kingdom of God grows.

You may argue with me if you wish. You may say to me, "But if the Lord of the Kingdom sends forth His word why do we need preachers?" You may argue with me if you wish, "Isn't it true that we need to share the word with our neighbors in order for them to enter the Kingdom of God?"

No. Not at all. Preachers exist because the Lord of the Kingdom causes them to exist. I would not be here if it were not for the Lord of the Kingdom. You would not be listening to me if it were not for the Lord of the Kingdom. He does not need preachers to send forth His word. He can send forth His word any way that He chooses. He is the Lord of the Kingdom.

He doesn't even need particular kinds of preachers. He does not need inspiring ones or interesting ones. He can bring His word through any preacher that He pleases. He can bring forth His word through boring preachers or overbearing ones. After all He has chosen sinners as His preachers.

And He does not need you to bring His word to your neighbor. He can use some other baptized person to bring His word to your neighbor. He does not need you to do it. He does not need Christian publications. He does not need Christian tracts or magazines. He does not need evangelistic crusades. He does not need fancy music or elaborate Divine Services. The Lord of the Kingdom is the Lord of the Kingdom. He will bring forth His Word. It is His word after all. When He does the Kingdom will grow. The Kingdom will grow no matter what.

The Kingdom is composed of believers in Jesus Christ. What our Lord is teaching us today is that the number of believers in Him will grow throughout the world. That number will grow whether we put effort into it or not. The Lord of the Kingdom is not dependent upon us to get it to grow. He does not need us to get it to grow. We need to thank God that we have been included in the Kingdom at all. The Lord of the Kingdom could have left us out of the Kingdom. He chose not to.

The Lord does not need us to stand up and make His Church great. The Church is already great. By derivation He does not need us to stand up and make our congregation great. Our congregation is already great. It is already great because the Lord of our congregation is great. How are you going to beat rising from the dead? Since no one can beat rising from the dead and the Lord of our congregation is risen from the dead, then our congregation is great because our Lord is greatest of all. Our congregation would be the greatest of them all if there were not other congregations whose Lord is also the One who rose from the dead.

Speaking holistically now, the Church does not need anyone to make her great. We do not have to stand up and make her great. The gates of hell will not prevail against the holy Christian Church. She is already great because her Lord is great. She will last until the end of time. She will endure and grow

until her Lord returns to her. She will endure and grow because the Lord has said that she would endure and grow.

The Lord of the Kingdom of God does not command you to make His kingdom grow. From our human reason perspective the Kingdom of God will grow all by itself. It does not in fact grow all by itself. It's Lord sends forth His Word and the Kingdom of God grows.

Not only does the Kingdom of God grow, no one can stop it from growing.

It may start out small, but it will get big.

When the Kingdom of God started out it started out with the apostles. It started out small. The apostles did not have fancy churches like what we have. The apostles did not wear fancy vestments like preachers nowadays. The apostles did not have large congregations at first. We read about the thousands of people who were baptized on that first Pentecost, but if you compare it to the millions who still worshipped idols it was not that big of a number. Christian communities in the Ancient Near East were relatively small. But they did not stay small.

Eventually there were Christian communities in every city of the empire. It did not take long before they entered into the rural areas as well. Eventually Christianity took over Western Civilization. The Kingdom starts out small, but then it gets big.

It grows because the Lord of the Kingdom wills it to grow. He bestowed miracles upon the apostles. He later gave His congregations enough clout to grow by the millions. You cannot stop it.

When the Lord compares the Kingdom to a mustard seed, not only is a mustard seed small and then gets big, in some places in the Ancient Near East the mustard seed was considered a weed. The Kingdom of God is like a weed.

Now you know about weeds. No matter how hard you spray them, uproot them, fight them, they are back and they grow. If you do not fight them, then they will really grow.

The Kingdom of God is like that. You can try to fight the Kingdom of God, but it will grow anyway. You can imprison the members of the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of God will grow anyway. You can put the members of the Kingdom of God to death and it will still grow. In fact experience has shown that the more you put to death the members of the Kingdom of God, the more members of the Kingdom of God there will be. The more you imprison the members of the Kingdom of God the more members there will be.

Take Africa as an example. Those who confess the name of Christ in Africa are sometimes imprisoned. The President of the Lutheran Church of Kenya has personally been imprisoned because of his confession of Jesus Christ. There are those in Africa who have been killed because of their confession of Jesus Christ. And yet Africa is the place where the Christian Church is growing the fastest. The indigenous churches are not able to crank out pastors fast enough to serve all of the new congregations that the Lord of the Kingdom is forming. They call upon us in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to help them because we have the money and the theologians to give them the help that they need. On the island of Madagascar 3000 Lutherans turned out on October 31, the day of the Reformation, not the nearest Sunday, to celebrate the fact that the Lord of the Kingdom of God had restored the Gospel to His Church at the time of the Reformation. 3000 Malagasi Lutherans standing outside singing native hymns and "A Mighty Fortress." They are trying to kill the Kingdom of God in Africa and Africa is the place where it is growing the fastest. The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed.

This is why Luther explains the Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer in the catechism the way that he does. The Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer is, "Thy Kingdom come." The explanation goes like

this, "The Kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also."

The explanation neatly summarizes what our Lord has taught us in these two parables in the Gospel reading. The Kingdom of God comes by itself. But then that raises the question, why pray the petition at all? The petition that we pray in the Lord's Prayer asks God to make His kingdom come, but if His kingdom is going to come anyway, why bother praying the prayer?

The reason that you pray the prayer is so that you do not miss out on the Kingdom. Just because the Kingdom of God is growing does not necessarily mean that it will come to you personally. The Kingdom of God is growing by leaps and bounds in Africa, but none of us are Africans. We live in America. What about us? Will the Kingdom of God come to us. Well, that depends on the Lord of the Kingdom of God. If He wills that His Kingdom come to us, it will come to us. How do we then affect the will of the Lord of the Kingdom of God? We pray to Him. We ask Him to use His will to bring the Kingdom of God to us.

I don't know about you, but I don't want to miss out on the party. I don't want to miss out on the Kingdom of God. There will be many who come from the east and west, from the north and from the south and they will recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I want to be one of those people. I do not want to be one of those people who is shut out. And so I pray the Lord's Prayer. I pray the Lord's Prayer several times a day. And each time I pray it I pray, "Thy Kingdom come."

"How does God's Kingdom come?" the catechism continues. "God's Kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit so that we believe His holy word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity."

And so He does. He does so all around the world where the Kingdom is growing and He does so also for us.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.