

# Pastor Jamie's Sermon

Good Shepherd Church, June 16, 2024

“Seeds and Soil”

## *Young at Heart Message*

At the Winter Craft Sale this past year, I bought a cute little pinstriped glass skull with a cutting of a plant in it that had just started to grow roots.

I no longer have the glass skull, but the cutting looked a lot like this:



In fact, I clipped this cutting on Friday in order to illustrate my sermon today, so this is a fresh cutting taken just a couple days ago.

Plants are quite incredible when you really think about it.

I know those of you who are gardeners may not be as impressed as I am, but let this black-thumbed person tell you about my journey with this little cutting from last year's Winter Craft Sale.

I was pretty proud of myself that I kept the cutting alive, to be honest with you.

I did very little. More accurately, I did nothing except add water to the glass skull when it was getting low.

This little cutting kept growing roots despite what came close to plant neglect.

After several months – all winter and most of the spring – I started to notice that the little plant's few leaves were falling off.

The roots had gotten to the point where they pretty much filled the little glass skull, but it had lost all but the top two leaves.

I also noticed, however, that it was sprouting tiny baby leaves just at the point where the stem stuck out of the water.

Now, knowing almost nothing about plants, I thought that maybe it was time I actually planted the little cutting in soil.

It seemed to me that the worst that could happen is... well, that it didn't survive the move to soil.

So, I went and bought soil I thought might work. I figured I couldn't go wrong with standard house plant soil.

On one of the first nice-ish spring days that we had – sometime in March or April – I decided to transfer the little cutting with all of its roots and its two little leaves to soil.

And I'm happy to report that today, just a few short months later, this is what my plant looks like:



When I read today's scripture describing a person who simply scattered seeds on the ground and then did nothing else to cultivate them, I knew I had to share the story of my little plant.

This little plant survived my neglect and kept growing more and more roots despite me not paying any real attention to it.

But it thrived once I started taking a more active role in its care.

In our scripture reading today from the Gospel of Mark, we heard about someone who simply scattered seeds, but did not actively care for or cultivate those seeds.

And despite the neglect of the person who scattered the seeds, those seeds sprouted and grew.

But, I wonder what would have happened if the person who scattered the seeds would have helped them thrive?

### ***The Message***

Today's parables from Jesus are notoriously difficult to preach, believe it or not.

It certainly seems like there should be some good metaphors to lean on from the passage.

And yet, it presents difficulty because the parables aren't as clear as Jesus usually is.

He is talking about the Kingdom of God, a mystery in itself, using parables that don't really seem to provide any more clarity to the concept.

And yet, we can still gain some insights from these stories.

What if the Kingdom of God was not some mysterious, far-off land of opportunity, but instead the world in which we live right here and now?

Would knowing this cause us to live our lives differently than we currently do?

It might be hard to believe that a world filled with broken people, sadness, despair, loneliness, and so many other difficult and challenging things could possibly be the Kingdom of God.

But, if God resides here with us, in the here and now, and sits with us through our painful times and our times of joy, then are we not in God's Kingdom?

If God calls us to love our neighbours as we love ourselves, and to serve others in all that we do, then are we not doing our best to live out that call in God's Kingdom?

If God is the creator of the world we see, touch, taste, smell, and hear, then would we not call this God's Kingdom?

God's presence and God's rule happen here and now.

Jesus' life and love came among us, not in some far-off, intangible, unattainable way, but in the grit and ground of this place on earth.

There are times in our lives when I think we are more like the cutting of this plant – with roots growing underneath, but little showing outwardly to the world.

And then there are times when we are more like the cared for plant, roots growing deep into fertile soil and leaves blossoming for all the world to see.

But in both of these times, God is right there with us, loving us when we only can muster two small leaves, and loving us when we are in full bloom.

There are times when we set aside the notion of God's Kingdom in order to serve our own needs or to go our own way.

And, there are times when we are more aware of God's presence and leadership in our lives.

And all of this reminds us to live our lives in expectation of God near us – God with us, among us, and within us.

This notion that we will only see and be in God's Kingdom "someday" holds God at arm's length.

It makes God feel distant – like a relative who lives halfway across the world.

But if we live as though we are already in God's Kingdom – as though God is always with us in the here and now – then we never know when we might go from a small cutting that's growing roots in preparation for being planted someday to a thriving, blooming plant that God has been cultivating and preparing to be fruitful.

This also allows us to live with hope for our place on earth.

Nowhere and no one on earth is beyond God's unique and branching love.

No one is excluded from the Kingdom of God if we envision being in the Kingdom of God everyday, everywhere we go.

God created everything, and all of us, and God doesn't give up on any little square of this earth.

And perhaps God is waiting for us to notice when a plant cutting, growing roots but not yet thriving, is ready to be transferred to fertile soil.

Perhaps God is waiting for us to take notice of God's Kingdom in this time and this place.

Perhaps Jesus is telling us that whether we know it or not, whether we take active part or not, God's Kingdom will continue to grow and expand not in some far-off, unattainable or unknowable place, but right here before our eyes, if we are willing to take notice.

If we are willing to put the effort in to cultivating the seeds that have been planted, perhaps God's Kingdom will become knowable right where we are.

May we experience the joy and the hope of knowing that we are already in God's Kingdom, and may we do our part to cultivate that Kingdom among the people we know and the parts of God's creation that we individually care for.

May we hear this Good News and experience the Kingdom of God, the saving grace of Jesus Christ, and the expansive presence and love of the Holy Spirit in all that we do. Amen.

Let us pray:

Creator God, we have been planted and we have taken root, and we look to you to help us thrive. Thank you for being present with us through every moment - whether joyful or challenging. Help us to see and know that we are in Your Kingdom in this time and place, and remind us daily that You are right here with us. Remind us as we watch the sunset, or as we smell the lilacs in full bloom, or as we hug a loved one, or taste honey made by honey bees, or as we hear the birds singing in the crisp morning air. Remind us always of your vast love for us. Amen.