

**Pentecost 3 (Proper 6), June 13, 2021****Text:** Mark 4:26–34**Theme:** Ignorance is bliss?**Other Lessons:** Ezekiel 17:22–24; Psalm 1; 2 Corinthians 5:1–10 (11–17)

- A. In the Name of the Father...Amen.**
- B. The Gospel lesson serves as our sermon text for this morning.**
- C. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, let us pray:**  
**652 Father, We Thank Thee**  
 1 Father, we thank Thee who hast planted  
 Thy holy name within our hearts.  
 Knowledge and faith and life immortal  
 Jesus, Thy Son, to us imparts.  
 Thou, Lord, didst make all for Thy pleasure,  
 Didst give us food for all our days,  
 Giving in Christ the Bread eternal;  
 Thine is the pow'r, be Thine the praise.
- D. Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God the Father through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.**

**Introduction**

- A. In many aspects of our high-tech world these days, we've come to think of things that are automatic to also be quick.**
- We can set up automatic payments for our bills so that when we have a charge, our bank account automatically—instantaneously—pays it, and we don't have to worry about it.
  - We can set up our contributions to the church automatically so that at any time we designate, our congregation gets the support it needs, and we don't have to think about it.
  - No waiting.
  - But automatic things also have their drawbacks: they can be too quick.
  - Who of us hasn't sent a confusing or embarrassing text message to someone because our phone quickly auto-corrected what our chubby fingers tried to type, and it was off and gone before we caught it?
- B. Sometimes, not knowing what makes a thing great enhances its beauty.**
- C. Such is the case in the parable of the growing seed that we hear from Jesus today.**

- D. Like the Growing Seed, the Kingdom of God Grows:**

- 1. We Do Not Know How, Only That God Has Promised That It Does, and Perhaps Ignorance Is Bliss.**

***I. It is true: sometimes, not knowing what makes a thing great enhances its beauty.***

- A. Certainly for the growing seed, ignorance was bliss.**

- In many ways, the brief nature of this parable is what gives it such power:
  - "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground" (verse 26).**
  - What is scattered is the kingdom, and it is scattered in the world.
  - Unlike the parable of the sower, no distinction is made between the kinds of soil into which it is sown; it is sown in every place.
- The man then goes about his business night and day, and the seed grows without his knowing how:
  - "The earth produces by itself" (verse 28).**
  - The Greek term here is "automatically"—no further intervention is needed or required.
    - Greek "automatos" (of its own accord or self)
  - The earth produces first the blade and then the ear and then the full grain.
  - The growth happens, and it is good, but the man doesn't know how:
    - Only that in time, a plentiful harvest will come.

- B. But we are all sinful, prideful people who are not content with something working apart from our knowledge of it or our effort to make it happen.**

- When it comes to the kingdom of God in particular, we want to explain growth or decline, and certainly, we want to show the steps we've taken to make growth happen.
  - So there are plenty of programs out there to help churches deemed to be dying, giving them steps to take to turn the ship around.
  - In addition, who of us doesn't have someone we care for who seems to be outside the kingdom of God and disconnected from the faith?
    - The question about them is usually the same:
      - What can I do to help them come around, find hope, have the joy of Jesus?
  - And when it comes to our own faith life, there are times we like to take credit for growth because we've gone to church more or studied our Bible more or prayed harder.

- C. But the truth behind how to fix:**

- a dying church,
- how to get our loved ones to believe,
- how to increase our own sanctification is not by exploring more deeply what we can do, but what is done already.
  - In other words, to ask what can be done is to assume that something is missing that we can work to supply or improve.
  - It is to try and insert ourselves into a process that we have no business knowing about since it's beyond our comprehension and is accomplished in a way far different than we would like.
- Our high tech world seems to be so much nicer when we are oblivious to how things work, as long as things work as it should.
  - In the same way, the kingdom of God is a beautiful gift when we simply behold that the Creator mysteriously causes it to grow into a glorious harvest.

***II. It is true: The growth of the kingdom of God is up to him, not us.***

- A. Jesus highlights that beauty in the parable today, even as he maintains the mystery of how the kingdom produces a fruitful end.**

- For what does the parable say?
  - "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. . . .**
  - The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear" (verses 26, 28).**
- Christ's death on the cross has redeemed the whole world, and the kingdom of God is already sown everywhere that Gospel is preached:
  - in you and me,
  - in the people of God in the Church,
  - in your unbelieving loved one,
  - in your atheist neighbor,
  - All when they've heard the Gospel.

- B. The only growth that is going to happen will occur by God's design, not by your effort, pressure, stress, or badgering.**

- It is God who grants the growth ***automatically***.
  - Perhaps it's not all at the same time or in the same way for every person.
    - But God assures us that the kingdom is there whether people recognize it or not.
  - If it were up to us to accomplish faith or church growth, then surely in two thousand years we would have figured it out:
    - growth would be happening by leaps and bounds.
  - Only God has the ability to bring about the perfect kingdom, which may very well be comprised of superstar Christians and lovable losers all together.
- The growth happens in God's time and in his way:
  - We know not how because if we did, we would probably stress over getting it done,
  - Our Lord is much more interested in freeing our guilty conscience in his forgiving grace and granting to us a holy and eternal joy.

- C. Yet the question still lingers: What do we do then? What do we do about declining churches? What do we do about our seemingly lost loved ones? How do we increase our faith?**

- The answer to those questions is also in the parable today:
  - "[The man] sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how" (verse 27).**
  - Like the man, we go about our day-to-day business as a child of God in our God-given vocations.
  - Love and mercy received from God is love and mercy given in our homes and schools and workplaces and communities.
    - We are a people who are called by Baptism into Jesus' death,
    - formed by mercy and forgiveness,
    - shaped by mercy received at the Lord's Table,
    - who live by faith and prayer, patience and hope.
  - We confidently ask for God to grant the growth that he wills for us, for those we love, for the holy catholic (small c) Church throughout the world, and for those in whom the kingdom of God is still but a seed.

- D. In the end, the harvest will come only when the grain is ripe and when the Lord has given growth to the kingdom as he desires.**

- It is then that the faithful will be gathered and the mystery of how the kingdom grew will be revealed.
- We will be tempted along the way to try to help things along by our own effort or strength.
- But just as you cannot force a flower to bloom or don't always know exactly what makes a cake taste so good, in time, the kingdom's beauty and goodness will be revealed and will be far more joyous than you could have imagined.

**Conclusion**

- A. In the parable of the growing seed (Mark 4:26–29), however, Jesus says that the planted seed of God's kingdom grows automatically, but it isn't always quick.**

- God sometimes takes his time in allowing that seed to grow.
- We can't rush it along, even if it is automatic.
- We're called simply to go about our vocations night and day and see how God provides growth for his kingdom:
  - sometimes in the perfect *patient* time.

- B. So rather than stress, know that when it comes to kingdom growth and faith development, ignorance is bliss, for by the Gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection, God will grant the growth in his time and his way.**

- For now, we each live in faithful patience night and day as a child of God, praying in hope for the growth that he has promised will come. Amen.

- C. Let us pray:**

2 Watch o'er Thy Church, O Lord, in mercy,  
 Save it from evil, guard it still,  
 Perfect it in Thy love, unite it,  
 Cleansed and conformed unto Thy will.  
 As grain, once scattered on the hillsides,  
 Was in this broken bread made one,  
 So from all lands Thy Church be gathered  
 Into Thy kingdom by Thy Son.

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- D. 2 Corinthians 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.**

- E. The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.**

- F. In the Name of the Father...Amen.**