

Sunday, June 13, 2021 – Third Sunday after Pentecost

One of the characteristics of living things is to grow.

How are you growing? If you are no longer growing taller, how are you growing in other ways?

In several parables Jesus spoke of the Word of God as like a seed that grows.

Old Testament Israel is spoken of as like a plant that is planted and then grows.

Psalm 80: 8-9 – You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it.

You cleared the ground for it; it took deep root and filled the land.

Cf. Isaiah 5: 1 ff.

Ezekiel 17:22-24 - The sign of the cedar, planted on the mountain of Israel

22 - I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of a cedar.

23 - On the mountain height of Israel I will plant it,

in order that it may produce boughs and bear fruit and become a noble cedar.

Under it every kind of bird will live;

in the shade of its branches will nest winged creatures of every kind.

Psalm 92:1-4, 12-15 – The righteous shall spread like a cedar of Lebanon

12- The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree and shall spread abroad like a cedar of Lebanon.

13 - Those who are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God;

14 - they shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be green and succulent.

Cf. Psalm 1: 2-3 – Those who delight in the law of the Lord, who meditate on his law day and night, are like trees planted by streams of water.

They yield their fruit in due season, their leaves do not wither, in all that they do they prosper.

Cf palm trees near Palm Desert, California – where water comes up to near the surface

2 Corinthians 5:6-17 - New creation in Christ

6 - We are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord.

8 - Yes, we do have confidence. We would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

9 - Whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

Cf. Philippians 1: 21-24 – For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and to be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you.

11 - We try to persuade others; but we ourselves are well known to God, and I hope that we are also well known to your consciences.

12 - We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you an opportunity to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast in outward appearance and not in the heart.

13 - If we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you.

14 - For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died.

*The love of Christ urges us on. Christ's love for us, as well as our love for Christ.
How does Christ's love for you urge you on? How does your love for Christ urge you on?*

15 - He died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

16 - From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way.

How did Paul – when he was Saul, before he met Jesus on the road to Damascus – know Christ from a human point of view?

What are some ways in which people today know Christ from a human point of view?

17 - So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

Some translations have "the new has come" rather than "everything has become new."

What is the significance of the difference?

What old has passed away in your life? What old still needs to pass away?

What new has come into your life? What new still needs to come?

Mark 4:26-34 - Parable of the Mustard Seed

1. We are all called to do something

26 - The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground.

We are all called to sow seeds, from which the Kingdom grows.

2. While we are called to do something, we are not responsible for everything

27 - He would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how.

We sow the seeds, but we do not cause the growth. God causes the growth.

3. Growth is happening, even when we cannot see it

28-29 - The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.

Growth takes place even though we do not understand how it takes place.

Nor can we force it to take place. It is God who makes it take place.

Sometimes – just when we think that nothing will ever happen – a seed begins to grow.

4. Great things happen even from small beginnings

30-32 – The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.