

Vicarage Viewpoint²²

13th June. Trinity 2



Mark 4.26-34

Jesus uses images of plants and trees in his parables. This is surely much more significant than simply borrowing from the scenery around him. He could have talked about carpentry and building, for instance, and yet he talks about plants and growth. The abiding image for the kingdom of God is growth, not construction. Growth is silent. It continues day and night.

There is still a mystery and wonder around how a seed becomes a mature plant, even now that we understand DNA and photosynthesis. It is still astonishing that new life germinates, and we are still reliant on this natural process for our staple foods. All our skill at farming and food production is predicated on this natural force. These two parables suggest the kingdom of God also has this tremendous growing energy, similar to the emerging life of a seed. We seem to have little to contribute to the process, beyond initially sowing the seed and perhaps taking care of the plant. The earth and the seed together produce the mature plants, and this happens whether the grower is awake or asleep. The mustard seed grows to become a huge shrub, with room for the birds in its shade (reminiscent of the tree in Ezekiel 17.23).

This is what the kingdom of God is like, growing mysteriously and wonderfully. This is not the only image of the kingdom of God in the parables of Jesus: there are also family relationships, work colleagues, things that happen at wedding feasts and things that are lost, among others. But this cluster of parables reminds us of the mysterious energy secretly at work in the world - not only the Church - to produce the growth of God's kingdom.

With love and prayers,
Mark.

Contact Details:

Rev. Mark Zammit,
The Vicarage, Church Street,
Haxey, Doncaster. DN9 2HY.
01427 753004 or 07733077957
zammitparish@yahoo.co.uk
www.haxeyowstonferryvicar.org

Charity

Charity or love what's in a name?
The King James Bible translates them the same.
Corinthians 13 tells the great theme
Of love everlasting, everyone's dream.

Loved by all brides on their wedding day
The verses they all want the preacher to pray
The wonders of love that overrules all,
That holds on believing whatever befalls.

Love always trusting always prevails
Enduring, protecting, love never fails.
Faith hope and charity, virtues all three
But love is the greatest and ever will be.

By Megan Carter



A Time to Pray.

God of the rich and the poor, of the powerful and the vulnerable, we pray for the leaders of the G7 nations meeting in Cornwall, for the people they govern, for the people of other nations they can support, and for the world they can protect through their decisions.

We pray for a growth in resilience, awareness and togetherness across all the nations of the world as they continue to tackle the covid pandemic, as they confront environmental issues, and as they reach out to communities crippled by need, war and natural disasters.

We pray for the church in this place and around the world as we seek to serve those around us, to reach out to those in trouble, and to share the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ.

We pray for those in the charity sector who seek to support those in crisis, to feed the hungry, to embrace those displaced by war, to protect wildlife and the environment, and planet that we all call home.

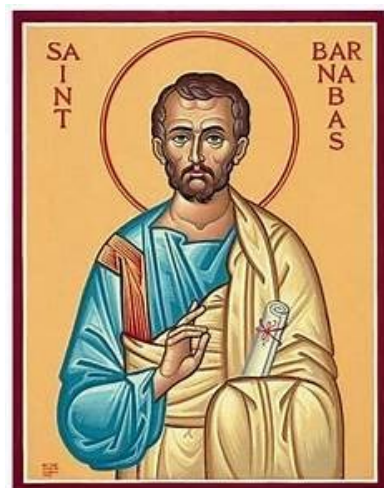
Paul's first missionary companion.

Would you have liked to go to Cyprus on holiday this year? If so, spare a thought for the Cypriot who played such a key role in the New Testament. He was Joseph, a Jewish Cypriot and a Levite, who is first mentioned in Acts 4:36, when the Early Church was sharing a communal lifestyle. Joseph sold a field and gave the money to the apostles. His support so touched them that they gave him the nickname of Barnabas, 'Son of Encouragement'.

Barnabas has two great claims to fame. Firstly, it was Barnabas who made the journey to go and fetch the converted Paul out of Tarsus, and persuade him to go with him to Antioch, where there were many new believers with no one to help them. For a year the two men ministered there, establishing a church. It was here that the believers were first called Christians. It was also in Antioch (Acts 13) that the Holy Spirit led the church to 'set aside' Barnabas and Paul, and to send them out on the church's first ever 'missionary journey'. The Bible tells us that they went to Cyprus, and then travelled throughout the island. It was at Lystra that the locals mistook Barnabas for Zeus and Paul for Hermes, much to their dismay.

Much later, back in Jerusalem, Barnabas and Paul decided to part company. While Paul travelled on to Syria, Barnabas did what he could do best: return to Cyprus and continue to evangelise it. So, if you go to Cyprus and see churches, remember that Christianity on that beautiful island goes right back to Acts 13, when Barnabas and Paul first arrived.

In England there are 13 ancient church dedications and not a few modern ones. Barnabas the generous, the encourager, the apostle who loved his own people - no wonder he should be remembered with love.



Mark 3: 20 - 35

The crowd came together again, so that Jesus and his companions could not even eat. When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, 'He has gone out of his mind.' And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.' And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, 'How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.

Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin' – for they had said, 'He has an unclean spirit.'

Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, 'Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you.' And he replied, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' And looking at those who sat around him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.'

Genesis 3: 3 - 15

They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?' He said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.' He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.' Then the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent tricked me, and I ate.' The LORD God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.'

2 Corinthians 4: 13 - 5: 1

Just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture – 'I believed, and so I spoke' – we also believe, and so we speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence. Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal. For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

God of truth, help us to keep your law of love and to walk in ways of wisdom, that we may find true life in Jesus Christ your Son. Amen.

Longest day of the year

June, of course is the month of the summer solstice, the month of the Sun. *Sol* + *stice* come from two Latin words meaning 'sun' and 'to stand still'. As the days lengthen, the sun rises higher and higher until it seems to stand still in the sky. The Summer Solstice results in the longest day and the shortest night of the year. The Northern Hemisphere celebrates in June, and the Southern Hemisphere celebrates in December.

While the Druids worship at Stonehenge and elsewhere, here are some Christian alternatives that honour the Creator rather than the created.

A Canticle for Brother Sun

Praised be You, My Lord, in all Your creatures,
Especially Sir Brother Sun,
Who makes the day and enlightens us through You.
He is lovely and radiant and grand;
And he heralds You, his Most High Lord.

St Francis of Assisi

God in All

He inspires all,
He gives life to all,
He dominates all,
He supports all.
He lights the light of the sun.
He furnishes the light of the night.
He has made springs in dry land.
He is the God of heaven and earth,
of sea and rivers,
of sun, moon and stars,
of the lofty mountain and the lowly valley,
the God above heaven,
and in heaven,
and under heaven.

*A prayer of
St Patrick*



**“What program does God use
to upload the sun every morning?”**

A prince's legacy on matters of faith.

Just when we thought the last word had been written about the late Duke of Edinburgh, it emerged that he had a genuine interest in theology. He was someone who listened intently to sermons, thought through what was being said, and then asked questions. Every Sunday when the royal couple were at Sandringham, a diocesan bishop was invited to preach in the parish church. Afterwards, they were grilled by the Duke who, it is said, showed that he “wanted to be intellectually and spiritually engaged”. That's a polite way of saying he wasn't prepared to swallow what came out of the pulpit if he wasn't convinced by it.

Some Christians are suspicious of people who probe the faith. Should it not be taken on trust? Who are we to question the Almighty? For others, doubt hovers uninvited. Honest doubt won't settle for unbelief but will continue to persevere with its enquiries. The Russian writer and philosopher Fyodor Dostoyevsky wrote: “It is not as a child that I believe and confess Jesus Christ. My hosanna is born of a furnace of doubt.”

So, if you wake up one morning questioning everything you have believed, take it as a spur to dig deeper and ask questions. Be encouraged by Philip, who shunned a second-hand faith because he wanted to know the truth for himself.

The next time you hear a sermon which you can't understand or disagree with, don't let the preacher get away with it. And if, in your private conversations with God, you find yourself praying, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief,' you won't be the first. See Mark 9, verse 24.