

**June 16, 2024 – Fourth Sunday after Pentecost**

**“Joining Hands with God” by Pastor Julio Romero**

**Gospel: Mark 4:26-34**

Our Lord Jesus grew up in an agriculture society. He was very familiar with seeds, soil, harvest, and everything else that has to do with agricultural practices.

What we have learned from the stories of the Gospels is that our Lord Jesus saw the Kingdom of God in almost everything. Just in one short Gospel, like the one for today, Jesus sees the Kingdom of God in a tiny, little mustard seed. He sees the kingdom of God in a farmer who scatters seed on the ground and as days and nights pass by the seeds sprout and grow, but the farmer doesn't know how all that happens.

The work of the farmer and the mystery of the scattered seeds and its comparison with the Kingdom of God deserves some attention.

The farmer surely didn't care much about the biological and physiological process of how the seeds sprout to become a full-grown plant capable of producing much fruit.

He was not interested in any of that. All that he cared about was seeing a field covered with healthy plants to get him a good harvest.

We may ask what the Kingdom of God has to do with this old farming practice?

Well, one thing I can learn from this parable is that God's Kingdom can be found anywhere, and it can appear in ordinary things and in the form of miracles that seem a mystery to us. All we know is that the hand of God is there.

Let's remember that the Kingdom of God came to us in a baby named Jesus. He grew up to become a healer, a messenger of Good News and a Savior.

The blind people to whom he gave sight didn't care how he did it; what really mattered to them is that they could see for the very first time. The many lepers he healed didn't ask Jesus how he cured them, how he made them clean. All that they cared about was that they were healed and back to their families and community.

The disciples spent all night fishing without catching anything, but when the Lord asked them to drop their nets one more time, they pulled their nets full of fish. It was

a miracle. They didn't ask for an explanation. What was important to them is that God provides.

Whenever the hand of God brings healing, provides for our needs and restores our lives, the Kingdom of God comes to us. We don't need to know how God does it. All that matters is that His hand is there for us.

I don't want to spoil the moment here, especially now that we are talking about the Kingdom of God, but I want to read a poem that sometimes is used in funerals.

The Poem, titled "The Gate of the Year", says:

I said to the man, who stood at the gate of the year.

"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."

And he replied: "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God.

That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way"

So, I went forth and finding the hand of God trod gladly into the night. And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

In several miracles recorded in the Gospels, those whose eyes were opened, those whose physical and spiritual wounds were healed, those whose thirsts were quenched and whose hunger was satisfied, those who were walking in dark places and were brought to the light by the hand of God, joined hands with God through their faith in the Lord Jesus.

To participate in the Kingdom of God is to join hands with Him and see the mysteries of His works be revealed to us. To participate in His Kingdom is finding the hand of God especially in times when we may be walking in darkness, times when we are lost: lost in deep grief, lost in our hopelessness, lost in our own brokenness. Those are moments when God may surprise us by taking our hands to bring us into His Kingdom.

"Thy Kingdom Come" we say in the Lord's Prayer. For the farmer in our Gospel story, the Kingdom came as the seeds he scattered all over the field sprouted. As the plants grew taller and taller, the heads produced much grain, grain to provide the daily bread and much more for himself and for his family.

Did the farmer know that something so natural could be compared to God's Kingdom? Probably not. Who did most of the work? We can easily say "the farmer". The farmer is the one who prepared the soil, scattered the seeds, controlled the weeds and collected the harvest, but who made the plants grow? Who provided the ground, the seeds, the light, the rain? God did all that.

The hand of God was in every aspect of the farmer's success, and if the farmer went on to bless others with the harvest, his hand and God's hand were joined very tightly. The Kingdom of God appears on Earth when we join hands with God to do good works.

You have probably heard the phrase "The Good News of the word of God is only Good News if it meets the needs of people"

Somebody said that you never throw a sandwich to a drowning person. As good as a sandwich is, it won't help the person in the water. You throw a life saver, a life jacket or a rope; that's what the drowning person needs.

God knows we need His Kingdom to come and that is what He sends to us. This Gospel offers that vision of what the Kingdom of God looks like. If the Kingdom of God can be found in a farmer scattering seeds on the ground and in a tiny mustard seed, the Kingdom of God can be found in each of us every time we join hands with God, and every time we join hands with God there is Good News for ourselves and for others.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, there are many things unknown to us, like the farmer in this parable. He had no idea he was part of God's kingdom when he scattered the seeds and collected the harvest. God made it possible for him to enjoy the fruits of his works, and if with those fruits he helped others rather than just himself, he definitely had his hands joined to God's hands.

I invite you to join hands with God and see where God leads us to be part of His Kingdom. **Amen.**

