

11th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle – B; June 16th 2024
Ezekiel 17:22-24; 2Corinthians 5:6-10; Mark 4:26-34

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

We have just listened to two small Kingdom parables of Jesus where Jesus compares the Kingdom of God to something material. *Through the parables of the seeds scattered by the farmer and the mustard seed, Jesus draws our attention towards the simple origin of the Kingdom of God on earth which is the Church and its magnificent growth in future.*

These two parables are not hard to understand or interpret; they illustrate the Christian paradox, '**Small is great' or small beginning, great achievement.**' As we know Christianity teaches many paradoxical concepts such as '*We conquer by yielding; we find rest under the yoke; we become great by serving; we are exalted being humble etc.*' Small is great doesn't make any sense in the worldly point of view. For we are familiar with the usual material slogan, '*might is right; money is power and bigger is better.*' But God doesn't view things from a worldly point of view; He has the heavenly perspective and in God's eyes, the poor, the small and the weak, the meek and the humble, are the truly great and blessed. That is what Jesus speaks in the Beatitudes.

Coming to the lesson of the seed or the mustard seed, we know that a seed is small and a mustard seed is very tiny in size and nobody expects a big shrub out of it. Though mustard seed is not the smallest of all seeds, in Palestine a grain of mustard seed stood proverbially for the smallest possible thing. **For instance, when Jesus says, 'faith as a grain mustard seed' he means the smallest conceivable amount of faith.** But once the mustard seed is fully grown the small birds can rest on its branches. In this parable what is important for Jesus is not the size of a mustard seed and its growth rather the nature of the Kingdom of God he established. This parable says, '***never be daunted by small beginnings***'. Here Jesus foresees the growth of the Church which he would establish in a small way.

When Jesus was crucified, even his close friends, the disciples, ran away and only a few women had the courage to stand at the foot of the cross. For fifty days the outside world has not seen the presence of the eleven men at all. So naturally everybody concluded that everything was over with Jesus. **But Jesus, the tiny mustard seed planted by God on earth was raised by God as a big tree.** Today Church is the resting place for millions in the world. But Christianity had a very humble origin with Jesus and it slowly grew with the apostles. Even after 2000 years the branches of the Church continue to extend far and wide. Currently there is no corner in the world where we will not find Christians and churches.

History teaches us a great lesson that anything good had a humble origin and anything had a big beginning could never continue for long. For instance, once upon a time Rome reigned all over the world, but finally she fell in the hands of the barbarians; the kingdom of great Britain once extended towards the end of the world, now is reduced to a tiny nation; The same thing happened with kings and emperors too. Alexander the Great, Hitler and Napoleon seemed to have built mighty empires with iron fists. But today we don't have any trace of their kingdoms at all.

On the other hand a tiny Loreto nun Sr. Theresa landed in the slums of Calcutta in 1950 single handed, not even have a place to live. After one year of effort she managed to get 10 candidates for her new Order and thus obtained the recognition from the local Bishop. Long story short today Mother Theresa's convents and institutions are spread all over the world with 5,750 religious sisters serving. That is what we have just heard in the first reading from Prophet Ezekiel about the growth of Israel that God planted a tender shoot of cedar, and it became a big cedar tree giving shade and protection to many; because it was planted by God.

Living in an instant and fast food culture, we expect everything to be big, quick and full. We don't have any patience to wait for the slow growth and also we believe that with our money, power, talent and influence we can conquer the world. Please remember God begins anything in simple and humble way, but it will never cease to exist and will continue to grow. It is applicable to our spiritual journey, married life and material achievement. No one became a saint overnight; no one became a good father or mother in a day; if we begin with the Lord, no doubt he will take care of the rest of the things. That is why **Jesus says, "But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides" (Mt. 6:33).**