

Sermon: July 30, 2023

Mustard Seed Faith

For 14 long years Jacob worked for Laban. For 14 long years, Jacob waited for the freedom to take his beloved Rachel and go back home. I wonder what he thought on the last day of the 14th year. As he looked back to his time in Laban's household, did he see memories to treasure or just time spent to reach his ultimate goal. We heard today that he was filled with joy for those first 7 years, as he prepared to be with Rachel. He sang over his food, danced while he worked... all for his beloved Rachel. But what about that last 7 years, as he looked at his father-in-law with resentment. Did he still sing and dance with joy? Did he see God's presence in his day-to-day life?

In those years with both Leah and Rachel, Jacob became a father several times. His family grew; his wealth grew. Did he see the blessings of his life, or did he just take them for granted?

A lot can happen in fourteen years. It can feel like a lifetime. For some of our young people it is more than a lifetime filled with scraped knees and silly jokes and memories that the rest of us hold in our hearts forever.

Where were you fourteen years ago and how has your life changed? How has our country changed... how has our world changed? How has this church changed? A lot has happened – some good, some really bad... all of it life changing. Too often we focus on the big events swirling around us and miss all the memories built by our families, right before our eyes.

Jesus reminds us that the God's Place is not found in the big events, but is found all around us -- in the little things we encounter all along the way. Jacob worked for fourteen years, but signs of God's presence were all around him – in the food and sunshine, in his son's first word and his daughter's first step, in the lost sheep returned to the sheepfold. How much of that did he carry with him?

What is the Kingdom of God like? Jesus said it's just like those little things. God's Kingdom, the Beloved community, is like a tiny mustard seed. All by itself, it is easily overlooked. But, plant it and make sure it has sun and water and good soil, and soon you will have a bush that provides protection to small animals and a home to the birds of the sky.

God's Realm is like a grain of yeast. By itself, it is nothing, but add it to flour and water and bake it, and you have a golden loaf of bread. Food that nourishes the body... and as we break that bread we remember Jesus.

God's Beloved Community is like a little pearl. Beautiful by itself, but even better when it is linked with other pearls. Just as God's Community is better when each of us are linked together by our faith.

The Kingdom of God is like all of these little things. They can become greater things, but you need to value that first, small ingredient. And you need to be willing to help it grow into something more.

What is God's Beloved Community like? Jesus tells us that it is also like treasure hidden and forgotten. But when that lost treasure is discovered in the most unlikely place, it brings such joy. We celebrate in our newfound wealth -- we sing and dance over it!

Or God's Realm is like an empty fishing net, worthless unless you plunge it deep into the water. As you pull it up, filled with fish, you rejoice in the abundance. As you sort through the fish, you cannot help but remember Jesus' words to the disciples, sending them out to fish for people. God's Kingdom is filled with all the people we catch, and they are worth more than all the treasures and the pearls in the world!

God's Holy Community is like all of these things. God's Holy Community made up of all of the small things that the rest of the world passes by, but those small things help create that which is the most valuable.

God's Beloved Community is just like us. We are small. You might think we are easily overlooked by the rest of the world. But, we are vital to God's vision of a Beloved Community.

This Church, have a special place in God's plan. And we can look back at not just 14 years, but hundreds of years of stories... But, do not look back! Do not get stuck in the past and the stories of who you were. This is the time for us to explore where we are going and what God has in mind for us, Now, right now, as members of the Beloved Community!

In 14 years, what will we see when we look back? Will we notice those little things and see ways we have grown them into something beautiful and vital to our lives? Or will we stumble along and miss out on opportunities because we lose sight of why God put us here? It's really up to us in this place called Trinity. God's gifts are unexpected, but God needs us to respond! We need to open the treasure box when we find it; we need to dance for joy when we encounter God's blessings; we need to drop our nets in the water of life.

And all we need is a little bit of mustard seed sized faith.

Praise be to God!

Amen