

Homily. 11th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year.B. 12/13 June 2021.

To a dispossessed, exiled and much reduced people in need of hope, Isaiah came speaking about their renewal. They would have a future, a new beginning that would wipe away their distress and despair. Like a small young shoot taken from the very top of a mighty Lebanon cedar, God's people would begin the long process of growing strong and tall again, until they once more towered amongst the nations. God wanted the people to know that though they had been devastated they had not been abandoned, for the Lord had spoken and the Lord would do it.

Remembering this hopeful prophecy Jesus used a similar image when speaking with the crowds about how it is with the way of the Kingdom of God. As is so often the case though, Jesus used this image with a twist, bringing it down to earth and to a much more human scale. He said that the little speck of a mustard seed, so easily lost or overlooked, is how the Kingdom of God begins. Over time, like the cedar shoot it grows, but not into a towering tree. Instead it becomes a shrub about as tall as the average human being. Still, it manages to put out branches and leaves that provide shade in the heat and shelter for us and for the small birds of the air that flit by in the sky.

In their Babylonian exile, Israel was given hope by the promise of becoming great and mighty again. The Kingdom of God, the way of God's reign in our lives and world, promises a multitude of small shrubs growing amongst us, many shelters of life and relief made to measure for us.

You see, we have to understand that the mustard seeds God plants and tends are as many as there are people like us who do the little things that make life more liveable and meaningful, as many as the small acts of love, kindness, justice and peace-making that we help to happen.

We can leave the might things that so exert the ego and attract notice to those invested in such plans and projects, for God's way is not that of single towering monuments but of daily moments. God plants and tends the mystery of the Kingdom's coming not in a single cedar but in shrubs, in the ordinariness of many faithful, persevering and generous lives.

Look at what the Cross was and teaches us; the lonely death on a small hill outside the great City of Jerusalem of a wandering preacher and healer from a Galilee backwater, very soon forgotten by all but a few weak and frightened followers who were themselves ridiculed by the powerful of that time. Yet, by God's life-giving power, the Cross has changed us and the history of the world for the better ever since.

The many tiny seeds of the Kingdom are just like this, just like the cross of Christ, by the action of God who says to us today; I have spoken and I will do it. This is our hope and our way to contribute to the betterment of world today. Let no one ever underestimate the power of small things and the simple works of ordinary people because they and we are the way God works amongst us, and it would be a fatal mistake indeed for anyone to ever underestimate the power of God.