

Talk for the Evening Service 13<sup>th</sup> June 2013.

‘Building our house of faith’

The church’s year has entered a season of calm, no great festivals happen between now and the end of October except perhaps a Patronal festival or harvest. But do not think it is an excuse to sleep through the weekly talks simply because they don’t seem exciting, and you might have heard it all before. On the contrary, we are now into a period of learning and growing in our faith. We hear the of the teaching and miracles of Jesus and strengthen our belief and understanding of God. We have a lot to take in, three years of ministry in five months!

The period between Advent and Pentecost is rather like building a house but not in a traditional way. We start the right way with the foundations of faith, in Advent and Christmas. Put a layer of bricks on during Epiphany, another before Lent, then stop and start constructing the roof. The main beams are erected in Lent, when we take that last journey with Jesus to Jerusalem. Then the wooden frame forming the roof, goes on at Easter with the resurrection and finally topped off with the tiles of protection of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. But now we have to put the walls in place by jacking roof up and start filling in the brick work, and there are a lot of bricks to cement together if we don’t there will not be a house but a shambles. We just have to make sure it has a strong foundation and not one of sand

We started last week with Jesus stating that his family is not his blood relatives. Anyone who will do the will of God, is his family

As Tim said in his talk, being a member of the family of God is a willingness to dare to love each other and be willing to walk with Jesus. If we do that many bricks are cemented into our house of God’s love.

Today we add another layer or two of bricks although with this parable it would seem we have turned our attention to the garden. The parable Jesus tells is one of the shortest in the four Gospels but is full of meaning. Jesus sees a large crowd gathering, all eager to hear him speak. He gets into a boat on the sea of Galilee and starts speaking. Why a go out a boat? Well quite simply the acoustics would be much better than on land, and Jesus used it to good effect on more than one occasion.

He tells the crowd that the kingdom of God is like someone scattering seeds on the ground, leaving them alone, and then they sprout and ripen ready for harvesting. But the sower has no idea how it happens. As all you gardeners know, a seed germinates, becomes a seedling, and then flourishes into whatever it is supposed to be. Absolutely brilliant if you are wanting produce, but not so good when a weed, or should I say, ‘a flower out of place’, does exactly the same thing. It is a real miracle how one small seed can produce so much.

We have an apple tree in our garden that was grown from a pip by my eldest son over fifty years ago and every year it produces more apples than we can use. But the rooks and magpies love the ones left on the tree, and the apples helps them through the winter. Jesus strengthens his argument that much can come from something small, by comparing the kingdom to a mustard seed.

The seed he is referring to is not the mustard seed we get with mustard and cress. This mustard seed grows in Mediterranean areas and becomes a strong shrub over nine feet tall and is of culinary use. The seed, which Jesus calls the smallest of all the seed on earth, when planted becomes, as Jesus says; 'the greatest of all shrubs and even birds can nest in it.'

You must hand it to Jesus, he really knew how to get the attention of the crowds. By using parables, and telling stories related to the everyday lives of the people he was able to get their attention. He did not use elaborate language, nor speak to them in a dictatorial way, which would remind them of the Roman authorities. He spoke clearly and simply so that all could understand, but what he said was the truth. He spoke the word of God. And thank goodness he did speak in parables because it makes it easier for us, also to understand as well as those first Christians

We know how something small can flourish into something big. So many charities, started from the idea of one person, shared with others and then developed. The evolutionary ideas that changed mankind from caveman to spaceman, invariably started with one person having the courage to experiment. No great idea came from forming a committee to think up an idea!

And so, it is with faith. Jesus was sent by God to grow his kingdom not just for a few, but for everyone to share in God's love, God's forgiveness, God's kingdom. But he could not do it himself so he recruited his disciples, and the Christian movement started, and like the mustard seed that will grow into a shrub, flowers, forms seeds that fall onto the ground and start growing more shrubs, so too, did

the Kingdom of God grow and flourish by the spreading of seeds of faith.

We still need to spread our seeds of faith today. Over the last year our churches have been struggling to stay in contact with people, it has at times been difficult to keep in contact with each other and for some, let alone our faith. It has been difficult. Now, with the churches opening up again we have the task of rebuilding our family of God and encouraging people to come back to church and share the worship with others. It may seem an uphill task, but it can be done, and with God's help we can do it. We just have to trust him and hold true to our faith and pray for each other and for our church leaders still struggling to keep our worship going. We are the mustard seeds that will flourish with nurturing from God's love. We do not have to rush at it, a good seed doesn't grow overnight, it takes time, and gets its strength from the soil. We can get out strength from God, through prayer. Just by praying for someone who you know needs help, or is in distress is a growth of faith. Jesus did not expect God's kingdom to grow over night he knew it would take time and so it will again. But our churches will start to flourish again, it takes time, patience and prayer and immense faith in God to help us.

Over the next weeks we will add more bricks of understanding to our house we are completing and then by the time we reach Advent we can move on and start building another house for God . You just need a good trowel and plenty of faith to build it. Amen