

Dear Friends,

Mark 4: 26-29

Jesus says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me". There were times when the heart of Jesus was troubled, but mostly the picture we have of him, is of someone who is peaceful and at ease, who is confident and assured. The image of Jesus staying calm in the middle of the storm is one that stays with me.

His confidence came from his belief in God. He had a secure relationship with God. He knew that he was in God and that God was in him; that he was God's beloved son and that God was delighted with him. This made him strong, so that he was able to handle all the buffeting and battering, all the storms and tempests, everything that came his way. What Jesus knew for himself, he wanted to give to others so that they too might be strong. So, to his friends he said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me".

Later, Paul caught something of the spirit of Jesus. He said, "we are always confident ... because we walk by faith and not by sight". He gave us a contrast. We can live only noticing the things that we see, the evidence before our eyes. A lot of that may make us feel troubled for the world, the Church and those we love. If you only take notice of what you see, you may very quickly be overwhelmed.

Paul however, like Jesus, also takes notice of faith. He believes in God. He is confident that God is alive and about God's business. He believes that in God's own way and time, God will bring God's work to completion. You can't always see that with the evidence of your eyes. But you can go on trusting it with the faith of your heart.

The desire of Jesus to lead people to faith which would give them tranquillity and confidence led him to tell some of his parables. For example, he told one about someone who scatters seeds which eventually produce a harvest. You are being invited to share with God in the activity of scattering seeds. I wonder what seeds have been placed in your hands. What is God asking you to do right now? There may be something you have to say or do. There may be a small seed of change that you need to plant in your own life, so that you may grow and your life may become more fruitful. There are always seeds of prayer to be scattered. I wonder what seeds you have been given.

Once the seeds have been scattered, the gardener simply sleeps and rises. Both are important. There is a time for rising and being active. There is also a time for resting and sleeping. The farmer rises and gets on with all the little things that must be done. Then, having done those things, the gardener rests, because that too must be done. I wonder how well you are able to keep the balance of activity and rest.

Once you've scattered your seed, then the rest is up to God. I'm sure gardeners and farmers will take issue with Jesus on this. There is a lot that people have to do as they work with nature to make the seeds grow and the earth flourish. But Jesus is giving an illustration. It does not have to work in every detail. And one of the points he is making is that you simply do your bit, then leave everything else to God.

While the gardener is going about the business of living, the seed sprouts and grows, the earth produces by itself and from itself, the farmer knows not how. God is about God's business. God's life is sprouting and growing. It is being productive. We do not know how, but we are confident that it is so.

And we trust that God's activity will produce a final harvest that will bring all things to completion and perfection. As Julian of Norwich put it, "All shall be well and all shall be well and every kind of thing shall be well", or as Sonny Kapoor, the proprietor of The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel said, "Everything will be all right in the end, so if it's not all right, it's not yet the end".

So, do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God who takes the seed you scatter and uses it in the work of bringing about an abundant harvest.

God bless you,

Tony