

Trinity 3

Throughout life we learn and do different things. Many of us learn to ride a bike for instance. It may seem a bit scary at first as we attempt to go along with both feet on the pedals, taking those stabilizers off. Lots of wobbling and maybe falling off or crashing into a hedge. Perhaps we can't turn round and have to get off the bike and turn it in the other direction. I vaguely remember doing that. Or as many of us drive, we might remember our driving lessons. The weirdness of having control of a vehicle that's moving along and being glad that you have an instructor by your side with dual controls. That first three point turn or reverse around the corner, has a strange sensation to it, and most of us take it very slowly at first. In both these scenarios, if we persist, we start to see progress. Yes you find that you can take your feet off the ground and have both of them on the pedals and you do find a way of turning the bike in another direction without having to get off it! And in driving it starts to seem less odd that we're making a car move along and yes we can go backwards. It's okay! We start to see progress, we're encouraged as we see the signs of things to come and we gather momentum in a direction we're firmly on. There's no turning back.

When we've been driving a few years, the car almost seems to have a life of its own!

In today's Gospel from Mark we hear of small signs of progress. Signs of something slowly growing and gathering momentum, which would be a source of encouragement to the followers of Jesus and the early church. It is the kingdom of God. The gospel writer has Jesus talking in parable form as a source of encouragement to all believers. It all points to a momentum that has begun, which cannot be stopped. Ground being gained which will not be lost. Jesus talks of seed and how it grows and once it starts it's not going to stop. Seeds are small, small enough to be scattered on the ground. Days and nights go by and the one who scatters sleeps and rises. 'How's the seed doing? When will it start to appear? And the seed then sprouts and grows. Alongside the farmers hard work the seed has a life of its own and the soil and everything else, gives it that life. We hear. 'The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head.' Eventually the grain is ripe, the farmer goes in with the sickle because the harvest has come.

Similarly Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a mustard seed, 'when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs.'

The mustard seed in fact is not the smallest of all the seeds, although it is considered as this in Palestine and it grows to a height of eight to ten feet. So not the smallest seed and not the biggest shrub, although quite big, but that really doesn't matter. What's important is that something with small beginnings can become something so much more, as a small seed planted in the ground can grow to around eight to ten feet, as would have been seen by the people Jesus addresses and the audience of this gospel.

The example encouraged them and gave them heart that the kingdom of God was real and it would only get better. More of it was to be had in the very best possible way. You just have to be patient and not too discouraged when it's not going as quick as you would like. A bit like when you muck up you're reversing or wobble into a hedge when you thought it was going well. The answer is, it is going well! The good signs are there.

So let's be encouraged that there is something greater than the life we know, in the kingdom of God. Its beginnings might seem small, but the kingdom of God is coming. Let us put our trust in God, who sets the seed in motion to give us the harvest of all harvests.

Amen