

May 26, 2013
Creation Celebration
Mark 4:26-29

If gardening teaches you anything, it's that you have to be patient. You have to wait for the right time to plant. You have to wait for the right weather to plant. You have to wait for the rain and the sun. You have to wait for the seeds to sprout. You have to wait for them to grow. You have to wait for them to mature in their own time. Nothing you do will make any of it happen any faster. You can't be in a hurry with a garden. When you grow things, you have to be patient.

God must have known that when God created. God must have known from the very beginning that things would take time and that creation could not be rushed. For everything there is a season. A time for every purpose under heaven. God was patient and gave everything the time it needed because good creation takes time.

God's work in the world and in us requires patience. But patience is very hard to come by these days. Everyone is impatient. The world is getting faster. Technology is getting quicker. Everything needs to be immediate, instantaneous, fast as lightning. We want results and answers. And we want them now. It doesn't pay to be patient.

But Jesus says that in God's Kingdom, patience is required. In the Kingdom of God, it's about scattering seed and waiting. It's about watching night and day and waiting. It's about knowing that seeds will sprout, but not knowing exactly how or when. It's about waiting, and

trusting that to everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven. Being part of the Kingdom of God means being patient. It means being patient with others. The apostle Paul says that love is patient and love is kind. He lists a lot of the virtues of love in 1 Corinthians 13, but the first thing on the list is patience. Love is patient. And patience means waiting. It means hoping. It means not knowing. It means trusting. It means believing that that God is at work even if you can't see it in the other person.

Our kids, our friends, our spouses, our neighbors, the seed of God's Kingdom is in them, growing, and with a little sun and rain, there will be a harvest. But so often we have no patience for it. We expect others to be fully grown, to be fully matured, to be mistake-free and perfect right now. But creation requires patience. It requires the faith that God is there, we know not how. But God is there. God is at work in our kids, in our spouses, in our friends and neighbors. God is at work, even in our enemies. Yes, we are audacious enough to believe even that. God is always at work and always patiently waiting. And God is never finished with anyone.

God is never done with us. God never stops believing there is a harvest in each of us. So we also need to be patient with ourselves. All we see sometimes is how inadequate we are, and how insufficient and incompetent. And we are so impatient with ourselves and our mistakes

and our failures. And we believe that God is too. How could God put up with us? How could God do anything with us? It's just not possible. But God isn't concerned with what we think is possible. Because with God all things are possible and all people are purposeful. And God is never finished with us. God is always helping us grow into the creation we are meant to be. God believes in us and hopes in us and has faith in us. God is never finished with us. God is persistent and patient and God wants us to be persistent and patient with ourselves. Because if we can be patient with ourselves, if we can be more understanding with ourselves, if we can believe the mystery of God at work in ourselves, then we are much more likely to believe that about others.

The Kingdom of God requires patience. Its growth takes time. And no amount of anxiety or worry will make it go faster. All we need is to trust and believe that God is at work in us and at work in the world around us and at work here in what we are doing as a church. Ideas need time to grow. Seeds need time to sprout. And a church that wants to be an authentic, gracious community develops at God's pace. Who will be called here to encounter God in our church? What missions will blossom and grow? Which worship services will speak to someone? What will happen with our new building? What will grow? What fruit will be born for the Kingdom? Who can say? We know not how the Kingdom grows. But if we are patient and faithful as God is patient and faithful, if we

believe that God is not done with us, the Kingdom of God will be among us.

Who would have guessed that our Community Garden would be such a blessing? Or that the backpack ministry would have flourished like it has? And who knows what seeds are planted out there now, planted in each of us, just waiting to burst forth. A heart suddenly ripe for God. A spirit ready to serve neighbors. There is something that has taken root in you, in all of us, and when the time comes, it will bear fruit.

The Kingdom of God requires patience. With ourselves. With others. With the world around us and the world that God is still creating. It's the joy and wonder of a God that likes to garden.