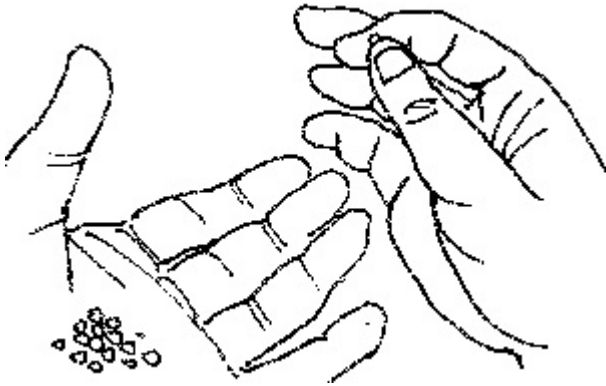


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“To what shall we compare the Kingdom of God?” (Mark 4:26)

2 Sam 11:1-4a, 13-17; Mark 4:26-34

There is a Russian proverb that says: “Men pray that two plus two will equal five.” We cause things, then pray that our action will not have the obvious effect. Another saying affirms that “We will reap what we sow,” positively or negatively. Cause and effect are built into reality, and our wishes and even our prayers cannot change this.

The parable of the farmer who plants and harvests with the assurance of nature’s bounty even if he does not understand how, is Jesus’ way of affirming that once God decides something, it happens. The Kingdom of God is at hand. This echoes Isaiah 55:10, that just as the rain and snow fall to water the earth, so the Word of God does not return empty. God’s Word informs reality and the underlying structure of cause and effect. Human beings may try to thwart reality, but it does not yield to our wishful thinking.

This lesson in accountability takes on dramatic form in the shocking story of King David’s abuse of power by bedding the wife of Uriah, who is off fighting a war on the king’s behalf. A pregnancy occurs, and the king moves from adultery to murder after trying to deceive Uriah, then arranging for his death in battle.

One of the deep messages of the biblical narratives is that even sin cannot derail God’s purposes. David’s crimes lead to profound suffering in his own family and for the nation, but God’s plan goes forward. Despite David’s treachery, the themes of justice, repentance, and mercy emerge as the dominant expression of the covenant between God and his chosen people.

Jesus draws on this message by proclaiming God’s rule as decisive, even if evil and its human agents abuse power and try to seize the trajectory of history from the divine plan. The parable of the mustard seed reassures us that we also have seeds to sow. Even the smallest seed can achieve its potential, producing a large plant to give shelter for the birds and a harvest far beyond the act of sowing. Truth and goodness also multiply, and they have the force of reality and the power of grace to sustain them. Those who sow with integrity will flourish and remain rooted in God’s Will. Truth is truth. Two plus two is four. Reality is our friend.

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