

MARK 4:1-8; 13-20

Again Jesus began to teach beside the sea. Such a very large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the sea and sat there while the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. He began to teach them many things in parables and in his teaching he said to them: Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. Other seeds fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.

ROOTS Mark 4:1-8

In 1966, lie detector expert Cleve Backster devised an experiment to test his hypothesis that plants react to humans and their thoughts. A leading expert in the field, he hooked up a lie detector to a plant in his office to see what would happen when he thought or acted in various ways. He was astonished by what happened! He discovered that when he merely

thought about putting a match to one of the plant's leaves, the lie detector reacted wildly. Just thinking about it made its needle jump indicating the plant was emotionally reacting in dramatic fashion. With his curiosity now aroused, Backster hooked up all the plants in his office to see how they would respond when he dumped live brine shrimp into a pot of boiling water. The plants went wild. They appeared to have an energetic connection with other living creatures, not just humans, and felt the fear and pain of the dying shrimp.

Since those rudimentary experiments, scientists have concluded through extensive research that there is an energy field surrounding us. And this does not just include living things, but even inanimate objects. Interpretation? Our intentions, our thoughts and our actions have repercussions far beyond our limited consciousness leaving little doubt that we are all connected. It seems certain that we operate in a field of energy that responds to every thought we have and every action we take. Just because we are not aware of it does not mean it isn't there.

Doesn't this speak volumes to us in an era in which the world has taken a strong turn toward nationalism, isolationism, hostility toward immigrants and refugees and a thinly veiled racism; a world where we have shamelessly polluted our environment and taken ourselves on a journey of

self destruction which threatens both our planet and our civilization? We live our lives and formulate our policies as if we are all separate entities who are entitled to satisfy our every desire and who must endlessly compete to come out on top and if necessary to squash everyone we believe to be an adversary. So perhaps we need to recalibrate our intentions in an effort to help save ourselves and our world from a spiraling fall from grace.

The parable of the sower and the seeds is familiar to everyone and since Jesus' audience was largely agrarian, they understood the metaphor. You don't need to be a farmer to understand that not every sown seed is going to germinate and mature into a fruit bearing plant. For there are numerous conditions that must be met at every stage along the way to maturity. External factors such as sufficient water, good fertile soil and adequate sunlight are essential. Those can all be observed. But what occurs beneath the soil is equally important. For in order to bear fruit, the plant must develop a solid root system. Without that, it will wither and die.

Let's go a step further. When you are hiking in the forest, one of the challenges along the way are sections on the trail that are just waiting to trip you up. That is where the roots of the trees criss-cross your path forming a matrix you must navigate. The trees join their roots together to

better enable them to withstand high winds and storms. As Goethe observed, "In nature, we never see anything isolated, but everything in connection with something else which is before it, beside it, under it and over it." And aren't we stronger when we join together?

For those of you who aren't NFL savvy, one of the legal plays made notorious by the Philadelphia Eagles is now popularly known as the "Tush Push." It's called on a fourth and short situation where the quarterback lines up under center with two behemoth linemen behind him who push him from behind to gain a tough yard. It works nearly every time.

We can't live in this world without friends and allies to support us. What would have happened in the last two world wars had America sat on the sidelines and allowed Germany to run roughshod over Europe? While Russia was key in Hitler's defeat, their takeover of East Germany as their reward served as a warning to the West of their future intentions. Thus, NATO was formed as a safety shield to protect the democratic free world from Soviet aggression. And now the war in Ukraine is in its third year with no end in sight. But without NATO support, Ukraine would be a Soviet vassal. Let's pray the next Administration is faithful to our commitment.

It is the root system which brings life to the plant. And the soil in

which we grow is the soil of the Spirit. If we fail to recognize that we are all deeply connected, we will eventually perish. If anything could not be more obvious, it is that we cannot solve the problems of the world or of our church by ourselves. We need to work together not only for our own sake, but for the sake of all God's children.

And as "Tush" comes to shove, as it were, in our efforts to merge with one or more other struggling churches, we as a congregation must be united and willing to make the same concerted effort that made the Craft Show such an extraordinarily successful event. While the Spirit works beneath the soil with the Root system, we must provide the hands that sow the seeds and nurture the emerging plants to produce fruit for the Kingdom. Anyone who has ever planted a garden knows it is a lot of work, but if it is a labor of love, it may well lead to a bountiful harvest.

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November 17, 2024