

Pastor Roy's Sermon from June 17, 2012

Grace to you and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Parables. What is a parable? A teachable moment? A story with secret meaning? A divine curve ball? A mystery which makes us stop and think, be grateful and desire the goodness of God? The parables deliver a whole new way of thinking and making decisions.

Parables, like the Scriptures in general, deliver to us the voice of God. They confront us with ultimate reality. The truth of God's Word is a verb, not a noun. It's not something to be revered, protected, or defended. The voice of God speaks wisdom to us which demands a response. Oh, we can ignore it, but our lives are the poorer if we do.

Take Paul's mention in today's passage of the judgment seat of Christ. Sure, we can think about it as the threat of an end of life evaluation of how we invested our time and ours lives. Were we good or bad? When we say Judgment, isn't that what some of us think of first? There are scripture passages which refer to judgment as an end of life accounting. But most Gospel and epistle writings tell us clearly that the judgment of God is not only what happens at the end of our lives.

The judgment of God is what happens every moment of our lives. Paul says, later in the passage that everything is made new. Everything is renewed in the life giving, mystery filled daily experience of God's mercy. The opportunity to live joyously in the presence of God by the power of the Spirit of God. It is a daily, moment by moment experience of applying grace, wisdom, and peace to our world.

The judgment of God sets us free to live as we were created to live. The reign of God is about the miraculous and often unobserved growth of joy and peace, of hope and life. The Judgment seat of Christ referred to in 2 Corinthians and elsewhere is the voice of God calling us to live truly. The judgment seat of Christ is in our hearts, the place where we make decisions and live with passion. Walking so with Christ helps us to rein in our unhealthy impulses and be still long enough to begin to live according to God's compassion and justice.

Each moment we have the power to create heaven and hell. But by the time we get to the end of our days, its too late to make a difference. Its too late to help another or ourselves. Then we are carried along in the flow of eternity, in the flow of God's creation. Part of understanding God's judgment of our actions, good or evil, is Paul's reminder that the Divine way of judging is far different from the human way. If anyone is in Christ, this is the stuff of new creation. The old has passed away, everything has become new. Here is the judgment of God. Its not about whether or not you are good enough. Its about learning to see with God's eyes, hear with God's ears, and touch with God's hands. Judgment is not to be feared but wisdom to be desired far above all else.

Today's parables remind us that this seeing, hearing, and touching—cannot be measured as you might a tomato plant, or how many miles to the gallon one gets out of a car, or how many gallons of milk a cow produces, or the profit margin of a company, or how much tax revenue a state produces for the common good.

The reign of God is faith and trust. We cannot produce it in our strength even as we cannot make a seed grow. Either they work with the soil or they do not. This year, for the life of me, I could not get cucumbers to grow in a certain place in our yard which I thought would be a perfect place! How

frustrating is that? I have to accept where the seeds grew this year and revel in the wonderment that any grew at all!

Our lives tend to teach us that we have to be in control of everything at all times. But the reign of God is an alternate lesson in reality. God's reign is that God is moving and shaking in things which we cannot control or understand. It is a long parade of moments which are in the care of a caring creator who oversees all things in grace and love. All the little acts do count--even if they don't seem to. Though it seems as if our efforts offered to God accomplish little, the Kingdom is at work whether we know it or not. Sometimes our fiascos are the greatest opportunities for peace to grow.

The life of faith is not about getting it right. Isn't it about trusting God in the ebb and flow? That seed will grow. That plant will grow. That fruit will grow. There will be a harvest. Its not about you and me. Its about the forces of God at work.

Today we celebrate Fatherhood. Parenting is a great mystery. We, to the best of our ability, sow many seeds. We wait. You cannot see the growth. It is a mystery. When our children have grown and as they grow, we cannot take credit for their successes. We cannot point to how they came to do and be who they are. So it is with the Kingdom--the reign of God.

Ok, here is the summary. The reign of God breaks in on our common choices, giving us the power of judgment. The Gospel teaches us to choose and live well. God's compassion for all helps us to choose not based on our own fears and uncertainties, but based on the abundance of a creative and merciful Judge who gives us all we need to do well.

The bottom line is this. I believe that because of God's grace, the appearances around us are deceptively neutral or even negative. But God is at work in quiet ways. Yes, we are involved in God's work. God calls us into action and we act. The good news is that God's Spirit is bringing amazing good where there appears to be little or none. Creation around us is responding to the call of God.

So keep sowing your seeds of faith! Keep loving and caring and serving. Do these without concern for results. We never truly know the results! But they are much better than we realize, IF, we humbly invite the Spirit of God. Today is the day to offer our seeds to God—to offer our humble, earthy actions and intentions to God. In our weakness, in our foolishness, even in our hopelessness and despair. IF we offer, God will use our offering today. Too late for yesterday, let it go. If we need to make something right from yesterday, than that is our faithful action today, but otherwise, we must let it go and invite God's faithfulness to make the difference today...and tomorrow.

Thanks be to God for faith through which God acts in mysterious and amazingly good ways. Amen.