

Service of Installation **Abundant Living - Abundance for All**

Mark 4: 26 - 29 He (Jesus) also said, “The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.”

Meditation: This little parable in the Gospel of Mark challenges us in these days as we seek to live into the kingdom of God.

The parables of Jesus come to us on one hand as straightforward, accessible images that we easily connect with when we first hear them, yet continue to confound us years later as we continue to ponder their deep meaning and implications. At first glance this little one seems to say to us that when we're working in the kingdom of God we can simply toss around a handful or two of seed, head to bed and God will take care of the rest. Just set the alarm clock for the fall and we will be harvesting bushels full of all that God has taken care of while we were sleeping. Sounds like a pretty good offer from God.

Yet, if we're honest, we don't really like this sort of message. We are the Women's Missionary Society. We are known for our hard work in the field. Many of us are also members of what generational theorists call the 'builder generation,' a wartime body of people who will gladly set aside playtime to expend tremendous energy in the building up a future world for the benefit of our children and church. Without something to work on ourselves, and without evidence of hard work being done by others we become anxious that everything will fall apart at the seams and we will not be able to succeed in our labour.

Jesus' message of untroubled sleep is a steep challenge for many of us. Without having us on the job, how will God bring this lovely garden to harvest? We are faced in this parable with the message that our labour is not the key factor needed to achieve spiritual growth in this garden. We cannot make a garden grow. And that message is a freeing one for all of us.

You see, we are mistaken when we think that this parable is about us. This parable is really about God, the true gardener in the kingdom of God. This parable is about God's grace. This flourishing garden reminds us that in the Kingdom of God the harvest comes from God and God alone; the harvest comes because God loves us and will not fail to fulfill the promises given to us. We are assured of the harvest because we know the gardener.

God does need us to work in the garden, to plant, and water, and fertilize. Jesus reminds us in another parable that the work is plentiful and the workers few. Our dedicated work in the garden is needed, but we can work differently, confidently,

knowing that we are dependent on God gardening skills, and not our own. As we look to the year ahead and the many concerns and worries we bring to our ministry through the Women's Missionary Society be assured that it is God who is the gardener in this venture. We can rest, we can even sleep knowing and trusting that the kingdom of God is sprouting and maturing in a most wondrous way tended by a master gardener who loves us more than we can comprehend.

Leader (to the officers): You have been called to special service, tending to specific responsibilities within this group/presbyterial/synodical. You have been called to live into the kingdom of God by bringing the best that you are to this task while trusting in God's promise of a bountiful harvest. Will you serve with energy, imagination, dedication, and faithfulness relying on God's promises revealed through Jesus Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit

Officers: I will

Leader (to the members): You have been called to assist, encourage, and support these leaders called from among you. Will you uphold them in prayer, help them tend to the tasks before them and even take over when they are in need of rest.

Members: We will

Leader: The executive is now duly installed. I charge you to work together caring for one another, encouraging one another, and reminding one another of the assurances of God's love in all that you do.

Unison Prayer: God of grace, you have called us to be servants of Jesus Christ, and share in his ministry of love and compassion with all of creation. Renew us this day to serve you with joy and energy. Direct us by your Spirit and give us gifts of grace to serve wisely and well. Chasten us when we become too dependent on ourselves and ignore the good news that the harvest comes at your hand, not ours. Give us rest when we need it, encouraging us to sleep confident of your promises; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.