

## **Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time B2018**

All the readings of this Sunday talk about the importance of Christian hope. They show that God in his power is capable of making things grow and mature for his glory. They invite us to hope in the future of the Kingdom of God.

The first reading describes the future of Israel under God's guidance. It compares Israel to a small tree that will become a fruitful and big one to the point that the birds will find refuge in its shade. It highlights also the sovereignty of God who lowers the mighty and lifts the lowly.

What is behind this text is the idea that the secret of the future is in God's hands. There is also the idea that any beginning, as small as it might be, has the germ of growth in it. The last idea is an invitation to hope for the future.

This text allows us to understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as Jesus is talking about the growth of the Kingdom of God. First of all, Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a seed planted in a field that grows and produces fruits without the farmer knowing how it happens. Then, he says that as it works with the seed, so it does with the kingdom of God. After that, Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a mustard seed which, though the smallest of all the grains of the earth, becomes a large plant that shelters the birds of the sky. The Gospel ends with the statement saying that Jesus spoke always in parables to the people, while in private he explained them to his disciples.

What do we learn from today's readings? Today I want to talk about Christian hope for the future. In fact, we all want to succeed in what we undertake. We do anything in our power in order to succeed in our business, our jobs and even our families. For that reason, we give the best of ourselves in our undertakings in the hope of attaining the purpose we assign to our life.

However, in spite of all our efforts, it happens sometimes that things do not always go our way. Sometimes, after having accepted many sacrifices and so much pain, we realize that the final result is not what we were expecting. In the end, it comes to the truth that we are not in control of the many factors which enter into play with regard to our success.

This would be the case, for instance, when our expectations and dreams for our children turn to be, over the years, vain or dead. Such a consideration teaches something, namely that where there is expectation for success, there is also the possibility of failure. That is why the bible reminds us that everything does not depend on us, but also on God. As Psalm 127 says, "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it. Unless the Lord guard the city, in vain does the guard keep vigil".

What this psalm wants to tell us is that, though we have to do anything in our power in order to succeed, we have also to count on God and not only on our own efforts. Only such a vision can help us understand the sense of today's parables. In fact, the farmer does his part in tilling the soil and planting the seed, but the work of growth and production is something that is beyond his control. In that sense, the first parable wants

to tell us that the growth of the kingdom of God is independent of human efforts, as important as they might be.

That is what the seed, that germinates sprouts, grows and produces harvest without the farmer knowing, means. However, it does not mean that because the growth depends on God, we have nothing to do about it. If we dwell on such an attitude, we will destroy the sense of our mission as disciples of Jesus.

Of course, no one can make the seed grow, but we should not forget that, like a farmer who tills the soil for a good harvest, we have to create the conditions in which the seed can grow well. That is why we should be active in the world, knowing well that from our efforts and our work the world can become a better place for future generations.

Moreover, even in the case where there would be a failure in the beginning of an enterprise, the possibility of a good result is always permitted, because even from the ashes, life can come out.

That hope in the future of our undertakings is what the parable of the mustard seed teaches us. In fact, the humble beginning can one day become a great work. Undoubtedly, the context of this parable refers to the history of salvation in the sense that the mission of Jesus was a mixture of failure and success to the point that the disciples were wondering about its future. But, the answer of Jesus is encouraging, because the small seed will one day become a big tree.

The best example to refer to is about ourselves. For instance, many years ago, we were just teens and today we have become these great and respectful adults: fathers, mothers, grandparents, great grandparents, etc. How nice is all that! This will remind you also that all the big ideas and the inventions that have transformed our lives have started from an individual and sometimes from a garage, and from there they have expanded throughout the whole world.

That is why we have always to keep hope even in the presence of a failure. We should never be discouraged in what we do even when there is an evident failure. In that sense, we have to come to understand that the small acts of daily life count and can make a difference. We should never be tired of repeating them or be discouraged to start again when we fail. We need patience when we start something. We need courage to keep going when we face difficulties. We need to hope that from a small beginning will come one day a big enterprise. We need to trust God, whatever might be the conditions of our work. That is true for God's work as well as for our human work.

Let us pray, then, that the Lord may give us the necessary attitudes we need to work for him and for our fellows. May God bless you all!

**Ezequiel 17: 22-24; 2 Corinthians 5: 6-10; Mark 4: 26-34.**

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