

Maybe you aren't like this, but whenever I read scripture about someone clearing a field with a cycle, I think "oh, oh", I better start paying attention. I don't want that thing coming at me." It is almost without exception that hearing about the harvest coming, I expect a time of reckoning. We are so attached to the notion of good and bad; extremes of the colors, black and white; in and out, this is so much a part of our thinking that even when Jesus is telling us something that is a pure gift we are always listening for the other shoe to drop.

That tendency in us is a perfect launching pad for the Kingdom of God. Listen to the action and the tone of this parable: the sower just scatters seed on the ground; he then sleeps and rises day after day. He doesn't tend the crop; he notices it growing as he passes by each day. The earth produces of itself - human intervention is not part of it. And splendor arises: first the stalk, then the head then the full grain in the head. Even that has to ripen, once again from the earth itself, and when it does.....here comes the cycle, dunt dunt dun. But there is no dunt dunt dun in this harvest. The sower is simply harvesting the fruit of the wheat; the sower is overjoyed at this harvest - there is absolutely NO JUDGMENT. This is what the Kingdom of God is like, Jesus tells us. God supplied all the seed needed to grow as God supplies us with the love and faith we need to grow - even if we've been a hellion and a pain - that love is there and when we understand and accept it - this is the Kingdom of God!! Come on in - no locks, no doors, no passports - you just have to come in. No locks, no doors, no passports AND no gossip, no judgment, no hierarchy. No gossip, no judgment, no hierarchy - what??? Not even a little bit of superiority? No locks, no doors, no passports - wait a minute - does that mean I might be sharing a cloud with Caligula or Tokyo Rose? Or perhaps worse, a nobody. The Kingdom of God is not, as is often supposed, heaven, not later, not sometime and some place else. The seed was scattered everywhere. The Kingdom of God is here now - can we live it? No locks, no doors, no passports. Can we live it? No gossip, no judgment, no hierarchy. It should be the simplest thing - freeing ourselves from the burden of comparison and competition - allowing ourselves to accept God's love without having earned it. Can you do it? The first step, it seems to me, is to want it. We worry: Who am I if all I can describe myself with is my place in God's Kingdom - no title, no salary, no trappings of wealth, no beauty, no brawn.

Jesus follows with another parable that hints at why we might desire the Kingdom of God enough to give up our dependence on external things. It's my guess that Jesus saw a bird's nest in a nearby mustard tree or bush and the comparison clicked in his head. And again, a simple seed which bears the Kingdom of God is sown and from it comes a shrub, large enough to have branches, large enough to shelter baby birds. And again, the journey from scattered seed to sheltering bush, is a mystery. We are not invited to understand the miracle of growth; we are not invited to understand how the Kingdom of God was created - we are invited to participate in what the Kingdom of God is; we are invited to feel it under our feet as seeds do their work in secret. And again, what we think is our 'natural' desire to understand, perhaps to know before we commit, And again, how we have evolved - inquisitive, controlling, distrustful - is at odds with the Kingdom of God - offering shelter. In Matthew, Jesus says: **28** "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Offering shelter for all who choose to accept it. How funny we are - with all our focus on if we are good enough or not; with all our energy going into proving our worth; with a resistance to letting God take that role; How funny we are thinking that we can fulfill our own longings and quiet our own restlessness.

This is the kingdom of God - a harvest of wheat healthy and sweet - a huge mustard tree whose branches offer shade. This is the kingdom of God - under our feet, over our heads, offered to us now.

This is the Kingdom of God - This, right here - 'you mean the beauty of Spring?' Not exactly; 'you mean the great good fortune of a loving spouse?' Well, nice but not the Kingdom really. 'You mean the human progress that has moved us forward beyond belief?' There are a hundred questions we could ask about The Kingdom of God; they would not help us know it any better. The Kingdom of God is not to be studied - it is to be experienced so Jesus used parables to help us suspend our endless questions and to bathe us in the one answer. The Kingdom of God is.