

How Does the Kingdom Grow?

Mark 4:26-35



Le Meridienne (The Siesta) by Vincent van Gogh, circ. 1889-90

The Theological Context

“To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God but for **those outside** everything is in parables, so that

‘they may indeed **see** but **not perceive**,
and may indeed **hear** but **not understand**,
lest they should turn and be forgiven.’”

Mark 4:11-12

Speech in the Ghetto

"It is the style of the chroniclers of the ghettos, where everything had to be said swiftly, in one breath. You never knew when the enemy might kick in the door, sweeping us away into nothingness. **Every phrase was a testament.**"



Elie Wiesel



The Theological Context

- Dual function – to harden and reveal
- **.Usual**: Parables followed well known Jewish themes
- **.Unexpected**: Old stories with a new twist, designed to reinterpret Israel's hope of the kingdom.
- **.Unsettled**: The messages are subversive, designed to change one's worldview and give birth to a new order
- Mystery = parables cannot be understood without revelation
- Secrets are to be passed on by the disciples

Heavenly Seed

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving **seed to the sower** and bread to the eater,
so shall **my word** be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall **not return to me empty**,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

Isaiah 55:10-11



New Creation

For you shall go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall break forth into singing,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;
and it shall make a name for the LORD,
an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

Isaiah 55:12-13

The Man and the Growing Seed

“The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

Mark 4:26-29



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Mark 4:26-29

automatē – something happens without visible cause,
“by itself”



Sabbatical Year

You shall not reap what grows **of itself** (*automata*) in your harvest, or gather the grapes of your undressed vine. It shall be a year of solemn rest for the land. The Sabbath of the land shall provide food for you...all its yield shall be for food.

Leviticus 25:3-7

Wisdom Hidden in the Seed

“It is, however, the seed itself which transforms earth and water into its own substance, carries it from one stage to another, until it refines the elements and transfers them into something like itself, casing off husks, leaves, etc., and allowing the pure core to appear, capable of bearing the Divine image.”



Judah Halevi (1075-1141)



The Harvest

Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently **waiting** for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.

James 5:7-8



The Harvest

“But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

Mark 4:29

How Do We Cultivate Life?



How Do We Cultivate Life?



1. Sowing in God's word with confidence

Since you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God...therefore, like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation. (1 Pet 1:23, 2:2)

How Do We Cultivate Life?



2. Being attentive to God at work until the harvest

Something is very gently,
invisibly, silently,
pulling at me—a thread
or net of threads
finer than cobweb and as
elastic.

.....

Not fear
but a stirring
of wonder makes me
catch my breath when I feel
the tug of it when I thought
it had loosened itself and gone.



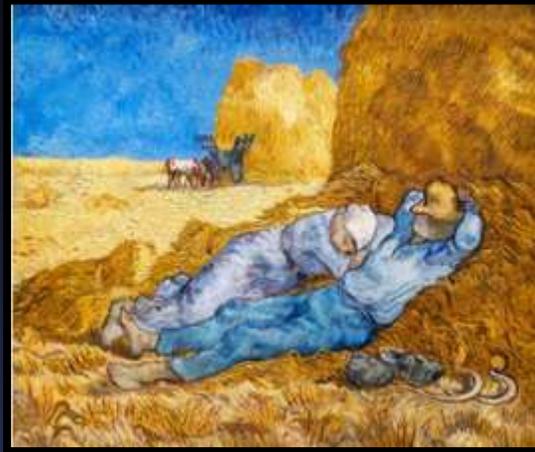
Denise Levertov

How Do We Cultivate Life?



2. Being attentive to God at work until the harvest

How Do We Cultivate Life?



2. Being attentive to God at work until the harvest

It is in vain that you rise up early
and go late to rest,
eating the bread of anxious toil;
for he gives to his beloved sleep.

Psalm 127:2

How Do We Cultivate Life?



3. Being ready to harvest the fruit

Oh sing to the LORD a new song,
for he has done marvelous things!
His right hand and his holy arm
have worked salvation for him.

Psalm 98:1

The Harvest



Daniel Kirchhofer



In Remembrance of Me



Our Confession

Eternal God,
in whom we live and move and have our being,
whose face is hidden from us by our sins,
and whose mercy we forget in the blindness of our hearts:
cleanse us from all our offenses,
and deliver us from proud thoughts and vain desires,
that with reverent and humble hearts
we may draw near to you,
confessing our faults, confiding in your grace,
and finding in you our refuge and strength;
through Jesus Christ your Son. Amen

Book of Common Worship

In Remembrance of Me



The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who is in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil,
for yours is the kingdom and the power
and the glory forever. Amen.

In Remembrance of Me

