

All by Itself

Scripture Reading — Mark 4:26-29

All by itself the soil produces grain. . . . — Mark 4:28

One of the remarkable aspects of plant growth is that we humans do so little to cause it. That fact is both frightening and humbling. Farmers plant seed and tend it throughout the growing season. But they cannot force it to germinate, or protect the crop from every whim of weather, or make a plant bear fruit.

The created world reminds us how much we depend on God for each day's provisions. We can prepare seeds and plant fields for best possible outcomes, but we cannot force a plant to grow or make it bear fruit. Harvest is a gift of God's grace, a gift beyond our control.

Jesus uses the growing seed as a picture of God's kingdom. It is appealing to imagine that spiritual growth is something that can be controlled—that with enough persuasion I could mold public opinion to address poverty or racial injustice, or work hard enough to eliminate sinful anger or selfish greed from my own life. Jesus reminds me, though, that all growth is a gift. I may tend the seed of God's righteousness in my heart, water it, and try to protect it. But only God can forgive me, restore me, and make me grow.

As you look at crops that have grown this year, remember God's gift of gracious growth in your own life and heart. And as you anticipate the harvest, pray that God is also preparing a harvest of good fruit in you.

Prayer

Holy Spirit, thank you for growth. Teach us patience as we wait for the gift of Jesus' new life to bear fruit in us. Amen.

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