

Telephone Conference Service 13th June 2021

Message

Whenever I hear a parable about seeds, there's a sort of impatient shuffling in my brain to ask a question that, until now, I've not made efforts to investigate. 'How do we get seedless grapes?' So, I did what most of us do these days for a quick answer, I Google'd the question. (Other search engines are available.)

Parthenocarpy, is the word that came up, and I'll leave it to the curious among you to delve more deeply.

In a nut shell, appropriately, the main theory is that it's an unfertilized seed which produces this genetic defect, and was discovered by the early Romans.

Cultivating them through cuttings and grafts, they were delighted. No longer having those annoying pips to spit out, and able to redeploy slaves/servants from pip sweeping to other duties.

It's interesting how humankind has cultivated many things to suit our earthly needs, culinary or otherwise. And the results aren't always palatable, are they!

Seed metaphors or analogies figure throughout the Bible, suggesting fertility, growth, both literally and spiritually, and harvest. 'We reap what we sow'.

The Luke and Matthew versions of the mustard seed parable refer to it growing into a tree, whereas Mark recognise it as a humble yet substantial herb, which to me more greatly emphasises the point about small beginnings, considering the size extremes of a mustard seed and that of an oak or cedar.

God's Word nourishes our faith and guides our direction, so it's easier to grow God's Kingdom to fruition through humble and willing hearts.

But we have to prepare ourselves to receive it. Constantly finding our way through the mystery of germination! Or we end up being grafted onto an existing cultivated vine. The easy one perhaps, but not the **true** vine.

I remember some 20 years or so ago, reaching a moment of change or shift in thinking. Not the germination moment of faith – that happened when I was about 12. This was probably the moment I consciously checked where I was going spiritually. And if God's call to be closer to him doesn't change us in some way, then we are not listening, are we.

I'd had a really good day at work. Everything had fallen into place well and goals had been met. I was happy that I'd done my best and on this rare occasion, all outcomes were good. Even the sun shone!

Then, as usual, I said to myself, 'I'll pay for this tomorrow!'

But, as soon as I had said it, I stopped and thought, 'Why do I say things like that?'

Over some chocolate that evening I thought more about how I had expected to pay for a good day with a bad day to follow, as if it were a punishment for being happy. I didn't believe then, and I still don't believe God does that.

We're not even punished **for** our sins, but **by** them, and the consequences.

And that's when I switched, and started to believe – and notice, that a good day, or a happy occasion, strengthens me for when things aren't so good. And that change altered me. I was from that moment more positive than negative. It was a hard habit to break, and I struggled. A small beginning for me, and I can see where that has led me!

We need to acknowledge that God loves us and wants us to be happy in his love, so I am. Most of the time!

Once we make that change and decide to grow in Christ, we become – as Paul tells us, a new creation.

God's love gives us value, and gifts we can use to serve him, and one another.

We choose to live differently and persuade others to do the same, by at least trying to follow Christ's example.

A tough call, but it's what we are called to be, seed spreaders!

How seeds are grown is partly a mystery. Scattered or planted, in prepared ground or rough, they can grow beyond imagining. Feeding many with what is produced, or simply to provide shelter to heal and comfort.

God's Kingdom is growing **now** like this, calling and holding the faithful.

Let's continue to remind ourselves of this, as we envisage the time of completion, to keep us hopeful, focussed and constant.

It's what God has promised for us, and we know that God keeps his promises.

Amen.