

## **Pentecost III : Trust the Mystery**

**1 Sam 15: 34-16: 13** Psalm 20 2 Cor: 5: 6-10, 14-17 **Mark 4: 26-34**

Three men who lived along a caravan route in the desert made their living from the passing caravans buying and selling goods. But they dreamed of being gardeners. How could they be gardeners in a desert?

Then they heard that the master gardener would be coming past on the next caravan so they decided to ask him to teach them the art of gardening. The master gardener also heard about these aspiring gardeners, so when his caravan arrived, he set out to visit them.

He arrived at the first man's house and asked him: "Do you wish to grow something in this deserted place?" The man had known that that the master would ask him this question, so he had given it considerable thought. He realised that he liked to daydream about gardening and read books about it; but he did not really want to be a gardener, so he told the master: "No." The master smiled, said "Fine" and proceeded to the home of the second gardener.

The second man had also envisioned how the conversation with the master would go. They would begin with the practicalities of gardening, and then they would progress to philosophy and talk about gardening as a way of life, finishing with a prayer to the Great Gardener in the Sky. This is what the second man expected.

However, when the master arrived, he asked: "Do you wish to grow something in this deserted place?" The man replied "Yes" and took a breath to say more but the master held up his hand and said: "Wait here. I will be back."

The master returned two days later and said: "There is a wheel at the back of your garden. Turn it one full turn every afternoon." Then he left.

The man was disappointed. He went to the site of his future garden and saw the wheel. He turned it one full turn. He did the same the second and third day. However, on the fourth and fifth days he was too busy to turn it.

So it continued: Some days he turned the wheel and some days he did not.

After two months his neighbours arrived, saw nothing had grown in his garden, and asked him why. He said flatly: "The master gardener is a fraud. If you want to grow something, do not ask him."

Meanwhile, the master had arrived at the home of the third man whom he asked the familiar question: "Do you wish to grow something in this deserted place?" The man said he did, so the master told him to wait and he would return. Two days later he returned and said: "There is a wheel at the back of your future garden. Turn it one full turn every afternoon." Then he left.

What the third man did not know was that the master had installed an underground irrigation system. With each turn of the wheel it released hidden waters that nourished the earth deep down.

The third man was also disappointed by the terse instructions, but he followed them faithfully. Then one day, he was greatly surprised to discover that something had begun to grow. Green shoots shot up through the parched earth. The man became anxious, how would he keep the plants alive and flourishing? The master had given him no detailed plan. He was beside himself with worry.

Then one day, instead of worrying about how to keep the growth alive, he looked at the plants themselves. On each leaf were instructions about what to do next. The man followed the instructions and soon his home was surrounded by a lovely garden.

His neighbours exclaimed: “However did you grow this beautiful garden in this deserted place?”

The man shrugged: “It seemed to happen naturally. I persevered and tried not to have too many expectations.” — *Eating with the Bridegroom*, John Shea, 2005, Liturgical Press, pg 153ff

In the OT lesson, seven sons of Jesse pass before Samuel before the Lord chooses David, the youngest, most unexpected, unlikely candidate. God’s choice is a mystery, the purpose and importance of which are revealed over time, in a pattern of unfolding augmentation like a sprouting seed, as the Gospel describes it: First the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head.

It was Samuel’s job to trust the mystery and co-operate with it.

The man in the Gospel story scatters seed and it grows, he does not know how. It is a mystery. He trusts and co-operates with the mystery.

We know that growing is what seeds are designed to do. It is in their DNA. The end product is present in the smallest possible beginning, like a mustard seed.



And Jesus says that’s what the Kingdom of God is like. It just grows. The growth from seed to plant is inevitable. We don’t control the process – God does.

The kingdom grows organically. And inevitably, as day follows night, God’s hidden, mysterious work in the world and in us will be fruitful. We don’t control the process – God does.

Trust the mystery.

**Resources**

[workingpreacher.org](http://workingpreacher.org): Meda Stamper

*Eating with the Bridegroom*, John Shea, 2005, Liturgical Press

[Pastorsings.com](http://Pastorsings.com)

Seasons of the spirit online