



# Sunday Reflection

## Ordinary Time

in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew  
& St Johns, Johnstone



For Sunday 13 June 2021

# Pentecost 3

We gather to worship the God who is beyond our understanding, yet as close to us as the air that we breathe. Let us rejoice that the creator of the universe is also the saviour of the world and the guiding Spirit of our lives.

## Reflection for this week's Gospel

**"With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples."** Mark 4:33-34

### An Illustration to set the scene

The late Professor Stephen Hawking once described how an astronaut falling into a black hole would be "spaghettified" – stretched out into long, thin shapes!

A similar illustration was used by Professor Brian Cox, now famous around the world for his television science programmes. Indeed, many celebrity experts are also university professors, yet they seem able to capture the basics of their subject in ways that non-specialist viewers can at least begin to understand.

Whether astrophysics or other subjects like wildlife or medicine, their clever analogies simplify it all for us.

Back in the lecture hall or tutorial, however, they would go into far more detail for their students.

## Looking at the teaching of the Gospel

In today's Gospel, the supreme teacher, Jesus, could be comparing two disciplines – agriculture and astronomy.

The first is obvious: he talks about the way seeds grow.

But Jesus says he's using those examples to illustrate the kingdom of God.

If ever we needed proof that the kingdom of God is not a place, not some distant planet or mysterious location above the clouds, here it is.

Jesus teaches that the kingdom of God is not a place, but a process. It grows.

He describes a hugely complex subject in simple terms: the kingdom of God is "as if" someone scatters seed and it grows; it is "like" a small seed that grows into a huge tree.

But what Jesus is doing here is sowing seeds himself.

Just as watching a television science programme might encourage someone to study the subject further, Jesus is sowing seeds of interest and curiosity among those who listen to him.

And just as university professors go into much more depth with their students, so Jesus later explains everything to his disciples. Earlier in this chapter, he did just that – unpicking for them the parable of the Sower.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus illustrates the complexities of the kingdom with parables. Simple illustrations we can begin to get our heads around, they pique our interest.

We ask ourselves, "What does that mean?" and we try to find out more.

That's what parables do.

They provoke us to ask questions.

It's just as well, because we're never going to get answers unless we ask questions.

So, if Jesus is suggesting that the kingdom of God is a process, what kind of process is that?

Amazingly, it is one that involves us. As he says elsewhere, “the kingdom of God is among you” (Luke 17:21).

Often translated as “within you”, the implication is the same. God is trusting us to help the kingdom grow, here on earth.

Today’s second parable tells us that our gifts, however insignificant we might think them, can – just like that tiny mustard seed – grow into something great: God’s kingdom of peace, love and justice, here on earth.

But the first parable underlines the fact that we need God’s help. We can’t do it on our own.

Just as God makes the seed grow in due course, and the farmer “does not know how”, God can help us to do amazing things in the service of the kingdom.

### **How can we reflect on the application to our lives?**

So how can we help the kingdom grow?

And how can we allow God to help us in this task?

First, we should tell others, remembering that Christ died for all.

We don’t need to be preachers or teachers to do this. Our attitudes and behaviour are the best illustrations of our faith in Christ.

What we do, as much as what we say, can begin to sow the seeds of faith in those around us.

That’s a huge responsibility, because if we fail to act in the way Jesus taught us to, then we’re failing him.

To ensure there's no black hole in our universe of faith, let's keep studying the Bible's accounts of the ministry, teaching and sacrifice of Jesus.

That way God will equip us with the best possible seed. In regular prayer, let's listen for further explanation, as disciples, students, of Jesus.

Then, by serving Jesus in practical help to our fellow human beings, we can sow God's seed here on earth.

For this beautiful planet God gave us is where we can all learn to be citizens of the eternal kingdom.

**“With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.”** Mark 4:33-34

Please share your response to this reflection to [Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](mailto:Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk) – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God' spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

**[www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](http://www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk)**