

Second Sunday after Pentecost  
Sermon Text: Mark 4:26-34  
Related Text: 2 Corinthians 5:6-17  
Date Preached: June 14, 2009

Frequently in life we look toward a finished product. We celebrate finished products. I've seen quilts that were finished after many hours of work, furniture hand crafted, and model airplanes built. Over the course of the summer some will share the harvest from their gardens.

We celebrate the finished products or milestones of life such as baptism, confirmation, graduation, getting married, completing major projects at work, the end of a school year, harvest time, tax season, or seasons particular to our line of work, and retirement.

We celebrate the things that come at the end of a long process. From a faith perspective the same can be said for death. A funeral is an opportunity to celebrate the life of a loved one and commend that loved one into this new creation that God makes us in heaven.

In the Gospel of Mark Jesus speaks about the Kingdom of God as being like a mustard seed, tiny, hard to see. It grows into a great shrub that can serve as shelter for birds and provides shade from the summer heat.

Often overlooked in between the beginning and the ending is the actual process itself. Take Jesus example from today's story that in the Bible are called parables.

Here is a seed. The seed is cast. One day we may look in the garden and see simply dirt. The next morning we look out and see the beginning of a plant emerge. We didn't see it grow. We saw the result of growth, we saw it had emerged.

There is a lot we can do to foster the growth of what we plant. We can feed the soil with fertilizer. We can water the plants when the ground is dry. We can pull the weeds that would threaten or inhibit growth. Those are the things that our youth do when they give of their time at the hunger garden. The one thing we cannot do is the actual growing itself.

We don't control the plants growth. We don't have any control over the harvest that our garden will yield. Such growth is God's to give.

Much of what we go through in life is a process. Such a process is guided by God. While we see or look for results along what is important is the actual process itself.

How is God at work in the process of shaping his children through Confirmation? How is God at work in the process of his children making connections between what we believe with what we do? How is God at work knitting us together like a quilt?

These questions have partial answers. We know that worship and prayer bring us into conversations with God. We know that confession and forgiveness reminds us that Christ has died for us. We know that the sacraments of Baptism and Communion bring us into God's family and reinforce our relationship with God.

While we know these things take place they are but partial answers to how God is at work. There is the bond we have of being part of a community of people called the church. The service we do in God's name brings us together with people of similar interests. The diversity of the family of God helps us learn from each other.

The point is that we are never finished products. The danger in looking at our lives as a series of finished products is the denial of what God is continuing to do every day of our lives.

We heard the great pastor and teacher to the church in Corinth say, “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.” The wonder and beauty of being a new creation is that we are not finished products. Creation didn’t end on the sixth day.

God is continually at work bringing forth new life. We are continually nurtured in the body of Christ with the very body and blood of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is continually at work cutting away that which is bad, so that new life can emerge.

This is all part of a loving and nurturing process. This is a process of grace. And through the grace of God, we are invited to participate in the process of being made a new creation.

Milestones are good to celebrate. However, the process is more important. The process invites us to trust in God. The process invites us to believe that we are becoming a new creation. The process invites us to see that new creation emerge in each other.

God graces us with the ability to be part of this process. Throughout the process the love of Christ urges us on. AMEN.