

PROPER 6

Sunday between 12 and 18 June inclusive
(if after Trinity Sunday)

Thought for the day

From small beginnings, and by God's power, the kingdom of heaven grows.

Readings

1 Samuel 15:34-16:13 or Ezekiel 17:22-24
Psalm 20 or Psalm 92:1-4, 12-15
2 Corinthians 5:6-10 (11-13) 14-17
Mark 4:26-34

Aim

To look at Jesus' teaching on the growth of the kingdom of heaven.

Starter

If you have one of those Christmas ornaments where lit candles make angels move round and round, this is ideal for them to set up and watch, working out what keeps the movement going. Other appropriate 'machines' would be lamps where globules of oil float gracefully up and down, driven by the heat, or kites.

Teaching

First have a look at the Old Testament passage chosen for today. If it is the Samuel passage, use different voices and a narrator. If Ezekiel, explain first that King Nebuchadnezzar had taken the important people of Israel off into Babylon, and the prophet had described this as a great eagle tearing it off the top branches of a cedar tree and planting it in a land of traders. Now, in contrast to the worldly way of doing things, we look at God's way of renewing and redeeming a hopeless situation.

With both readings, bring out the point that God decides what he will do and does it, for greatest good. We are called to work with him, rather than just following our own whims and fancies; the important thing is to check constantly with God what his will actually is. That way we will be less likely to find ourselves working in opposition to God.

Now read Mark 4:26-34. Look out for where the growing power lies. (Farmers and gardeners don't create the growth themselves, but work with the creative God to allow God's natural growing power to happen.) God can't *only* work where we are busy about his business. If we do our best to

Notes

Discussion starters

1. Do we sometimes block God's growing kingdom by wanting it to happen in a particular way for us, our family, or our church?
2. Is it possible to work too hard for the coming of the kingdom?

Activities

There is a short sketch on the sheet about a sun-bathing farmer who is busy growing his crop, and they are encouraged to explore the quiet, hidden growing of the kingdom of God. There is also a checklist for looking at signs of spiritual growing, both as individuals and in their church community.

Praying

It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord, and to sing praises to your name, O Most High; to tell of your loving kindness early in the morning and of your faithfulness in the night season.

(From Psalm 92)

provide the best conditions for people's faith to grow, the actual growth of the kingdom is going to happen through the loving God's power and will. Finally look at this week's section of 2 Corinthians. Whether we are in this life or the next, our only goal is to please God. It is the love of Christ in us that controls us, enabling us to live fruitfully – his freely given gift rather than our hard work.