

No matter how much you love your job;

No matter how much you appreciate all the good things in your life and no matter how much joy you find in life;

No matter how much you love your family and your friends and would do anything in the world for them;

there are days when you wonder what it's all for and why you bother to do all the things that you do. There are days when it seems like it's all for nothing.

And it's more than just being in a funk, or being tired or just needing a vacation- I wouldn't go as far as to call it an existential malaise, but it does make you wonder what is the purpose of doing good, and what is the purpose of trying to change the world for the better when the world in fact only seems to be getting worse?

It's very easy to fall into that kind of thinking, especially when you see all the not-so-good things in the world and you feel powerless in the face of it all. It can even make you wonder where God is in all of this. Well, believe it or not- and I know you believe it- God is very much present in all this. It's just that we have to first adjust our ideas of God and how God works if we want to hold on to the hope that God is helping us to bring about His Kingdom, to make the world the way that God wants it to be.

Jesus' parables of the mustard seed and the yeast want to yank us out of our idea that the Kingdom of God is this awesome event that will overwhelm us with its power and its glory and that will suddenly overtake us in one fell swoop. Jesus is saying something very different- He's saying that what may not look like very much will in fact be what is fulfilling God's purposes in

the world; and He is saying that it will take more time than we are comfortable with to get to the point where it has reached its fulfillment.

So as essential and as life-giving as bread is- and there's nothing like a good, real loaf of Italian bread- it's really one of the most basic of all foods. And as beautiful as the mustard tree is in its own way, it's nothing special at all. And it goes without saying that the yeast and the seed take their own sweet time to do their work and waiting for them only makes you impatient and frustrated.

But the Kingdom of God is like the seed and the yeast, remember- the Kingdom of God will be what transforms us and the world around us into expressions of the goodness and the love of God, but it will be through the ordinary events and situations of our lives. And it's going to take a while.

The idea that the coming about of the Kingdom of God- or in a word, salvation- that this coming to life is a process is evident in the writings of the Church Fathers. Taking their cue from the Gospels, these theologians and spiritual writers of the early Church talked about the coming of the Kingdom of God in terms of growth and process- like mustard seeds, like yeast transforming the loaves, like fields of wheat and weeds that should be left to grow. And as Martin Luther famously said, *“this life is not godliness but the process of becoming godly, not health but getting well, not being but becoming”*.

So waiting for this new reality to come about while we impatiently wait and occasionally fall into a spiritual restlessness should not discourage us- it should give us the hope that things are already changing for the better right under our noses. And if you want proof of that, you just have to think of the persons in your life who did nothing earth-shattering for you but who quietly

and yet profoundly changed your life for the better and made you the very good person that you are.

And as we share that goodness with the persons around us, we make their lives better and the process goes on and on, and will keep going on until the Kingdom of God that Jesus has inaugurated will come to its fulfillment and God will be all in all. Then we won't have to wait anymore- it will be already here.