



THE CHAPEL OF CYPRESS COVE

INTRODUCTION TO WORSHIP SERVICE & SERMON – SEPTEMBER 05, 2021

Every Sunday worship is a special time to collectively be in the presence of Almighty God as we give him honor, glory and praise. Worshiping together, even virtually, gives us all a “connection” to the Holy Spirit and each other. Worship also has structure to collectively enhance our spiritual direction, understanding and knowledge as well as singing praises to God.

There are times that our worship services call attention to various individuals and their devotion to Almighty God and humankind through their talents. This morning our worship service not only honors Almighty God but a person who has served our church in a dedicated manner as president of our church board of directors...Frank Haskell. Frank is retiring from his position as president and will remain on the board. We all thank Frank for his service to our church and may you continually be led by the Holy Spirit in all your life's endeavors.

I also want to take this time to thank all our members and friends of our church who in their own way, especially through prayer, help to maintain and receive spiritual direction from Almighty God and each other as we walk together to continue to make the Chapel of Cypress Cove a beacon of love and peace.

Now will you please join me as we call ourselves to worship Almighty God?



Title: Living In Today's World

Rev. Ted Althouse

Texts: Mark 4:26-34

September 05, 2021

If I say to you; today is Sunday, September 05, 2021 ...10:30am...Chapel of Cypress Cove, Fort Myers Florida, United States of America, Western Hemisphere, planet earth... what do you think I am trying to convey to you?

What I described to you is where we all are at this very second and that we are alive...living in today's world as we know it to be at this moment...but changing all the time. In about 20 minutes we'll go about doing something else in our life's cycle of living. Constant change of living continues on day by day, year by year until our living ceases. We are living in Today's World!

One truth, among many is to realize that some of what this world is doing is good and some of it is bad. We can't escape good and evil in this world but as Christians we can try to live more on the “good” side of life as possible. We move through a course of world events that is ever changing. Sometimes we may ponder the question: is our life better today than years gone by? The answer lies in the way a person sees their life today

in relationship to yesterday. Today, we have greater advances in medicine and science that assist us in living longer and healthier. We also have learned better health management today than years gone by. And scientifically, we have progressed to a point that outer space exploration...which was only thought about 50 years ago...is now a commonly known place which is being continually explored.

Another issue to ponder is the increase of world catastrophes that seem to be mounting steadily! Are we quickly leading to the eventual destruction of our world as we know it to be? Surely you, as a Christian, have heard of spiritual Armageddon? Armageddon is the Biblical prophecy of last battle between good and evil before the Day of Judgment and return of Jesus Christ. Jesus said in the gospel of John 14:13: *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again to take you to myself."* Questions about what will take place on that day have been pondered and studied for a long time and the answers are varied with some mixed personal feelings. However, the reality of it all is that we who are here in this world today should be living in harmony as Almighty God designed our world for peace and harmony.

Living in a society which is in productive harmony with God's intended direction should be the ultimate goal of all Christians, as well as the entire world society.

Astronaut James B. Irwin said, in describing his faith in God as he lived in this world; *"I have encountered nothing on Apollo 15, or elsewhere in this age of space and science, that dilutes my faith in Almighty God."*

The prophet Ezekiel saw God's chosen people to be a nation of peace. He listened and heard God speaking to him and he responded to God. He knew it was his obligation to tell others about his conversations with God. Also, the gospel writer Mark, provides the needed guidance for those who come to know the teachings of Jesus Christ...the son of God and desire to live in harmony with each other. Both these great men, living in different time periods, loved God deeply and were positive role models for living...living according to God's desire for his creation which we call the world. They also loved God's people and his wisdom including harmony and peace.

The apostle Mark's two parables which we are examining today, are about the growing seed...and the importance of the tiny mustard seed. These parables suggest that while God's people have an important task...to sow the seed of the kingdom of God on earth...we must also learn to live with God's people...whoever and whatever they are and represent. A times this can be a difficult accomplishment, but not out of reason with God's presence in our life. God gives us the opportunity to grow in faith...just as any seed grows in life.

Mark uses the analogy of the mustard seed to assist in understanding. Mark said; *"What shall we say the Kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade."* (v31-33) This is a prime example of the work of God's creation...the seed, small in the beginning but becomes great in the end. This is like the work of the holy spirit, when first planted within a new believer, is small in the beginning but when allowed to be nurtured and grow...it becomes greater and it spreads for others to receive. The dedicated Christian must be concerned with bringing the seed (Holy Spirit) and soil (human spirit/soul) together so that God's will may flourish and produce a great harvest (saving lives). We who understand this obligation are the sowers (planters) and have our work cut out for us to do the farming for the harvest (new followers of Jesus Christ.)

In the nature of creation, the power of growth is in the plant itself and the destiny is present in the seed from its beginning. Let us not forget that God has produced the original seed of life for everything...and has

created, within that seed, the outcome of its life cycle. Adam and eve were created by God's original seed of life and through them produced the human life form of today.

Mark provides another illustration, he writes: *"This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows..."* (v26 & 27) It is a known fact that any seed properly placed in the ground will grow even when the person who put it there is awake or asleep. The great author, Robert Louis Stevenson said this about planting seeds: *"Don't judge each day by the harvest your reap but by the seeds that you plant"*. So, it is with Christianity! God's seed of life, properly planted in the mind, body and soul of an individual, will grow. It takes nourishment and guidance...and it will grow...whether awake or asleep. Mark knew it was important to plant the seeds of God's faith and see that they are nourished through love and guidance. Mark knew that God's love is strong enough to produce fruit even through the most difficult times of life.

Another truth is that we know that unfortunately some seeds planted will not grow. Much depends on how that seed is planted, nurtured or fed. I believe that each Holy Spirit seed planted and cultivated in faith will produce results, maybe not always as we predict it to be, but as God desires it to be. Over the many years as a pastor, I've come to realize that much of humankind has become overly aggressive with his/her carnal desires without giving credit to the spiritual Being from which we were conceived...Almighty God. With our God given abilities we need to press on toward our own goals always acknowledging where these talents and abilities come from...the seed of Almighty God. If humankind continues to seek only their own personal selfish goals and not give credit to God...then that person is on a pathway of not receiving the rewards of eternal life with God.

In many of my messages, I speak about our future with God in heaven. As a born again, Bible based man of God, I know that every human individual has the opportunity of receiving eternal life with God through acknowledging his son Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. We must all, as Christian's, come to realize that the Holy Spirit of God has and is continuing to bring us together in fellowship and nourishes us as we grow toward maturity...and eternal life.

Because we live in today's world...our daily life has its struggles! I must be totally honest here in saying that in today's highly sophisticated world that one giant struggle, that most Christians have, is to remain faithful, loyal, and effective to Almighty God. Mark realized the importance of using the illustration of the tiny mustard seed that grows into a large productive bush. This is the reality of God's kingdom and our message...that from the smallest insignificant life, great things can and will happen.

The Christian individual of today is experiencing the greatest knowledge and wisdom for life...and through the revelations and ministry of Jesus Christ, we have a brief glimpse into what the kingdom of heaven is all about through Jesus Christ. If you believe in the life and sacrificed death of Jesus Christ, you will understand how HE touches our lives and that we have been given an opportunity to see what is in store for us in eternal life. Therefore, as a Christian, we have an obligation and commitment...to first keep our life in a proper order and then to help sow the seeds of Christianity in any manner we know how. We can plant, sow and harvest the seeds of faith because the Holy Spirit of Almighty God/Jesus Christ has been given to each of us and remains with us. We need to keep nurturing it through prayer, bible reading and fellowship with other Holy Spirit filled individuals...church.

Friends, it is a fact that we are living in today's world...so let us acknowledge our faith in God and the good seeds of living in our own life so that we can go forward to help plant as many seeds of spiritual faith in the lives of other individuals.

That was my conclusion for my message today but God wasn't done with me yet. He laid this on my heart and told me to do this simple exercise with Him...and then have each of you do it also. God wants us all to sit quietly for a few moments and as you do, think of one person in your life that you feel would be a good candidate to plant the seed of Almighty God's saving grace. Now feel the invisible hand of God reaching down and touching that person as He plants His seed of faith...and know that God's seed will be nurtured by your daily prayers for this individual. Your daily prayers are very important for God's seed to grow. Also, say nothing to that individual about planting God's seed and see if a difference is made in his/her life.

Let us pray...