

Sunday, June 13, 2021 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church

**Bible Study – Mark 4:26-34 and 2 Corinthians 5:6-10, (11-13), 14-17
“Growing into the New Creation”**

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes) In pairs or groups of three, have participants share something new in their lives (this might include a product, an experience, or an insight).

Context Mark 4:26-34. This week’s reading gives two parables that compare the kingdom of God to the common experience of seeds. The first suggests that the kingdom grows mysteriously, in ways that we cannot control. The second, that the kingdom of God is not like human kingdoms (often portrayed as great trees) and starts from the tiniest of beginnings, providing protection for those who would take refuge there.

Context 2 Corinthians 5:6-10, (11-13), 14-17. In the first nine chapters of Paul’s second letter to the Christians at Corinth, the Apostle attempted to heal the breach that had arisen between him and them over various insults and snubs that they had exchanged since his previous visit with them a couple of years before. These chapters provide him with the opportunity to heal those wounds. In the immediate context of these verses, Paul describes to them his own limitations and sufferings by way of letting them know how he is willing to suffer – joyfully -- for their sake. For Paul it is Christ’s reconciling love for all that drives us and our love for Christ that transforms our relationship with Christ and with each other – transcending even whether we live or die.

Read Mark 4:26-34 and 2 Corinthians 5:6-10, (11-13), 14-17

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the story?

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

Read Mark 4:26-34 and 2 Corinthians 5:6-10, (11-13), 14-17 again.

Some reflection questions – Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

- Why do you think Jesus used agricultural metaphors?
- What might Jesus be stating about the kingdom of God through these parables (Mark 4:26-34)? [The kingdom of God is growing mysteriously—during the night when the farmer is asleep—or is bursting forth from the tiniest expressions into an astounding expansion – birds resting on a shrub.]
- Why did Jesus use parables to relate the mysterious of the gospel to the crowds?

- How might we be a living parable for the kingdom of God?
- What might Paul mean by saying that “from now on . . . we regard no one from a human point of view” (v. 16)?
- How does Paul’s affirmation that we are “new creations” make you feel? What does it mean?
- Take time to have each participant reflect on and then share their testimony of how God’s grace has affected their lives (should be less than five minutes). If they need help, outline what a testimony is:
 1. Life before encountering God’s grace
 2. Encountering God’s grace (Who was there? Where did it happen?) and
 3. How life has changed because of experiencing God’s grace?

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

Prayer (10 minutes). Each person prays sharing their answer the following statements:

I ask God for....

I thank God for.....

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, pray the closing prayer. Ask for a volunteer to lead the group or read the following prayer in unison:

God of transforming grace, we give you thanks for how you continually and faithfully work your redemption within each of us. Empower us not to be afraid or ashamed to share the life-altering encounter with your amazing grace in ways that are attractive and influential to others. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord’s Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven
hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.