

In his hands

Mark 4:26-29

June 17, 2012

Show me your hands.

Greg talked about hands last week, about how much more you can do with an open hand than with a closed fist. What can you do with your hands?

Screw in a light bulb, play the piano, write a story. Shake hands, rub someone's back, stroke a dog's head. Drive a car, send a text, take a photo. Cast a fly rod, paddle a canoe, dig a hole.

What can you hold in your hands?

A hammer. A pen. Someone else's hand.

Can you hold your life in your hands? Can you hold the future in your hands? Can you hold the whole world in your hands?

Jesus said: "The Kingdom of God is like this ..."

It's like doing a jigsaw puzzle. You start slowly, sorting the pieces, looking for patterns of color and shape. When a piece doesn't work, you keep trying and trying until you find the right one, and when, at last, everything is in its right place, you are finished!

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It's like building a house. You find a good piece of land and a house plan you like. You have detailed blueprints drawn up and you gather all the best materials and hire all the best contractors and craftsmen and set them to work. You monitor their progress, keep them on schedule, check the quality of their work, and make any necessary alterations as you see the house take shape. And when they are finished and when you are satisfied with the result and when you have added your own personal touches, you have a home!

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It's like climbing a mountain, a Himalayan peak. You choose your mountain and you choose your route. You assemble a team of expert climbers and you enlist capable support people: cooks and medics and porters and camp managers. You plan and you train and you stockpile equipment and supplies, you choose a date and make the travel arrangements. And when the time comes, when the time is right, if you have planned well and trained well, if the weather holds and your strength holds, if everybody does their job well, if you do your job well, you reach the top!

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It's like running for president. You choose a message and you stay on message. You tell people that you -- only you -- can help them fulfill their dreams. You assemble a team of expert strategists and you enlist capable support people: fundraisers and door-knockers and telephone-callers and volunteer coordinators. You tout your own virtues and you attack the weaknesses of your opponent. You build an ever broader base of support by debate and persuasion, by defining values and making promises, by building relationships and fashioning coalitions -- person-by-person, neighborhood-by-neighborhood, state-by-state. And if you do your job well, if your team does its job well, if you stay on message, if your message resonates in the hearts and minds of the people, if you have enough resources, if you have enough money ... you win!

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Jesus said: "The Kingdom of God is like this!"

A man scatters seed in his field. And he goes to bed! He sleeps at night and goes about his business during the day, and all the while, while he is sleeping, while he is out and about, going here and there, working and playing and being, the seeds are sprouting, the stalks are growing, the fruit is setting! And "when the grain is ripe, [he] starts cutting it with his sickle, because harvest time has come."

That's what Jesus said!

What does the man in Jesus' story do? He scatters the seed and harvests the grain. What doesn't he do? He doesn't make it grow and he doesn't even know how it all happens!

What do we do? Scatter seeds and enjoy the harvest. What can't we do? We can't control the process, or even understand it!

What does it mean to scatter seeds? Every Sunday we pray: "Your kingdom come, your will be done." We scatter seeds by doing the will of God. By doing what God wills, by doing what God wants, we plant seeds. Seeds of justice, seeds of peace, seeds of righteousness, seeds of shalom. Seeds of wholeness, seeds of fullness, seeds of plenty, seeds of joy.

We plant the seeds, but we don't make it happen. We can't bring justice or peace or shalom or joy into being. We can't bring the kingdom of God into being. We merely plant the seeds and, one day, we will enjoy the harvest!

One day, when God's kingdom comes in all its fullness, we will enjoy the harvest! Not "if," but "when!" And you have nothing to do with it, except planting the seeds. It doesn't depend on you.

Show me your hands. What can you hold in your hands?

Can you hold your life in your hands? Can you hold the future in your hands?
Can you hold the whole world in your hands?

*This is our Father's world:
O let us not forget
that though the wrong is great and strong,
God is the ruler yet!*

*This is my Father's world:
why should my heart be sad?
The Lord is King, let heaven ring!
God reigns; let earth be glad!*