

Whenever I hear the readings set for today I am reminded of a song written by an Australian musician Paul Kelly. Paul Kelly has written many fantastic songs and they often have a social justice theme. The song which I am reminded of has the chorus ‘From little things big things grow’.

It is a ballad which tells the story of Vincent Lingiari, who along with his people worked for rations on an outback station in the Northern Territory – and one day they had enough – and so they walked out. The manager of the station offered them wages, but Vincent Lingiari said no, enough’s enough, we want our land back. And in a sense the land rights movement for indigenous Australians began. Vincent became the leader *Gurindji* communities in August 1966 – and he changed not only his own nation, but an entire country. The protest led to the Commonwealth Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976. The Act gave Indigenous people freehold title to traditional lands in the Northern Territory and the power of veto over mining and development on those lands. In 1975, 3,236 km² of land was handed back to the Gurindji people. When he died in 1988 the understanding of land ownership and stewardship would never be the same again.

Paul Kelly’s song is the story of how one man, the decision of one person, at a single point in time, in a sense any person, can change the course of history. The final verse of the ballad is

*‘That was the story of Vincent Lingairri
But this is the story of something much more
How power and privilege cannot move a people
Who know where they stand and stand in the law’¹*

From little things, big things grow.....

How do we bring about change? How do we not rely on power and privilege, but rather knowing where the right place is to stand?

I find this a particularly vexing question how we change the way we see our world and value everyone as made in the image of God. How and where do we stand in a journey – especially at a time such as we are in now – when so much has changed and so much is uncertain?

The generations of old understood time so differently to us. We expect immediate changes, quick resolutions, lasting peace. The peoples of old understood that time is not about the moment, but in some ways more about the process – and in this some understanding, some wisdom, some transformation might come! It may be that we need to appreciate this notion

• ¹ [Lyrics](#) → [Paul Kelly](#) → [From Little Things Big Things Grow lyrics 1991](#)

for time when we become impatient about the recovery of our communities in the face of Covid19.

In the readings we have been hearing from Matthew's gospels over the past weeks we have been listening to endless parables as Jesus tries to help the people of Israel to understand the timeless and all-encompassing Kingdom of God. But why so many parables? Why so many stories? Why doesn't he just tell us all straight?

Well as we heard in last week's gospel – 'let those who have ears hear and those with eyes see!'

The bottom line is you never know what might click for you, when the connection will happen, for our faith, for what we believe. What illustration, what analogy will resonate? Which action will bring the needed change? Each day is different when it comes to being a disciple, and so the image, the story, the issue that clicks and helps us to understand is likely to be different. In some sense this seems to be the logic behind the many parables we are hearing.

After all, how does one depict the kingdom of heaven? The possible pictures of the kingdom of heaven are certainly not exhausted by Matthew, not even by Jesus. No one impression will suffice. And more importantly how are we challenged to see that we can make a difference now and see the kingdom of heaven now – if only we believe transformation and change is possible. How can we dare to imagine that things might be different? How are we inspired to believe that from little things big things grow!

Jesus shares his parables about the Kingdom of Heaven to a community who have a shared history, and shared understanding. Stories of trees in the Hebrew Bible often concern power and rule. So a tree that can grow from a mustard seed gives us an image of the kingdom of God that is more powerful, more pervading than any earthly kingdom.

Similarly a small drop of leaven (yeast) produces a lot when mixed with flour – the abundance of God's kingdom is greater than we can imagine or even perceive.

And then we have the hidden treasure in a field and then pearl of great value. Both indicating that the person who finds the treasure joyfully "sells all" to buy such a treasure. The Kingdom is so amazing we would give up everything else to enjoy it and be part of it.

So how do we hold this all together? We have images which remind us that time is beyond our understanding. We have images of great change emerging from a tiny starting seed of action. We have a people of faith who

have the promise of God's own land, God's Kingdom. We have God who is faithful to this promise despite our human failure. We have Jesus providing us with images of the power, abundance and joy which is present in this Kingdom and available to all creation if only we would embrace it.

Let those who have ears here and eyes see!

These parables and images work to reveal different facets about God and about our human condition, both personally and corporately. The parables don't argue for truth itself but show that what is true about God and about ourselves might be disclosed in the act of our wrestling with, resisting, and being pulled into truth. And it is through this that we can struggle with the confronting and difficult questions of our time.

In this sense these parables are about seeing, not only God, but also our true selves. Do we have the courage to see our weaknesses so that we can see the true context of the God's promise?

The readings we have heard today should disturb us, they are intended to challenge how we see God and ourselves.

If we are content with our lot in life, they are a challenge us to think about where God might be pushing us next, what seeds are waiting to bud and grow in and around us.

If we are angry with God, or ourselves or a that the world – they are a challenge to consider what healing we need – how we might need to be honest, and what we might need to let go of to find something more precious.

And at a time when we are all unsettled and uncertain– they are a challenge to what we might need to sort out, what needs to be kept and what needs to be thrown away.

In the end, we can be assured that the reason Jesus spends so much time explaining the kingdom of heaven is because we need to be reminded that it's there even when it seems so excruciatingly absent. The promise of the parables about the kingdom of heaven is that even when the kingdom is not seen, it is near. We may be struggling at present to see God's kingdom in our current context, but that does not mean it isn't there.

For this is a story of a God who is patient – and longs to change the world – and we are invited to remember that it is from tiny seeds of hope, *big things grow....*

Amen