



## Raquette Lake Chapel Sunday Reflection June 13, 2021

**This Sunday's Scripture:** 1 Samuel 15:34-16:13, Psalm 20, 2 Corinthians 5:6-17, Mark 4:26-34

### "Why do you teach us in parables?"

Chapter 4 in Mark begins a series of parables, and when Jesus's followers ask him about the meaning of the parables, and his reply is:

*To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables; in order that they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand... (see Mark 4:10-12)*

This is troubling for a modern reader. What is this big "secret" about? Who are "they"? Is Jesus talking about me? Why can't he just use plain language to say what he really means? A key word in Jesus's reply can give us a clue: "secret" in this translation. The Greek New Testament uses the Greek word "mysterion" or mystery.

There is a serious drought plaguing the western US. This past week the governor of Utah ordered a day of prayer for rain to end the drought. A story about praying for rain and mystery...

A small farming town was suffering with drought. One hot and dry Sunday, the pastor told his congregation, "There isn't anything that will save us except to pray for rain. Go home, pray, believe, and come back next Sunday ready to thank God for sending rain." The week passed, and the people returned to church the following Sunday. They were surprised when the Pastor gently chided them: "We can't worship today because you do not yet believe." One upset congregant stood up and claimed: "But we prayed, and we do believe." "Really? Then where are your umbrellas?"

The parables we read today in Mark are inviting us to bring our umbrellas and believe despite the mystery of the Kingdom of God and the mystery of faith as Jesus taught in his parables. The Kingdom reveals itself to us through faith, a faith that we cannot see or understand but a faith demonstrated in our lives: faith is made visible by our actions. As we struggle to find meaning in the parables of Mark in today's Gospel, we are well advised to remember that word mystery:

The growth of God's kingdom is mysterious.  
The growth of God's kingdom is momentous.  
The growth of God's kingdom is miraculous.

And why parables? The analogy to preparing soil, planting seed, watering, fertilizing is a parable we can all understand, even if we are baffled by how a plant comes from a seed. So let us not worry about the mystery of God, but enter into it willingly and confidently with faith. Let us thank God and proceed to live with our umbrella faith. (Thanks to Pastor Stephen Sizer for the story and theme of "mystery.")

**A Prayer:** Gracious God, we pray that you will aid those suffering from drought, bringing speedy relief. In times of trouble may Your name be on our lips so that you will nurture us and defend us. AMEN