

Green Shoots

With such an early year harvest seems a distant memory. We are now in the season of planting the winter crops of barley and wheat. As we look across fields which had looked brown and barren, suddenly we see rows of green as the tender shoots emerge, the first signs of next years harvest, full of promise of things to come. As farmers and gardeners alike will know there is always a sense of wonder and awe when we see this, the seemingly dead seed transformed.

In the bible there are two significant parables about these new shoots. Jesus uses them as a sign of his Kingdom.

He also said, “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, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.” Mark 4.26-29

And Paul uses the transformation of the grain to help describe the almost indescribable: what will happen to us after our death and the resurrection to come.

But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. 1 Corinthians 15.35-38

God is at the centre of both: all by itself the soil produces the grain, and God giving the body as he has determined showing the power of God in each.

Any farmer or gardener knows that we are not really in control. And soil is a wonder with billions of organisms in just a teaspoonful, a teeming incredible ecosystem powering the seed and plant towards the next harvest. And think of the acorn, the shoot comes from that and the soil powering the first saplings of oak trees into a forest such as Savernake.

As in a forest, so in the team are mighty spiritual oaks, but also ones that are old and dying. But there are saplings ready to grow. And there are indeed many spiritual green shoots around if we look, and this is a significant time as we have just licenced Sue as Team Rector. As we look at the green shoots in the fields, I hope these remind us of the green shoots in the team and in our communities and of the power of God behind them, the power that raised Christ from the dead. We pray for Sue, and for Steve as well, and keep praying that through God’s calling of each of one of us green shoots will mature to an abundant harvest by the power of God, to his glory and for his Kingdom.

Gerald Osborne