

St. Paul's Church
Proper 6-B

Wellsboro, PA
16 June 2024

[Laurel Festival weekend, for the 8:00 Service]

1 Samuel 15:34 - 16:13

Psalm 20

2 Corinthians 5: 6-10, 14-17

Mark 4: 26-34

DON'T UNDER-ESTIMATE

A packet of yeast kneaded into a mound of dough.
The tiniest morning-glory seed buried in the dirt.
A simple smile and hello - a stranger passing on the street.
Don't under-estimate the smallest thing.
The yeast we know raises the dough in a wonderful aroma for our bread.
The morning-glory bursts from the earth and climbs the lamp post
with burst with displays of colored blossoms.
That simple smile brightens the dismal day of someone whom you never met.
Don't under-estimate the smallest, seemingly insignificant act.

For years, I've been intrigued by the writings of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin,
"Teilhard" for short,
a French Jesuit priest, palaeontologist, and evolutionary theorist.
At one point in *The Human Phenomenon* - his magnum opus -
Teilhard describes the earth - and all creation -
as a living moving being,
using as one example the swaying and rising of tectonic plates.
I can extend Teilhard's imagery by believing Mother Earth beneath us
anxious for us to plant those seeds of faith and hope and love.
Then, as Jesus suggests, we go to sleep not knowing what fruit to expect
from our labor.

I read *The Phenomenon* on a plane ride to New Mexico with a band of Scouts.
As we waited in the airport to return home to Pennsylvania
I played a little fun with my boys.
Teilhard also talks about two, three and four dimensions of reality.
I take my pen and draw a dot on my hand.
"So, guys," I said to the four or five gathered near me, "What's this?"
"A dot on you hand."
"Yes, but what if this simple dot expands to a circle,
and then points to a sphere?"

And I lost two of them.
I pointed to the ink mark one more time.
“So, again, what’s this?”
“A dot.”
“Yes, but what if this dot expands to a line,
and presages a line, and then a square, and grows into a cube?”
Two more walked away.
But I could see that Justin was thinking.

A few hours later we are flying over corn fields in Virginia,
preparing to land at Dulles airport in Washington.
Justin is sitting in the seat next to me, and points out the window.
“Father Ed, I get it.” And he beckons me to look outside.
“From here, it looks two-dimensional, but I know it’s three dimensions.”
“And what about time?” I asked.
“Oh, man. That’s it. Corn!”
Planting seeds of inspiration.
Every once in a while I, well, plant seeds.
Four or five of the guys walked away, they still liked me,
and invited me to be a part of their Eagle ceremonies.
But one, just one, touched eternity,
and perhaps - just perhaps - grew further into his appreciation of God
and the wonder of Creation.

St. Augustine of Hippo wrote:
“Faith is to believe what you do not see;
the reward for this faith is to see what you believe.”
That table-spoon of yeast, the paper packet of morning-glories,
a simple smile and hello, a seed of intrigue expanding the mind.
Don’t under-estimate what God will do with the seemingly insignificant.

I’m struck, in closing, by words of Janet Morley
in her collection *All Desires Known*:
Christ our teacher,
you reach into our lives
not through instruction, but story.
Open our hearts to be attentive:
that seeing, we may perceive,

and hearing, we may understand,
and understanding, may act upon your word,
in your name. Amen.

London: SPCK, 1992