
Parables from *Reading The Bible in a Pandemic*

Shared by Gail Burnaford:

In Mark 4:30, the writer tells us that Jesus said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it?”

Let me tell you a story about birds and people who love them. On any given day, there are people in your neighborhood, on your block, in your building and maybe even in your house or apartment who are watching. These people are alert and mindful of their surroundings. They may not appear to be so to most people, except when these watchers are actually caring binoculars, or forgetting to watch where they are going because they are looking up in trees or at the sky. But they are watchful.

These people are also listeners. They become still, may stop walking on the sidewalk or path, and simply listen. And then, they pull out their phones, or tiny writing pads and make a note.

I know that these bird watchers are there – even though I am isolated and often alone during this pandemic. I know this, because I often go to my computer and search for Sightings Near Me. Sploosh! On the screen, there are dozens of dots showing all those watchers and listeners in the neighborhood. Then, if I scroll down a bit, I can see the exact birds that these fellow travelers have seen today! And yesterday! I can even see the time each sighting was made – 8:37 a.m., 12:15 p.m. or 4:35 p.m.

Somehow, this makes me feel less alone. Even though I do not know these people, even though I may never see these people, I know they are out there – caring and watching and listening – and reminding me to be mindful and aware ...aware of my surroundings, the natural world and my place in humanity.

The Gospel of Luke (13:18) says that Jesus asked, “What is the kingdom of God like? And to what should I compare it? Mark ‘answers’ and says that the kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground. (4:26)

During this pandemic, it seems like a good time to remember that there are indeed dozens of dots showing all those watchers and listeners in the neighborhood. They are all out there, busy naming and celebrating what is all around us...on my behalf and for me and with me. We are in the kingdom of God – right here, right now – like seeds scattered on the ground.

Shared by Karin Croft:

"And He said to them: 'should not religions come together in hard times over shared bread?'"

When it came time for the Easter celebration, as it is now known but was not then, the baker planned her ritual meal to begin with the breaking of bread and sharing of the cup of wine. The baker, a woman, went to the market but found that none of the stalls had flour for sale nor yeast. How could she bake? She went to one of the disciples for help who collected flour on her behalf but could not find any yeast.

Word of her need spread and soon the Rabbi's baker paid her a visit to recount the history of the Jews hasty flight from Egypt resulting in the unleavened bread eaten in commemoration at Passover. And the Imam's baker heard about the woman's quandary and came to tell of flat breads baked on hot stones for the iftar after each day's Ramadan fast.

The woman took these stories back, and baked and baked. She then shared her soft, flat breads with those celebrating Easter, Passover and Ramadan. Their common lot brought them together to break bread, but in their own ways.