

**Sermon Preached  
by Doug King  
13th Sunday in Ordinary Time  
June 29th 2003  
Mark 4:30-32**

A couple of weeks ago on Pentecost, someone mentioned to me how much they enjoyed the red paraments which are the liturgical color of the day. The vibrant colored fabrics hanging from the front of the lectern and the pulpit were festive and bold. As you can see, today's paraments are green as they have been for the past several weeks. Now do not get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with the color green. But over the next four months we will be seeing quite a bit of green. Green is the liturgical color of ordinary time and we will be in ordinary time until we reach the deep blue of advent. Occasionally we will get a brief respite of white for a communion Sunday or All Saints, but we had better just settle in for a whole lot of green. I do love a deep forest green or even a bright kelly green. But there are just too many green Sundays for my taste, too many Sundays in ordinary time.

Do we really want to gather for worship in ordinary time? It does not sound that enthrallingly exciting to me. It gives me an appreciation for those folks who choose to just hit the highpoints every year, you know the Christmas and Easter folks. I have even toyed with the idea of building more liturgical holidays into our calendar. What about the feast of Saint Paul in July sometime, we could use the color orange and shake things up a bit? Or John of Patmos Sunday in September complete with hot pink paraments?

Okay, perhaps we are not quite ready for hot pink paraments. I am really not giving ordinary time and the color of green a fair shake. The reason green is the color of ordinary time is that it is symbolic of growth. And growth is a vital part of our spiritual tradition as we seek to grow in faith and understanding of our God each day. But let's face it, green is the color of grass and no one has ever been overwhelmed sitting around watching grass grow. Most of us prefer the kind of growth that brings us those stunning moments of color when a yellow tulip opens or a blue iris raises up.

But unfortunately most of the growth in our spiritual lives comes in the grass growing variety. It tends to be slow and relatively unremarkable. Once in a while we may come to worship or be walking down the street and we suddenly gain some large insight into our relationship with God or have this intense emotional experience of feeling the presence of God. But most of the days of our lives are green and the growth is slow going. We might learn a little something new about the Bible, or the declaration of pardon might hit home and we feel forgiven in a way we have not before. Or we might just find ourselves a little more centered when we leave worship or after a time of prayer.

A pastor once complained that he worked so hard on his sermons and in the end so few of them were ever really that memorable. A few days after he preached them no one particularly remembered them. He felt he was not providing his congregation with an effective worship experience. A friend of his responded by saying that worship and preaching is like home cooking. You may not be able to name and remember every meal you have eaten in the past year but it does not mean that you have not been sustained and fed by them.

This is true for our spiritual lives and our many green-worship-ordinary-time Sundays together as well. Now I know nothing about the gestational period of mustard seeds or how quickly the bushes grow. My guess is that it is not all that dynamic or dramatic to watch.

Let's face it, to quote the illustrious theologian Kermit the Frog, "It is not easy being green." It is not easy being in what one might call the slow lane of spiritual growth. But that is the way it is for the most of us. We glean a scrap of wisdom one day and then on another day we get a hint of a sense of God's presence in our midst, in some way. We take these hints and these scraps and lay them down on our jigsaw puzzle image of God and we do our best to put the pieces together. And you know what? These are perhaps the most important pieces of the puzzle, these pieces we gather in ordinary time in our ordinary living. As much as God is present with us in the dramatic moments

of our liturgical year and the dramatic moments of our lives, when we recognize God in the ordinary, in the green, we are being the gift to recognize God all of the time.

Today as we have baptized Ian and we commission our youth group to go to Maine, we are reminded that there are lots of steps on the road to maturity. Right now Ian has to have all his needs met for him by others. Today he can make no promise to seek to be faithful to God. Today we have made the promise to teach him all we can about being faithful that one day he will claim the faith as his own. As we commission our Senior Highs for their mission trip some of us can remember when these teenagers were young tots themselves and they were baptized.

But today we no longer make promises for them. They have made their own decision to grow in the faith. And as they go out into the world to help those in need, We find that we are no longer teaching them but they are teaching us, about what it means to be faithful. There are so many steps on the journey.

This summer I hope we have the opportunity to have some slow ordinary green moments, on our porches, during evening walks, reading, and listening to the sounds of summer. And I hope we are all given the opportunity to glimpse some hint of God in the midst of the ordinary green.

Amen.