

There's a line in the Coptic Prayer of Commendation which always moves me deeply

*"If he sinned against you in his life*

*Forgive him and pardon him,*

*Because you created us for life, not for destruction "*

In these seemingly apocalyptic times we can easily forget that God's intent is not to destroy but to save. We project our failure to care for the world, and each other, on to God. God's desire however remains benign- this is Jesus as intended, coming both to save us from ourselves and to complete God's purpose for creation. Today we hear two of three "seed" parables – the first is the longest and the most threatening, not heard today, the one in which the seed falls in various places and comes to various ends, most of them bad. The second and third parables stand in stark contrast to this. The second indeed in complete almost comic contradiction to the first – far from the seed meeting various ends God's will is at work to grow it all to completion. The last parable reassures even the most fearful and weakest of disciples that God can produce great things from and through us even though we may feel and appear to be failing, of little consequence, making no difference to the enormity of the project God has begun- the restoration of all creation to God. But this is not to leave the matter entirely in God's hands. That first parable still matters. God is at work in us but we still need to trust that this is so.

There was a fascinating article in yesterday's Guardian Review on the science of epigenetics. This presents a far more nuanced and complex understanding of how nature and nurture interact than was traditionally accepted. It's now clear that we inherit both negative and positive influences from previous generations. Trauma indeed is trans- generational but so indeed is good. One might say that original sin still echoes but it's affects and the memory of it, can be overturned by fresh memories of good, the good we do to one another, or better, God does when we cooperate with God's original intention. Without an obvious religious intent the author of the review concludes with an affirmation of '*cathedral thinking*', that is, working now for the benefit of future generations. This long-term thinking, however, as its title suggests, is essentially religious, trusting, that is, that we have a larger purpose than mere survival: that good is an end in itself however small it's beginnings

One ecologist was said to remark that faced with knowing the world would end tomorrow, he would go and plant a tree. As Paul says , hope would not be hope, if we knew it's result, were certain. We gain hope *here* in the future by revisiting Br. Herbert's legacy of propagating geraniums to grace the courtyard whatever comes. I could also talk about kicking the future into the long grass but that's another story, another parable, for another time. Still, the seed has been sown.

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