We are made in the image of God – as the Bible says in Genesis. Tzelem Elohim in Hebrew, Genesis 1:27 but also James 3 – you find it! Somehow or other we are created like God. How?

Well as a species we are notoriously creative. Gardening is key in that. Joanna arrived with her brother Malcolm on Thursday at midnight. Thursday morning I was frantically watering the plants. Why don’t they recover immediately when I have just left them. I’m sure I watered them only a few days before. I wish I worked with Ezekiel – where God would take the dried out tree and make it flourish. God uses us, of course, but ultimately God is in charge whatever rubbish we do with the world.

The Bible starts with a garden, it was mostly an agricultural world. Jesus is arrested in a garden, buried in another garden, Mary meets the gardener who is Jesus and it no accident that the last chapter of the last book of the Bible is focused on the tree of life by an eternal stream –the same tree of life as in Genesis.

Do gardening and you plant and allow the natural processes, set up by God, to take the mustard seed or young tree and develop it into something wonderful. In reality there is almost as much mystery about how it does that, in most of our eyes, as there was then. But there is also harmony here. Hand in hand the creator human with the creator God.

So Jesus tells the mustard seed story and that of the farmer who sows and harvests. Both are hard work, as is the removal of weeds and irrigation, but being concerned about the biochemical activity inside the seed, the complexity of matching genes, the physics of osmotic pressure of water on the husk – it is all irrelevant. In practice, in reality, the farmer trusts – almost as much now as they did then.

There are many interpretations to such parables, but surely one is – as Jesus calls it – the kingdom of God is like. We are that kingdom and the skill is knowing when to sow the seed. Leave the rest to God.

At a zoom forum yesterday one lady was talking about the number of children that have not returned to Sunday School after the pandemic. What will happen to the church if we don’t get them back, she said, almost in desperation. Don’t get me wrong, I love a full church and a burgeoning Sunday School, but ultimately, ultimately that is not about our efforts. We absolutely must trust in God who takes the most meagre seed we sow and sometimes creates greatness out of it, and sometimes sees it pass away on the desert air. The mystery of growth of the grain, provided we do not botch up the process by leaving it to become a desert wilderness, the mystery of growth is in the hands of God. We can wring our hands in sadness or raise them in joy, but the basis for optimism about our future rests in God, the giver of growth and the sole determiner of the time for the harvest.

The whole context of all life is in the creation of God, and we are co-creators. Music, art, architecture all hum with the same nature of God when we do the same creation.

Paul uses some clear imagery that takes us one step further. He says that we are a new creation. Of course the body and brain are the same but the spirit, each of our spirits is, as Jesus describes to Nicodemus, newly born from above. Growing in faith happens – we know it does, and that growth is also mysterious, in each of us, given the space, the minimum water for life, the faith seed grows in us and others, to God’s glory.