

Food for Thought: The Importance of Grass



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One day recently, while reading Michael Card's *Mark: the Gospel of Passion*, a certain phrase caught my attention. It was just part of a sentence, yet I knew it was true and important. It was this: "...Jesus, for whom all of life is a living parable...." It is easy to learn things from the world around us if we just stop for a moment and think about entirely common things. Grass is an example. What could be more common? Yet it plays crucial roles our world.

For one thing, grass roots hold soil in place, a critical job. Grass literally holds the world together. In times and places where drought or other conditions leave no living grass, such places are plagued with sandstorms, dust storms, and the loss of the land's fertility. People are like grass. In whatever setting—our churches, schools, workplaces, senior centers, hospitals, families, civic groups, enthusiast clubs, volunteer fire fighter units, etc.—the people hold things together. Without them, or with far too few of them, such entities couldn't exist. Without people—all of them playing a role, even though those roles might seem thoroughly unspectacular (sometimes just showing up can be important)—destruction or chaos (like dust storms) will fill the void.

Grasses also are a key to feeding us—both through grains like wheat, oats, corn, rice, etc. and through the meat, eggs, and dairy products we get from the animals who eat grass.

And while people tend to think only of trees as the key to providing us with oxygen and reducing the carbon dioxide in the air, all green plants perform this function. Grass also, like all green plants, also absorbs water and in the process regulates temperature (the shade under a tree is always cooler than the shade under a manmade roof; likewise, a grassy lawn is about 30 degrees cooler than asphalt and 15 times cooler than dirt alone). Grasses play no small part, then, in providing us with air and an environment we can live in. They comprise 20% of the world's vegetation. Thus, as small and commonplace as it appears, grass plays a vital role in keeping us alive. In the same way, God uses common ordinary people to bring life and some amount of protection (through their actions and their words) to those around them.

Finally, grasses are diverse. There are 10,000 species, with some varieties able to survive in Siberia, some varieties able to survive in alpine conditions, and some able to survive in great heat. We too are diverse. And it is because we are varied that we are able to produce successful societies—both large scale and small-scale—from the most complex large cities to the small towns, from the folks who put on the local flea market to those who form a church, staff a soup kitchen, keep historical societies and libraries alive, and maintain friendships.

--Sally (McKenney) Mahoney