

The Seed

A man once said: Why such reluctance? If you only followed the parables you yourselves would become parables and with that rid of all your daily cares.

Another said: I bet that is also a parable.

The first said: You have won.

The second said: But unfortunately only in parable.

The first said: No, in reality: in parable you have lost.

—Franz Kafka

A traveling hobo left the villagers a seed. He said, “Plant this seed. It will grow into a mighty tree. You will be able to eat the fruit of the tree and plant the new seeds to grow more trees.”

The villagers marveled at such a gift. So they built an altar and set the seed up high where all could see and worship it. The seed was honored with syrupy praise and boring sermons. It was prayed to for help when people needed it. At night the villagers would sleep peacefully in their beds, knowing that the seed would protect them.

Years later some cynics arose, who gazed upon the bulb, now locked in a museum display case. They couldn’t figure out why the seed was still getting so much attention, especially since the village had by then become a city with modern technology and all that.

“Why don’t we just throw the seed away?” they asked.

But the old-timers wouldn’t hear of it.

“You blasphemers!” they cried. “Don’t you know that the seed is the meaning of life for us, as it should be for you? We would be lost without its oracles to guide us!”

“We can go our own way,” the cynics replied. “We don’t need the seed to tell us what to do. Besides, if you haven’t noticed, the seed doesn’t talk anyway. It just sits there in its case getting moldy.”

“You cannot trust yourselves,” the holders-on countered angrily. “For you are nothing but weak and impotent human beings. We must rely on a power greater than ourselves to help us!”

“Man is the measure of all things!” the cynics proclaimed, puffing out their chests. “We are the masters of the universe!”

War broke out between those who believed in and those who doubted the seed. When the smoke finally cleared, it turned out that everyone on both sides had been killed.

Shortly thereafter the old hobo returned and planted the seed in the ground.