

**June 13<sup>th</sup> 2021**

**A small beginning with a large result.**

**Scripture:** Psalm 20; Mark 4:26-34

Do you know the ad that says – from little things, big things grow?

This is exactly what Jesus was saying about the Kingdom of

God – from a very small beginning there can be a large result.

Most of chapter 4 of Mark is filled with a collection of parables, not a chronological description of Jesus' teaching on a specific day.

And we read in Psalm 20 that David was also talking about the power of the Kingdom of God as he tells us that the empires and kingdoms that had arisen would soon vanish in the dust.

And why is that? Because there is no fire-power in man-made things – there is only power in God alone – who can preserve a nation or an individual. God gives us eternal victory.

Now most Rabbi's in Jesus' day told stories – that is how people could understand about God. Faith was shared by telling stories and handing this down through the generations – until the written word was more sophisticated.

I love stories, there is always something more in them than what meets the eye. A moral, a hint at what we can do to grow from the story.

This is why Jesus told parables or stories. So that the crowd that gathered could relate and be opened to the truth of what He was saying.



The land was mostly used for farming, thus stories about seeds, harvest and growth would be very familiar to the crowd. These two parables have a lot in common with each other, apart from the seeds – they both tell us something about what the kingdom of God is like.

We may look around in our Church today and say – it is just not happening. We are a small church in a community of people, majority of whom do not know Christ. We gather every Sunday to share God's Word, sing praises to Him and share the hope we have in Christ.

We provide Outreach programs, Bible study and small groups in an effort to reach out. Some people come in and stay, but many others come and go.

We pray and work hard to see our church grow, but no matter what we do, we seem to stay about the same size. **What is happening?**

Or it may be that you have family or a friend or neighbour who does not know Christ. You have made it a priority to spend time with them, to get to know them, to really become friends. From time to time you share with them about your faith as you have opportunity. They are polite to you whenever you bring it up, but they do not seem to have any interest in Christ themselves. You pray for them and have invited them to church multiple times, but they still haven't come. **What is happening?**

The answers lie in these two parables – the growing seed and the mustard seed. Jesus told these parables in order to encourage us to keep on sharing Christ even when we do not see results.

The kingdom of God does not always grow the way we think it should grow. And so we need to grasp hold of these parables so that we may understand how God's kingdom grows and what is our part in it all.

Each parable has its own important truth to teach us about God's kingdom and how God's kingdom grows.

So let's look at the first parable of the growing seed. Jesus used this parable to explain that although Christianity had very small beginnings, it would grow into a world-wide community of believers. Jesus' main message was all about the kingdom of God. Jesus proclaimed that God's kingdom had drawn near in His own person. In fact, most of Jesus' parables have to do with the kingdom of God.

### Growing seed.

All the gardeners will know this – not much use in gardening if you get the right soil, fertilizer, water regularly and make sure it is situated right – if that is all you do. You don't plant any seeds.

### **How can you harvest a crop if there is nothing there?**

You could double your efforts, work twice as hard, twice as long – but you will never grow a crop. You have no seeds to plant.

The parable of the sower is the need to plant seeds as a means of sharing God's word with other people.

So if we are to see God's kingdom grow, our small church grow, we must share God's word with others, especially the good news of Jesus Christ as found in the gospel. No seeds, no plants, no growth. It is that simple.

**From this parable, the question is:** “Are we planting the seeds? Are we sharing God's word with other people? Are we sharing the gospel?”

Because if we are not, we will see no growth. If we want to see God's kingdom grow, we must plant the seeds.

### But it is God who makes His kingdom grow.

For Jesus tells us that we must plant the seeds but it is God who makes them grow. We read that, while we sleep, the seed

sprouts and grows – but we don't know how. Of course, we still are active in the garden, watering, feeding, removing weeds – but that's not the point Jesus is making. The point is that once the seed has been planted, the germination of the seed takes place apart from our efforts.

The germination of the seed is a mystery. It takes place underground where you can't see what's going on. Unless we have studied horticulture we are unsure what is actually happening under the soil. People have sung to their plants but all we can do is keep checking. Then one day we see a small green shoot emerge from the soil.

God's word is the same as it is living and active. Just like the seed in the good soil has the life force in it ready to grow, so the gospel has the power to bring salvation to everyone who believes. Our job is to plant the seeds. But God is the one who makes it grow. We need to be patient and give it time and trust God to do His work.

As long as we are planting seeds, then we can be confident that some of the seeds are going to grow. One day, perhaps when we least expect it, the plants are finally ripe and ready for harvest. One day, a person may walk through the door because we had planted a seed in the past. We must plant the seeds. God will make His kingdom grow.

### The Mustard Seed

In this 2<sup>nd</sup> parable Jesus contrasts a very small beginning with a large result. The mustard seed is tiny.

God's kingdom starts small but He promises that His harvest will be magnificent and prolific – the best fruit ever grown.

We may think this strange as God is so big, and Jesus was proclaiming the Kingdom of God had come – yet – what is seen? An ordinary looking man named Jesus accompanied by

a bunch of men with various dispositions and schooling. Fairly insignificant if you compare them to the Roman soldiers.

But God is interested in changing people's hearts and lives one person at a time. He doesn't seek out the brightest and the best, He seeks out sinners who know they need a Saviour.

God's kingdom will grow large.

As Jesus said, the Kingdom of God may start small but will grow large and fruitful. To help the people understand this, Jesus chose the tiniest seed out - the mustard seed which grows into a very large plant.

We see this in the worldwide spread of the gospel. Jesus started with 12 ordinary men – He taught them, challenged them to grow and to step out with confidence to share the gospel which has grown to penetrate every country in every continent on the earth. There are still unreached people within many of those countries, but the gospel continues to go forth and God's kingdom continues to grow.

Imagine how the disciples would react now – I am sure they would be overwhelmed and praise God for their part in His Kingdom.

We may be a small church, want to be bigger and to reach more people who need Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. But we need to realize that we are part of a huge movement of God that is reaching the nations with the gospel.

We want our Church to grow and reach more people and we need to be active in growing the seed. When we plant our seed – with just a word, smile, book, chat – we MUST also pray. And pray in faith and thank God that He is growing His Kingdom in the world and growing it right here in Chelsea in our little church.

And just like the mustard seed that grows into a large plant with branches that provide support and shelter for the birds, our church will grow to provide support and shelter, belonging and hope to our community.

God's kingdom is growing and one day it will fill the whole earth. And if we are in Christ, then we are a part of that. And that should be a great encouragement to us all, even when we feel like we are such a small part of all that God is doing in the world.

Our faith, no matter how small, can join with that of other faithful followers of Christ in every part of the world to accomplish great things.

We need to keep our eyes on the great harvest to come and not allow bad soil or weeds to discourage us from faithful service and witness because the Word of God is a powerful growth agent.