

## **A SEEDY STORY?**



**Scripture:**

**Psalm 20**

<sup>1</sup>The LORD answer you in the day of trouble! The name of the God of Jacob protect you! <sup>2</sup>May he send you help from the sanctuary, and give you support from Zion. <sup>3</sup>May he remember all your offerings, and regard with favor your burnt sacrifices. *Selah*

<sup>4</sup>May he grant you your heart's desire, and fulfill all your plans. <sup>5</sup>May we shout for joy over your victory, and in the name of our God set up our banners. May the LORD fulfill all your petitions.

<sup>6</sup>Now I know that the LORD will help his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with mighty victories by his right hand. <sup>7</sup>Some take pride in chariots, and some in horses, but our pride is in the name of the LORD our God. <sup>8</sup>They will collapse and fall, but we shall rise and stand upright.

<sup>9</sup>Give victory to the king, O LORD; answer us when we call.

**Mark 4:26-34**

Jesus also said,

<sup>26</sup>“The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, <sup>27</sup>and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. <sup>28</sup>The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. <sup>29</sup>But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.”

<sup>30</sup>He also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? <sup>31</sup>It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; <sup>32</sup>yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

<sup>33</sup>With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; <sup>34</sup>he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

**This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!**



## PARABLES

The fires of last October have taught us major lessons in life. Chris Rhodes shared an inspiring story of his family's recovery and faith last Sunday. The sharing of these stories is so important!

Jesus shared lessons in stories called parables which always had a life lesson to take along on our journeys in life.

### THE TINY FAITH OF A MUSTARD SEED

Today's parable was about how the kingdom of God is building up in and around us day and night. And even with just the tiny faith of a mustard seed, you can participate and help build up the kingdom of God even if you feel insignificant and small. You can be a faith sower and create something (such as this church) into a place where the community views us as a safe strong place of care and nurturing, like the way birds found shelter in the grown mustard plants. We were that strong mustard plant refuge during the firestorms and this church continues to provide care and a safe shelter in other ways, too.

### A SAFE AND CARING PLACE

Just last week the twenty-seven children who attended the wonderful Peace Lab Vacation Bible School arrived trusting we were going to be a safe caring place for them every morning. Last week was an example of the kingdom of God flourishing and blooming! Children sang, laughed, ate, learned and created.

Your enthusiasm and positive promotion of our church to the community is another way the tiny seed of faith can grow into a strong tree. When you share with your friends and family how your life is stronger and your roots of faith are deeper because you have a faith community supporting you, they might decide to check us out.

All of us have seeds of faith planted within. Yet many things can come along in

life that can hinder the growth of faith, such as an abusive family life, poverty causing both parents to have to work so much they can't get their kids to church, low self-esteem, a feeling of being too different from the mainstream, or letting the busyness of life take a higher priority.

### HEALING AND RESTORATION

Yet the kingdom of God is still growing. God doesn't give up on us! Evidence that the kingdom of God is growing is found in the healing and restoration that happened after the fires.

I wondered why the recently charred hillsides looked so lush compared to the areas that had not been burned. I found that some plants require fire for their seeds to sprout. For example, the lodgepole pine and eucalyptus trees have cones and fruits that can only open to release their seeds after the heat of a fire has physically melted the resin that seals them. Other shrubs and annual plants require the chemical signals from smoke and charred plant matter to break seed dormancy. Some of these plants will only sprout in the presence of such chemicals and can remain buried in the soil seed bank for decades until a wildfire awakens them.

After fire triggers the growth, some plants can even reach full flowering stage in just nine days following a fire!

**Our God has created nature with amazing resilience that provides us with signs of hope and healing and resurrection.**

According to the University of California Weed Report, burning usually favors the increase of mustard plants. Mustard seeds on the soil during a grassland fire are not likely to be killed by the heat of the burn. They are

like superheroes! No fire, or storm, or drought can kill them!

I love going out to the mustard fields in the spring! I'm not allergic to them! The mustard plants came back to Kenwood. And the mustard creates a good backdrop for photos. The mustard field in Kenwood is beautiful, but mustard is considered a weed.

### **A MUSTARD SEED SUPERHERO**

Jesus used the tiny but mighty ordinary looking mustard seed for the example of faith and the kingdom of God in today's parable. I Google searched for an image of a superhero mustard seed character.

I even considered drawing a mustard seed superhero with a cape and batman type outfit and we could call him Mustard Man or something. But I'm not a good artist. I did find Wonder Woman pondering about this parable though!

This image was on a church website blog. Pastor Gini and her Assistant, Pastor Tim, are Episcopal priests at St. John's Church in Georgetown, Virginia. They have a fun sense of humor!

The kingdom of God is described as seeds that grow and sprout without our intervention. They are so strong and prolific we don't have to do much but trust, have faith, and do the sowing of the seeds. God's mysterious power will grow the kingdom of God no matter what we do.

### **WORK ON A FARM**

As someone who grew up on a farm, I know what it takes to prepare a field, spread the seeds, cultivate, fertilize, water, and tend to the plants so they will flourish. But there are examples where you can just throw some seeds around on the ground without tending to them and the seeds will find a way to take root and grow no matter how little attention you pay to them.

### **PLANTING PEAS**

My mother loves to tell the story about how she told my two brothers, Larry and Jerry, to plant some peas.

When they were about nine and ten, Mom asked them to go to the garden that she had prepared and plant some peas. They were in the middle of playing but she said it was important so they did it.

However, Mom had a funny feeling. She thought it seemed like they finished the job very fast. So she brought them into the kitchen and asked if they had planted the seeds like she asked. They swore they did so she didn't worry. Then a few weeks later she was looking for her peas to start growing in the garden and found none. But over the fence within throwing distance, she spotted some peas starting to grow a vine up the other side of the garden fence! She brought the boys over to it and said, "I wonder how these peas got all the way over on the other side of the fence from our garden? Any ideas?" They were caught!

### **GROWING, SPREADING AND BLOOMING**

The California poppies that Steve Fenner scattered around our Community Garden are amazing examples of seeds that just keep on growing and spreading and blooming! Our church is doing the same, slowly but steadily and faithfully.

**What lesson is God teaching us when we ponder the idea that tiny simple things, like mustard seeds, can grow up to be mighty and resilient and even more so after suffering things like the wildfires?**

It goes to show that you don't have to be a huge redwood tree. You can participate in the kingdom of God as an ordinary weed. Even if you don't feel like a strong mustard

plant that can withstand the firestorms that come along in life, God has given you many other plants around you to help hold you up against the wind and to help you trust that God is at work in the world.

### **CHARIOTS OF FIRE**

Champion runner, Eric Liddell inspired the book and screenplay, *Chariots of Fire*. In it he explains faith and the kingdom of God this way to a fellow runner, "You came to see a race today, to see someone win. It happened to be me. But I want you to do more than just watch a race. I want you to take part in it. I want to compare faith to running in a race. It's hard. It requires concentration of will and energy of soul.

"So who am I to say, 'Believe, have faith,' in the face of life's realities? I would like to give you something more permanent, but I can only point the way. I have no formula for winning the race of faith. Everyone runs in her own way, or his own way. And where does the power come from, to see the race to its end? From within. Jesus said, 'Behold, the Kingdom of God is within you. If with all your hearts, you truly seek me, you shall surely find me.'"

### **GOD IS AT WORK**

Jesus was trying to help his disciples have faith that they could have an impact in a world of problems where the Roman government was overpowering the ordinary citizens everywhere. Jesus was reassuring them that God is at work even in places we can't see.

Don't dismay when there is distressing breaking news and our society seems to be getting less stable and more selfish. Trust that God is at work building up the kingdom of God even at the border, even on behalf of the little children being separated from their parents.

Trust and then answer the call to be a sower and sow seeds of hope, resist bullying, resist hate and discrimination, protest

the mistreatment of children, and sincerely ponder ways to do your part in representing the kingdom of God to the world until God brings it to its fullness, on earth as it is in heaven. Plant your seeds of faith in your little corner of the world and trust that God will help them flourish and grow.

Today we can thank the fathers among us who have already helped their children grow and continue to help build up the kingdom for us all!

Remember not all heroes wear capes.



### **Benediction:**

**And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen**



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