

The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed...

It is a simple comparison. The kingdom of God is like a tiny seed that eventually grows up into a very large plant. It starts small and ends up tall.

From a historical perspective, we can see the truth of Jesus’ words. One teacher and twelve disciples changed the world forever. Long before the era of instant communication, Jesus told his followers to make disciples of all nations. Any reasonable person would’ve concluded that was a ridiculous idea. There’s no way something like that could be done. Except, it was. Today, there are people around the world who trust in Jesus and follow Him. The tiny seed has grown explosively.

However, this mustard seed story has even more to say to us. It can help us to find God’s Kingdom in the right places. It can help us to recognize the hand of God at work.

What does Jesus want us to notice in this comparison? It’s that a teeny-tiny seed becomes a gargantuan bush—in some cases, mustard plants grow to fourteen feet tall! And in pointing out this sharp contrast, Jesus seems to be saying, “Don’t ever underestimate my kingdom. It may not look like much, but it is packed with power and life. It may not look like anything is happening, but in the end, you’ll see.”

It’s here where our lesson really begins. If the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, then that means it starts out small. It seems tiny and insignificant. Actually, the thing it is trying to accomplish seems ridiculous and impossible.

God’s kingdom seems to offer so little: a splash of water on the head; a round wafer and a sip of wine; people who are just like me; and lots of words from an old book.

And though those words may seem insignificant; though they may seem to have nothing to do with solving the problem you’re going through; though those words may seem like a tiny voice drowned out by louder ones; those words about Jesus are the mustard seed, packed with power and life. From this seed something totally new and unexpected takes root and grows. That something new is faith in Jesus; the surprising, Spirit-led ability to trust in Jesus for life, forgiveness, and meaning.

Jesus Himself could be compared to a mustard seed. When He was born in Bethlehem, it was like a mustard seed being planted in the ground. Hardly anyone noticed, outside of the angels and the shepherds. By worldly standards, it was an insignificant event. As Jesus grew up, he tried to tell those who would listen that He had been sent from the Father to give his life for the world. It all seemed ridiculous and impossible, especially when Jesus was executed on a cross. Surely this had been one big, tragic mistake, and Jesus’ death marked the end of another tiny life played out on planet Earth.

But the seed had not stopped growing. On that first Easter, the earth shook as a living Jesus exploded from His grave. His great tree of life continued to grow as He ascended into heaven and sent his Holy Spirit to his friends, and they began preaching his words with fire and passion. Two thousand years later the kingdom of God still preaches repentance leading to the forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name. From one seed, the redemption of the world has grown. Jesus himself started small—born of a human mother in a stable—and ends up tall—lifted up on a cross; raised up from the dead; taken up into heaven to guide and govern our world until its end.

This is the principle by which God operates: from humble and almost embarrassing beginnings—he works remarkable growth by connecting people to His Son. With a splash of water on the head and His own name, God adopts a person as His own and gives them the gift of trust in Jesus. With a round wafer and a sip of wine, Jesus delivers his blood and body into ours, so that we never need doubt that our sins are really forgiven. With words from an old book, God speaks to us and creates things. And He even uses people just like us to carry out his work of compassionate service. I was reminded of this on our youth group mission trip...Seeds are being planted; seeds that can change the world.

Or, of course, when it comes to God using ordinary people, we have the occasion to think about our dads on this Father's Day. If you had or still have a good Dad, today is a day to give thanks to God. A loving father is a great gift, even when you're familiar with all his quirks. And if you didn't have the greatest dad in the world, the truth is you do have a perfect Father, the Father to whom you pray in the prayer His Son taught you.

The secret of the mustard seed is that God will always provide the growth he desires. It may sometimes look like the seed is too tiny or that things aren't happening, but when the time is right, it will be harvest time. It starts small and ends up tall by the power that enables Him to do all things.