

Pastor Daniel Waldschmidt – St. John’s Burlington – Mark 4:26-34 – Fourth Sunday after Pentecost – June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018

**Theme: The Kingdom of God is like a Seed**

**I. It has hidden power.**

**II. It produces visible results.**

In our Gospel for today Jesus tells two parables. In both of the parables Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a seed. Today we are going to see that the kingdom of God is like a seed in two ways. I. The kingdom has hidden power and II. it produces visible results.

First, the kingdom of God has hidden power. The kingdom of God has hidden power even though it started out small like a mustard seed. Jesus says that the kingdom of God **“is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth.” (Mark 4:31)** A mustard seed is very very small. One author I read said that a mustard seed is one millimeter in diameter and is so tiny even if you had 725 to 760 mustard seeds it would only equal about one gram.<sup>1</sup> But this little mustard seed “grows quickly to a height of about 10 feet and has large leaves.”<sup>2</sup> The kingdom of God started out small like a mustard seed in the preaching of Jesus. But now the kingdom of God has grown and there are now millions, maybe billions, of believers in Jesus all over the world. The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. It starts out small, but it grows. And the kingdom can grow, because the kingdom of God has hidden power, just like a seed does. A seed does not look like a powerful thing. But if you put the seed in the ground and give it water it has the power to turn into a flower or a plant or a tree. The kingdom of God is like that. It has hidden power.

How does the kingdom of God come to a person? The kingdom of God comes to a person though God’s Word, his word preached or read in the Bible, his word attached to an earthly element like in baptism or the Lord’s Supper. And God’s Word and baptism and Holy Communion do not look very impressive outwardly. But they have hidden power. God’s Word comes into your heart troubled with guilt and God’s word says, “Jesus dies for your sins. Your sins are forgiven.” And when that message hits your heart and when you believe it by faith God sets up his reign of peace in your heart.

Because God’s word has this hidden power, God wants us to share his word, just a farmer scatters his seed. **“This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground” (Mark 4:26).** God wants us to tell other people about the promises God has made. When you tell somebody else, “Jesus has died for our sins. And God promises that whoever believes in him has forgiveness of sins and eternal life.” When you share that promise you are planting the seed of God’s Word. Now because the kingdom is like a seed, you might not see the results right away, but the word is still working on their heart even if you don’t see it. Jesus said, **“A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how” (Mark 4:27).** Our job is to plant the seed, and then let the word go to work on that person’s heart. That doesn’t mean that we only talk to the person once and then never talk to them again about God’s word. Every opportunity we get, we tell them about the promises of God and the word will go to work in their hearts.

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<sup>1</sup> Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008) 220.

<sup>2</sup> Snodgrass, 220.

The seed does need to be planted. A seed has the power to produce a plant. But the seed will only do that if it is planted in the ground. God's word has the power to produce faith. But it will only do that if it is planted in peoples' hearts. This is why it is so important that you tell your unbelieving friends about God's promises. When you do that, you plant the seed in their hearts. This is why it's so important that you read Bible stories to your young children at dinner time or at bedtime. When you read Bible stories to them, you plant God's word in their hearts. And God's word has hidden power to produce and strengthen faith.

Not only does the kingdom, which comes to us in God's word, have hidden power. It also produces visible results. In both parables you can see how the seed produced visible results. In the first parable Jesus says, **"All by itself, the soil produces grain – first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head."** (Mark 4:28) The mustard seed also produced visible results. Jesus says, **"When planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, which such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade."** (Mark 4:32) God's word has hidden power to produce visible results in our lives. God's word is planted in our hearts and then it produces visible results in our lives of good works.

You might notice that the paraments on our altar are green. They will remain green all summer, The reason the paraments are green is that in this part of the church year we focus on the Christian's life of good works. God's word produces good works, just like a seed produces living plants with green leaves.

Everyday ask yourself, "What green leaves can the seed of God's word produce in my life today." Maybe it's the green leaf of kindness to your coworkers or your children or your spouse. Maybe God's word will produce the green leaves of sharing your possessions with people who need help. Maybe God's word will produce the outward fruit of patience while you wait for God to answer your prayers. Maybe God's word will produce in you the outward fruit of offerings to the Lord to support mission work both here and around the world. In our first lesson today we saw how God's word produced the visible result of repentance for the Ninevites. Maybe God's word will cause us to repent of our sins. In our second lesson we saw how the seed of God's word produced the green leaves of faith and love in the Colossians. Maybe God's word will produce the visible results of increasing our love for one another and for all people.

Jesus' parables today teach us that God's word is a powerful thing. When his kingdom works in our hearts through the word it produces powerful results. So let's keep sowing that word in our own hearts and in the hearts of everyone who hears us. Amen.