

*Based on Mark 4:30-32. The Kingdom of God is Like a Mustard Seed.*

I must confess I do not much like mustard.

Even the plain old French's yellow version holds too much spice for my palate, not to mention the more flavorful *Grey Poupon* or Creole or Chinese versions of the condiment.

But here goes Jesus comparing the realm of God to a mustard seed, so I suppose I must try to pay attention.

Lo and behold it turns out mustard is a really big deal, especially in the Middle East, where mustard is indigenous to the land of Galilee where Jesus is preaching and teaching in this Lesson. Mustard is antioxidant, loaded with Vitamin E and Omega-3 fatty acids, and even to my great surprise *protein*. Mustard can clear up acne, hydrate the skin, strengthen hair growth, reduce blood sugar, reduce chronic inflammation, relieve the symptoms of menopause, and slow down the aging process.

(Maybe I can get over my spicy palate issues!?)

In the time of Jesus, the mustard seed is everywhere, grown for its oil as much as its spice, crucial to the local economy as well as the local ecology. Some in the audience of Jesus likely grow mustard for a living. To put it bluntly, the people know their mustard!

They know, as Jesus points out in this parable, the smallness of the seed: one to two *millimeters* in diameter. They know how long it takes the seed to germinate: eight to ten days. They know the budding and blooming timeline of the seed: around four months. They know the time it will take for the plant to reach full growth as a tree: within a few months to a year. They know the tree can reach anywhere from six feet to thirty feet tall.

That is one powerful seed!

From a one millimeter seed to a thirty foot tall tree in the span of five to twelve months, fighting cancer and diabetes and menopause along the way. *This* is what the realm of God is like, Jesus says! Small but mighty, healing and holy, interspecies for plants and animals and the human animal alike.

But that is not all.

There is a powerful collaboration of germination and generation along the way to wholeness. The mustard seed does its part by offering itself in all of its fullness. The earth does its part, nourishing the seed with soil and water and air. The sower of the seed does their part by placing the seed in the ideal environment. In fact, we might go so far as to say the mystery of the mighty mustard emerges from the collaboration of a Holy Trinity: sower and seed and soil, each doing its part; each reliant on the other for results.

You and I, Jesus tells us in this parable, get to join in that holy mystery as sowers and seedlings and soil of our own. You and I get to merge our being with God's being - a great collaboration of human and divine agency - in the sowing and the seedling and the soil. This, too, is what the realm of God is like.

Yes, I know, a couple thousand dollars toward famine relief in Gaza seems like an incredibly small seed in the face of such massive human suffering. Yes, I know, a couple dozen guns transformed into gardening tools seems like an incredibly small seed in the face of judicial undoing of essential gun safety legislation just this past week. Yes, I know, one meal a month in Jefferson County coordinated by the Patterson Family and then Lee Doty seems like an incredibly small seed in the face of so much hunger.

Jesus tells us to plant our seeds anyway. Jesus tells us to *be* these seeds anyway. Jesus tells us to serve as the soil for these seeds anyway.

The small thing becomes a really big thing in the coming realm of God, Jesus says. The commitment to one child through a baptismal serenade or a stint with Sunday Studio becomes a really big thing in the coming realm of God. The caring for one congregant as a Deacon Shepherd or another friend in the church becomes a really big thing in the coming realm of God. The welcoming at one worship service as an usher or just another poke in the pew becomes a really big thing in the coming realm of God.

Every bit of it *matters*, even if we never see the results. Jesus tells us we simply cannot force a timeline that is embedded in the natural course of events. We *can* do our small seedling part to cultivate a more faithful and a more fair natural course of events, in keeping with *that glorious reign of peace* for which we sang earlier in our worship.

The good news for us in our Lesson today is this: some time, over time - a month or a year or a millennium, Jesus says - a great tree will emerge from these small seeds of hope.

And there will be gardens everywhere we look.

And they will be green.

And they will be golden.

And the birds will sing.