

MEDITATION 40

Mark 4: 30-32

Jesus also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, ³² 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.”

Have you ever done something, something perhaps few if any noticed, and perhaps you never thought much about either, and yet over time had an oversized impact?

Sometimes we want people to notice. Sometimes we want to make a wave so that what we are doing is recognized. And sometimes we also feel we are not getting the recognition we deserve or someone else is getting the credit that should belong to us.

But there are those times, and maybe your time is yet to come if it hasn't come already, when what we have sown in faith comes to flourish in the positive impact on the life and lives around us.

Last week's meditation was also about planting seeds and waiting for the harvest. But each example Jesus uses to illustrate how growth in the kingdom of God happens is distinctive in what it has to reveal to us. What is it about the mustard seed that makes it distinctive?

The first thing is the size of the seed. The emphasis is on its smallness. Never think the significance, value and potential impact of what you have to offer is too small. Sometimes it's the smallest of acts of kindness, commitment and service that can lead to incredible results. Whether you ever see the results in your lifetime or not, without the seed planted there can be no result at all.

Second, is the astonishment, almost disbelief, of how such a tiny seed can lead to the growth of such a large shrub. The size of the shrub is totally outsized in comparison to the size of the seed planted. Never underestimate the possibilities even in the smallest of seeds.

Finally, the kind of shrub that grows out of a tiny seed planted, namely, the kind of shrub that is ideal for birds nests, is astonishing. How can we imagine that one tiny seed can lead to this type of wonderful benefit to some of God's creatures? Even if we have an idea and a hope of how the seed we may plant can support and benefit the growth and blessing of someone or something in time, the way such growth and benefit happens and where it leads is all too often well beyond anything we can imagine. Once growth begins to happen it takes a life of its own. Or in the way Jesus sees it, the Spirit takes over and makes of the little seed something well beyond any specific hope we may have had when planting it.

So, what's the moral of this parable then? Never underestimate what you have to offer and the seed you have to plant in the life of another - human or other creature or the earth. Never underestimate what the Holy Spirit and the wonders of creation can make out of the little that is planted. Finally, always believe that the result can well outsize anything you may imagine.

Isn't this a wonderfully beautiful parable to build our life purpose on? We are on this earth to plant seeds. The question is, what seed are we planting? Is it the seed of our anger and frustration not worked through but simply externalized in reaction and retaliation for what we have suffered? Is it the seed of our negativity, misery or bitterness? Is it a failure to plant anything or just keep it to ourselves because we don't believe we have anything to offer?

Belonging to the kingdom of God is about planting seeds in order to spread the embodied love of God somehow. And then we must trust that such planting, as invisible or small as it may seem, will be taken by the Spirit and blessed in ways we may not see and yet believe will bless the universe somehow. God be praised!

PRAYER: Thank you, O God, for seeds planted and seeds grown into something beautiful. We thank you for the seeds that others have planted in us. We thank you for the seeds you have planted in us in what has arisen from within us to bless us and the world around us. We thank you for results we have witnessed from seeds we have planted. And we thank you for the promise that whatever we plant and yet never see has benefit and blessing as potential and as value in and of itself.

And this is all so precious for us to believe, O God, because there are many reasons to feel discouraged and small. There are many reasons to feel disillusioned, frustrated or hopeless. There are many reasons we may feel unappreciated, unrecognized or bypassed for all we have offered.

Remind us that you see what no one else may see. Remind us that the value in what we offer and who we are is priceless whatever outcome or result may or may not be manifest. Thank you for the faith and hope you continue to plant in us, so that we may be encouraged to keep planting the seeds of your love in us.

In Jesus' name. Amen.