

A Mustard Seed

Mark 4:30-34

KEY VERSES

³⁰ He 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." ³³ With many such parables he spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it; ³⁴ he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

In this week's lectionary text we explore the parable of the mustard seed. Like this tiniest of all seeds, the kingdom of God is also easy to miss if we're not paying attention. But when planted a mustard seed blossoms into something beautiful and with a purpose. Verses 33-34 help us understand why Jesus taught in parables. These simple stories, used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson, were accessible to everyone. This method of teaching causes us to engage in the story rather than memorize a lesson, and can reveal different layers of meaning at different times in our lives.

In Eugene Peterson's book, *Working the Angles*, he describes how our eyes are naturally drawn to the lines of a triangle, but it's the angles that we should instead observe. Rather than the momentous experiences, it's the often overlooked daily spiritual rhythms and practices that shape the formation of our lives. **How well do you pay attention to the angles in your life, or do you tend to get swept up in the larger themes of life instead?**

In thinking about how this parable might be speaking to each of us, we need to consider what "working the angles" might look like for each of us. This summer might give you a great opportunity to pay attention to some "mustard seed invitations" that we might otherwise skip right past. **Consider afresh the three values that refresh our relationship with the Lord. How are you doing in each of them, and what might be some fresh opportunities to consider?**

1) Solitude: how is your relationship with God? When we find and hear God's word that we are his beloved, our souls have worth and meaning. If we don't find that in God, we will search for it elsewhere.

2) Community: in an increasingly lonely and individualistic world we are even more challenged to find community. Who really knows you, knows how to pray for you, and is living life alongside you?

3) Service: you might not need to look further than your home, office, or neighborhood to serve others. We also have mission partners with immediate summer needs. God will reveal places to serve if we are willing to open our eyes.

Think about who has shaped you over the years, and what habits you learned from them. What is Jesus saying to you through this parable about the kind of life you want to live? This week, pray this prayer that Thomas' friend and mentor, Steve Haynor, taught him, and see what He might reveal to you:

Lord, help me to see the world the way you see it, help my heart to break by the the things that break your heart, and help me not to duck. Amen.