

FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS

MARK 4:26-34



Their future doesn't look very promising. After all, Jesus and his followers are just a small group of people in a little corner of Palestine, with few friends among the religious leaders and those in authority, and with a message that doesn't seem to be reaching very far.

So Jesus tries to get the disciples to imagine what the kingdom of God will be like. He uses images, little stories or parables, to paint a picture of God's kingdom and its future growth. His listeners know that the mustard seed is tiny, yet Jesus tells them that from the smallest of seeds comes a tree so large that birds can nest in it. The kingdom of God is like that mustard seed, he says.

A second image, which Jesus uses elsewhere, makes the same point. The kingdom of God is like the yeast a woman mixes in with flour. A small amount of yeast has a huge effect – it can produce bread for a lot of people. The kingdom of God is like yeast, Jesus tells them.

The message is clear: the kingdom of God may have small, unimpressive beginnings, but like the mustard seed and the yeast, it will grow into something big and have an effect out of all proportion to its humble start. ■

SAY

“Lord, help me to hasten the flowering of God's kingdom of justice, peace and love by being a seed, a leaven, in the life of my Church and my community. Amen.”

LEARN

The word of God is something alive and active.

All our prayers and good works, no matter how seemingly small, help God's kingdom to flourish.

PRAY

Pray for missionaries and all who work to sow the seeds of God's kingdom throughout the world. Pray that you also will be an effective missionary of the Gospel.

REFLECT

These are challenging times for the Church in the West. We know the statistics; we can see with our own eyes how church attendance is falling even as the average age of priests and religious is increasing. The COVID-19 lockdowns of the last eighteen months have made matters worse. It is easy to feel down and demoralised.

It can seem like the yeast has lost its power, that the mustard seed is desiccating. We can be tempted to think that the promise Jesus made is not being fulfilled, and that, far from expanding, the kingdom of God is contracting and even dying.

That is why it's so important to hold fast to the promise Jesus made to his disciples, and that he makes to us too. Jesus assures us that the kingdom of God will flourish because it is God's will that it flourishes. And we are called to trust in Jesus. We trust in Jesus by putting our trust in small things and in God's grace.

The Holy Spirit is alive and active. Lots of small things are happening out there that are enabling the kingdom to grow. Many Catholics are looking seriously at what it means to be Church. They know the Church isn't made up just of bishops, priests and religious but of all the people of God. They are thinking about what needs to be done to help promote renewal and new life in the Church, how they can be a seed or a leaven in the lives of others and of their parish community. Just as the kingdom of God grew out of small things, they know that the little things we do, the little acts of love we show, even if they appear insignificant in isolation, can grow into something wonderful. ■

DO

Think about those who have been a seed, a leaven, in your life, those family members or others who shaped and inspired you to become the person you are. How can you be a seed, a leaven, in the lives of others in these challenging times?

Think about those who feel excluded from or hurt by the Church. How can you be a mustard seed, a gram of yeast, in their lives that transforms and heals and builds up? What might you need to change in your thinking so as to help bring about real growth and transformation in the Church?

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

O Lord, hear my voice, for I have called to you; be my help.
Do not abandon or forsake me, O God, my Saviour!

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

O God, strength of those who hope in you,
graciously hear our pleas,
and, since without you mortal frailty can do nothing,
grant us always the help of your grace,
that in following your commands
we may please you by our resolve and our deeds.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING Ezekiel 17:22-24

A reading from the prophet Ezekiel.

The Lord says this:

"From the top of the cedar,
from the highest branch I will take a shoot
and plant it myself on a very high mountain.
I will plant it on the high mountain of Israel.
It will sprout branches and bear fruit,
and become a noble cedar.

Every kind of bird will live beneath it,
every winged creature rest in the shade of
its branches.

And every tree of the field will learn that I,
the Lord, am the one
who stunts tall trees and makes the low
ones grow,
who withers green trees and makes the
withered green.
I, the Lord, have spoken, and I will do it."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM Psalm 91

Response:

It is good to give you thanks, O Lord.

1. It is good to give thanks to the Lord
to make music to your name, O Most
High,

to proclaim your love in the morning
and your truth in the watches of the
night. (R.)

2. The just will flourish like the palm-tree
and grow like a Lebanon cedar. (R.)

3. Planted in the house of the Lord
they will flourish in the courts of our God,
still bearing fruit when they are old,
still full of sap, still green,
to proclaim that the Lord is just.
In him, my rock, there is no wrong. (R.)

SECOND READING 2 Corinthians 5:6-10

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to the Corinthians.

We are always full of confidence, when we remember that to live in the body means to be exiled from the Lord, going as we do by faith and not by sight – we are full of confidence, I say, and actually want to be exiled from the body and make our home with the Lord. Whether we are living in the body or exiled from it, we are intent on pleasing him. For all the truth about us will be brought out in the law court of Christ, and each of us will get what he deserves for the things he did in the body, good or bad.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

The seed is the word of God, Christ the sower;
whoever finds the seed will remain for ever.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL Mark 4:26-34

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

Jesus said to the crowds, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man throws seed on the land. Night and day, while he sleeps, when he is awake, the seed is sprouting and growing; how, he does not know. Of its own accord the land produces first the shoot, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the crop is ready, he loses no time: he starts to reap because the harvest has come."

He also said, "What can we say the kingdom of God is like? What parable can we find for it? It is like a mustard seed which at the time of its sowing in the soil is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet once it is sown it grows into the biggest shrub of them all and puts out big branches so that the birds of the air can shelter in its shade."

Using many parables like these, he spoke the word to them, so far as they were capable of understanding it. He would not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything to his disciples when they were alone.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.

God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

O God, who in the offerings presented here
provide for the twofold needs of human
nature,
nourishing us with food
and renewing us with your Sacrament,
grant, we pray,
that the sustenance they provide
may not fail us in body or in spirit.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

There is one thing I ask of the Lord, only this
do I seek:
to live in the house of the Lord all the days
of my life.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

As this reception of your Holy Communion,
O Lord,
foreshadows the union of the faithful in you,
so may it bring about unity in your Church.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Behold O kind and most sweet Jesus, I
cast myself upon my knees in your sight
while with deep affection and grief of soul
I mentally contemplate your five most
precious wounds, having before my eyes the
words that David the prophet spoke about
you, most sweet Jesus: "They have pierced
my hands and feet, and I can count every one
of my bones."

*Traditional "Prayer before a Crucifix" to be
said after Communion*

