

## The Parable of the Growing Seed

<sup>26</sup>He also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, <sup>27</sup>and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. <sup>28</sup>The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. <sup>29</sup>But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come."

## The Parable of the Mustard Seed

<sup>30</sup>He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? <sup>31</sup>It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; <sup>32</sup>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."

## The Use of Parables

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

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**Sown and Grown**

**Mark 4:26-34**

**Kerra Becker English**

How often do we set our gaze toward heaven,  
wistfully looking for the Kingdom of God up in the air?

When Jesus tells us something radically different.

Jesus tells us that the Kingdom of God is buried in the earth,  
Where it grows in quiet mystery, taking all the time it takes.

The Kingdom of God springs up from the ground.

It grows like wheat waiting for the harvest.

It grows like a tiny mustard seed into a bush that becomes a shady home for wild  
birds.

The Kingdom of God is grounded.

Grounded. Earthy.

The earth produces of itself, and what does it produce?

Life. The earth is the provider of what we need to live.

Is it any wonder that we dig in the dirt,

Scatter seed,

Watch it grow,

And discover how amazing God's creation truly is?

Jesus took notice, and when he did he saw:

God's garden. The clay in God's hands. The Kingdom in a mustard seed.

Jesus taught in parables. The language of metaphor.

He created mental pictures intended to have layers of meaning beyond any law, more nuanced than statements of fact.

Sometimes he was understood. Sometimes not.

Why did he teach this way? An artist's way.

Did he know that a picture is worth a thousand words?

Did he expect these images to speak to his listeners in each time, each place for over 2000 years?

Well, the parables have endured.

They have enriched our spiritual conversations for centuries.

Jesus let his words linger in the air when he talked to the crowds.

He allowed his hearers to wonder about what it all meant.

But Mark says that he went back and explained them to the disciples.

Why didn't the disciples write down that part?

Maybe Jesus' biographers wanted us to have the same curiosity that the original listeners had.

Maybe they didn't quite understand it all either.

We don't exactly know.

Today, I invite you to listen and ponder, not with me telling you what it means as some preachers do,

But by going deeper into the images and to the best of my ability inviting them to speak for themselves.

*The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; 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.*

The Kingdom of God is buried in the earth,

Where it grows in quiet mystery, taking all the time it takes.

The Kingdom of God springs up from the ground.

It grows like wheat waiting for the harvest.

It grows like a tiny mustard seed into a bush that becomes a shady home for wild birds.

The Kingdom of God is grounded.

The Kingdom of God is sown.

It starts as seed. Potential, yet unfulfilled.

Scattered by the wind of the Spirit.

Planted by those who wish to see it grow.

Before the Kingdom of God takes root, the seed must find itself in fertile ground.

As with all living things, the conditions of life must be met for it to survive.

The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed.

In a few moments of quiet, allow God to be heard in your own imagination...

*Reflecting on your own life, how did the Kingdom of God get planted in you?*

*How are you grounded? What's the soil like, the water conditions? How is the ability to grow your life in faith being impacted?*

*And now imagine your community, the people that are in the circle of your daily activities, how are you preparing the way for the Kingdom of God to be planted in them?*

The Kingdom of God is grown.

The parable doesn't stop with the seed.

The seed flourishes and grows into the greatest of all shrubs, with large branches, and room enough for the birds to make nests in it.

Growth takes time.

Growth has its own schedule.

And yet, growth is the means of transformation.

The seed has to die to being a seed for the plant to succeed.

The possibility for abundant life emerges from this willingness to die to the old life to make way for the new.

The Kingdom of God is also the growth of the mustard plant.

In a few moments of quiet, allow God to be heard in your own imagination...

*Reflecting on your own life, how has your old life died to make room for new growth?*

*How is the Kingdom of God growing in you now?*

*How do the branches of your community life provide shade and shelter for others?*

The Kingdom of God is grounded.

The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed when sown upon fertile ground.

The Kingdom of God is like a mustard bush that when grown provides a habitat for other life.

The Kingdom of God is around us.

The Kingdom of God is within us.

The Kingdom of God is Jesus' way of saying that God is in this world with us.

We belong, heart and soul, mind and spirit, to the Kingdom of God. Amen.