

June 21, 2020

The Rev. Dr. Morar Murray-Hayes



Reading: Mark 4:26-34

The Message: "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A seed sower scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how..."

[Video](#)

The kingdom of God comes about by the planting of seeds.

And Jesus tells us that faith is like the smallest of all seeds -- like a mustard seed.

Here are some mustard seeds like the ones we use -- these are from Germany -- I found them in my mother's collection of seed. These are brown mustard seeds.

The seeds Jesus was likely referring to are black mustard seeds which have been grown and used as a condiment for well over 2000 years. They aren't as easy to harvest by machine, which is why the switch to brown mustard. Black mustard grows to nine feet tall with bristled stems and large leaves. Though it grows from a small seed, it is a strong plant with deep roots and spreads readily.



Black Mustard Seeds (photograph by Gaurav Dhvaj Khadka)

If faith is like a small seed, as a gift of God, it seems rather paltry.

The most massive living thing on planet Earth is the General Sherman, a giant sequoia found in central California's Sequoia National Park on the western slope of the Sierra Nevadas. This tree stands at nearly 274. 9 feet and is 102. 6 feet around near its base. It is estimated to weigh 2,756 tons. It is approximately 2,200 years old. The seeds of the giant sequoia are about the size of an oat flake, and according to the Guinness Book of World Records they weigh only 1/6,000 of an ounce.

Even the largest tree begins with a small seed or even a twig:

Indigenous seed savers have saved selected seeds with desirable traits and for cultural and historical significance. This happens to be a Pueblo seed pot which shimmers with the mica in the local clay. These pots hold seeds going back generations. You will see photographs of baskets which were also used to hold seeds as well as sweet grass.

While those in northern Ontario were primarily hunters and gatherers, Anishinaabe and Iroquois in the southern part of our province were farmers as well.

You may have heard the legend of the three sisters. Corn was a good-looking but lonely plant. Squash offered to be his companion, but corn refused, saying that they couldn't grow together because while she spread on the ground, he grew straight and tall. Bean, however, heard this conversation and decided to grow up tall alongside corn. Corn acts as the support for beans; squash keeps the soil moist and weed free like mulch; beans increase the fertility of the soil.

Even today, seed savers in northern Ontario are growing Odawa beans, Algonquin pumpkins, and Gaspé flint corn.

Jesus points us to the smallest of seeds. Why not an apple seed at least, or a great hulking chestnut? Or the seed potatoes my daughter bought this year? Perhaps he wants us to know: Here is a God who works within the smallest parts of our lives -- even if we think our faith is too small, it is not too small to become a part of God's kingdom.

On this Fathers' Day, I can't help but think that this is what parenting is about -- scattering the smallest of seeds with persistent love even though we have no idea how or when or if they will sprout.

God is the sower, who in the most inefficient way, scatters the seed, hoping it will take root and grow. As it spreads, it becomes the kingdom of God on earth.

We never feel secure that what we have will be enough for our children and grandchildren; but nonetheless, we have faith that, with God's help, the seeds we scatter in our children will take root and grow.

It's not the size of the faith seed God scatters; it's the persistence and motivation of the Sower, who keeps on scattering: this loving God who gives us faith by never ceasing to love us.

Perhaps we too can have the persistence and love for our children and the world's children that God has for us. God knows, fathers need it. Did you know that in past times, while Mother's Day was the busiest day of the year for florists and restaurants, Father's Day was the day on which the most collect phone calls were made?!

Yet, As Jesus says,
'The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how.'

It's not the size of the seed; it's the size of the faithfulness of the Sower. God has infinite love and patience for us.

Tomorrow, Paul McCartney turns 82, over 50 years after he wrote the classic song:

I could be handy, mending a fuse
When your lights have gone
You can knit a sweater by the fireside
Sunday mornings go for a ride
Doing the garden, digging the weeds
Who could ask for more
Will you still need me, will you still feed me

When I'm sixty-four

Will you still need me?

Will you still feed me?

God will still need you, no matter how small your faith seems.

"In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us." That is our great hope. At the foot of the cross you can lean back into the arms of an ever loving and gracious God and know: "God will take care of you.

And that's God's kingdom, folks. The smallest of seeds, persistently sown: God's faithful love. It's all you can count on in parenting and in life. It's all we can offer our children and it's all we hang onto ourselves. God will take care of you. It is enough.

Where is God's kingdom sneaking in, or spreading out, or taking over little corners of your world? As you are able, look around, reach out and see if you can find signs of those sprouting seeds of the kingdom.