

St Nicholas Church, Sighthill
13th June 2021

Even the smallest thing – like
the mustard seed – can
develop into something great

Call to worship

Leader: Waiting is never easy for us.

All: We are a culture of “instant” response.

Leader: Today, God is asking us to wait; to be patient.

All: It is not going to be easy for us to do that.

Leader: Quiet your spirits and open your hearts to
God’s word for you today.

**All: Lord, be with us. Help us to be ready to hear
and respond to your word. Amen.**

Opening Song: The Seeds of the Kingdom

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1KTBfHOREFc>

Opening prayer

Living God, in our desire for meaning and purpose in life, You remind us that You are available to us in our hour of need. As we reach out in our times of searching, You promise us that You will listen and answer beyond our imaginings. When we place our trust in our human enterprises, You call us back to Your holy place, to meet with You, and to rest in Your presence.

Forgive us for putting our trust in the things of the world. When others look for success in their chariot and horses in times of battle, let us put our trust in Your ways. When the world builds success on power and control, let us believe in Your ways of building a kingdom of righteousness and love. When we fall short of all You expect of us, let us hold to Your promise that You will pick us up again, and set out feet on Your path once more.

So, we turn from human enterprise to the Kingdom of God, from human failure to the forgiveness of God, from human weakness to the strength of God, from human focus to the purpose of God our Lord. We praise Your name, and rejoice in the love and strength, the purpose and the success, the triumphs and growth that come, not from our hands, but from Yours alone. And when our time of

prayers is over, let us lift up our heads and look ahead with courage. When our time of devotion is complete, let us rise with confidence to service and commitment. For You are our answer in our time of need.

You are our answer in the hour of our calling. In Jesus’ name we pray.
Amen.

The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily
bread.
Forgive us our debts, as we
also have forgiven our
debtors.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For Yours is the kingdom and
the power and the glory
forever.
Amen

Bible Reading: Mark 4:26-34

The Parable of the Growing Seed

He also said, ‘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. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. 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

He also said, ‘With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It 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 Use of Parables

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

Kingdom seeds for kids (parable of the mustard seed)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TY8gDzlwbN4>



Brief Reflection

The mustard seed was the smallest seed, but it grew into a huge plant. This is Mark's third parable of growth. In this parable, Jesus teaches that although the Kingdom of God started small, with Jesus and the disciples, it would grow and spread across the world to unlimited numbers of followers. The birds represent Gentile people. Jesus is saying that the Kingdom of God will include other nations and not just God's chosen people, the Jews. Mark's Gentile readers would have taken great comfort and hope from this parable.

The "parable of the mustard seed" is the only parable which is peculiar to Mark's Gospel. The metaphor points to the day when the whole world will accept the will of God and contains important truths. As human beings, we are helpless. Like the farmer, we can sow the seed, but we can't make it grow. Indeed, we may not even fully understand how it grows. We might think we know a lot and, indeed, that we are in control of our destiny and the lives of others. But in the face of nature, and the power and will of God, we are now in control. The Kingdom is God's, not ours. The growth of the Kingdom can be - and, most often is - imperceptible, like the growth of any plant. Compare today with yesterday, and we will be dispirited. See things in God's timeframe, and we will not. "God is working is purpose out".

At the same time, growth is inevitable. A tree can split a rock with its growth. So in spite of the waywardness of humanity, God's Kingdom will come. And there will be a day of completeness when the harvest comes. It is not for us to know when and how that might be. It is for us to continue to be the labourers who work expectantly. But we know the harvest will be gathered - in God's time. So, as well as being expectant, we need to be prepared. We have to stand - and work - in readiness. We have, literally - as William Barclay puts it - "to prepare to meet our God".

If, therefore, we live in patient service, we will know we cannot be defeated. Victory is already ours. And the passage concludes with this powerful image. All of Jesus' hearers would know that a grain of mustard seed stood - proverbially - for the smallest possible thing. In Palestine, this seed grew into something akin to a tree. It could be taller than a man on a horse. Birds would roost in its branches. So, we should never be daunted by small things, modest beginnings. Bigger things - God's things - will come.

Prayers of thanksgiving and intercession

Loving God, faith, You tell us, as small as a grain of mustard seed is always enough. Remind us, now, that prayers, small and feeble though we may believe them to be, will always be enough, if they are offered in a spirit of devotion and a willingness to be close to Your will and Your ways. Remind us that Your will unscrambles our stumbling words, our wayward thoughts, our random ideas, our scattered images, and sees in them growth and purpose, and creates from them something beautiful for You.

We pray, now, for those closest to us - those around us in the community of faith, on-line, electronically, in spirit and in fellowship, those we see face to face, those whose images appear on our screens, those you are fixed in our mind's eye. For family and friends, for church and community, for all who matter to us in the bonds of love, we pray today.

We pray for those who are our guides for life and faith, who point us to the ways of the Kingdom - for the teachers of our children and students, on-line or in class, for their diligence and commitment; for those who teach us our faith, but what they say and do, through what they know and are; for all who are heroes and role models for us and those we love ...that they might all be strengthened in the ways of righteousness.

We pray for people who serve in community and nation, who walk in the corridors of responsibility and sit in the chambers of decision-making; for those who stand tall for what is right; for those who give of themselves for the benefit of others... that they may always place the greater good above the love of self.

We pray for all in need, broken or ill at ease in body, mind or spirit ... And, in the silence, we name them before you ... (SILENCE)

And what of us, small as a mustard seed, frail as a green shoot, fearful as an uncertain plant? Strengthen us in our growth; take us and use us for your purposes; let us believe in Your ways and not in our own success and failures. For we are Yours, and Yours alone. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Lord of all hopefulness

Lord of all joy

Final hymn/ prayer: Lord of all hopefulness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEL3Wl3prQU>

Final Blessings

Go forth with joy, celebrating all the many ways for us to serve our Lord. Give us courage, hope, peace and love that we might bear these gifts to others. Go in peace, Amen.