

Pentecost 4 – June 16, 2024  
Text: Mark 4:26-34  
Theme: All The Small Things Add Up

**Sometimes in Scripture we see the emphasis on the planting of the seed. Sometimes we see the emphasis on the storage of the grain. Sometime the emphasis is on the farmer himself. This morning the emphasis is on the seed.**

**A seed is an amazing creation. Within that tiny structure, especially when a seed is as small as a mustard seed, within that one little seed is all the information to grow a much larger plant. If we're talking ratios, compare the size of an acorn to an oak, or a watermelon seed to a watermelon plant spread all over creation. Tiny seeds can really turn into huge things.**

**I think it is interesting that Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a mustard seed. A mustard seed is not a very impressive seed. Wouldn't heaven be more like a large seed like a coconut or a wily seed like a foxtail? A mustard seed is just so plain and boring.**

**I think that is how some Christians think about Christianity as well: plain and boring. Some people want Christianity to be exciting and flashy. But it is not, and that is what makes it hard. Now the devil is flashy. Oh, he knows all the tricks and pulls out all the stops for our benefit. So, we sit in our dull, boring, Christian world and watch all the pagans having all the fun. We sit on hard pews. They**

**sit on luxury yachts. We give away a huge part of our income to God and they round up their purchase at ACE Hardware for the children's hospital and feel great about their 38-cent donation. We strive to live morally upstanding lives and they do whatever gives them pleasure for the moment.**

**Of course, if it were just the pagans out reveling in all the fun, we might be less tempted because we understand at some level that pagans always have more "fun" than we do. But it is not just the pagans. There are Christians out there too. Now hold on just a minute! Why should they get to have fun when we have to be good? That's what really gets under our skin. Some Christians participate in all the flash and dazzle and still receive eternal life at the end.**

**That's when we start asking silly questions like, "well how much 'boring' do I have to do before I can have some fun." We start treating our faith like an obligation. We "do our time" with God stuff and then get out to have fun and enjoy ourselves. When do we get to go out and enjoy the flash and dazzle?**

**The hard answer is that we are never permitted to be part of that alluringly exciting world. Christianity is not likened to that. The kingdom of God is like a man scattering seed on the ground. The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. You never heard Jesus say**

**the kingdom of God is like the games in the Roman Coliseum. Nor did you ever hear Jesus say the kingdom of God is like sailing to an exotic port. What you heard time and time again was Jesus comparing the kingdom of God to the plain, mundane things of life. The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, like a fishnet, like yeast – the closest thing we get to anything exciting is the kingdom of God is like a treasure buried in a field.**

**One of the things I have noticed as I have grown older is that my appreciation for ordinary days has grown. There was a time when the prospect of another dull day full of all the normal things seemed tortuous. Get up in the morning, eat breakfast, go to school, eat lunch, go to recess yawn.... For me, fifth grade was that last time I can remember life being completely dull and utterly predictable. There are times now when I covet the life of the average fifth grader.**

**I think as our faith grows, our appreciation for the spiritually ordinary grows as well. In worship, for instance, most of us don't really want spotlights and drums and liturgical dancers. What we want is a format in which we reverently receive the gifts of God, and we are able to express our love and appreciation for those gifts to the King of the Universe. Sadly, today we often see the Church**

**chasing after flash and dazzle just as much as many individuals do. This affects us on at least two fronts.**

**First, we are easily led to believe that if we place our confidence in the ordinary, we cannot possibly be very good stewards of the gifts of God. After all, what are we doing to reach all those seekers out there? What about all those people who don't know how to "do" Lutheran liturgy? Second, our children are led to believe that the church is just as vulnerable to change as their world is.**

**Well, to address the first point, there is no such thing as a seeker, and we should ban that word from our vocabulary. If you are seeking God, you have already been made a Christian because only the Holy Spirit can move one to seek God. And if a new Christian comes to us, he needs something better than the world offers – something higher, more reverent, something holy. We will need to teach him how to use the tools, but as he hears the word and receives the sacrament, faith will show him how to worship and the mustard seed will grow into a hearty plant.**

**To address the second point, we teach our children from day one what worship is, what life with God is, what Christianity is. If we do that, then this will be the context they will seek. If we teach**

**them by our words or by our actions that worship is just something we do on Sunday to pay off an obligation, what are they supposed to believe? Or if we teach them that Sunday morning worship and study and the Church in general are only important when it is convenient for us or when we have nothing more exciting to do, what lesson will they learn?**

**Now here is the thing. We cannot fix this natural human desire to seek out flash and dazzle by using even bigger flash and dazzle. That defeats the purpose, doesn't it? I think one of the most brilliant things ever said was said by a non-Christian, Roman philosopher by the name of Ovid. He said, "Dripping hollows out rock." Given enough time, the constant drip of water on rock will wear the rock down. Perhaps you have seen places where thousands of years of water dripping has formed pools in solid rock. Jesus might have well said that the kingdom of heaven is like a drip of water. It would have fit in nicely with the mustard seed.**

**Our human nature is so drawn to flash and dazzle that we often forget that God neither demands nor encourages flash and dazzle. He is a God who calls for planting, watering, kneading, digging. He is a God who calls for slow earthy work. Think small. Think mustard seed. Think drip of water. You don't have to teach the entire counsel of God to your child every time he messes up – just plant a mustard**

**seed. You don't have to beat yourself to a pulp when you have fallen into a sin. Just stop it, and plant a mustard seed. It's all about small things – small seeds, small steps that add up over years. Life is not a sprint. It is a marathon. And the winner is not the one who gets to the top first. Neither is it the one who gets to the top with the most stuff. The real winner is the one who gets to the top with many others alongside him. We take it slow and steady. We recognize that we will spend some time getting lost and we will spend some time helping others find the path. What we do is plod along and plant seeds. We take time to nurture young plants too. One day we will look around us and find ourselves nearing the end of the race. We have the distinct joy of looking out over the seeds we have planted and the massive plants we have nurtured from seeds, and therein lies the greatest joy of a person's earthly life.**

**So slow down, take a breath and focus on what is important. Refuse to participate in the frenzied fever that so possesses our culture and just quietly sow God's seeds. Nurture His plants, and leave the flash and dazzle to the world – it's all they've got. But you have so much more. You have the God of all creation now and for all eternity.**