

What the Kingdom of God Is Like

SUNDAY 16 JUNE 2024

GOSPEL READING: Mark 4:26-34

26 And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground, 27 and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how. 28 The earth produces of itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. 29 But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come." 30 And he said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? 31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; 32 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." 33 With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; 34 he did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.

Meditation: What can mustard seeds teach us about the kingdom of God? The tiny mustard seed literally grew to be a tree which attracted numerous birds because they loved the little black mustard seed it produced. God's kingdom works in a similar fashion. It starts from the smallest beginnings in the hearts of men and women who are receptive to God's word. And it works unseen and causes a transformation from within. Just as a seed has no power to change itself until it is planted in the ground, so we cannot change our lives to be like God until God gives us the power of his Holy Spirit.

The transforming power of the Word of God

The Lord of the Universe is ever ready to transform us by the power of his Spirit. Are you ready to let God change you by his life-giving Word and Spirit? The kingdom of God produces a transformation in those who receive the new life which Jesus Christ offers. When we yield to the Lord Jesus and allow his word to take root in us, our lives are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. Paul the Apostle says, "*we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us*" (2 Corinthians 4:7). Do you believe in the transforming power of the Holy Spirit?

The cross of Jesus is the Tree of Life

Peter Chrysologous (400-450 AD), an early church father, explained how the "tree of the cross" spread its branches throughout the world and grew into a worldwide community of faith offering its fruit to the whole world:

It is up to us to sow this mustard seed in our minds and let it grow within us into a great tree of understanding reaching up to heaven and elevating all our faculties; then it will spread out branches of knowledge, the pungent savor of its fruit will make our mouths burn, its fiery kernel will kindle a blaze within us inflaming our hearts, and the taste of it will dispel our unenlightened repugnance. Yes, it is true: a mustard seed is indeed an image of the kingdom of God. Christ is the kingdom of heaven. Sown like a mustard seed in the garden of the virgin's womb, he grew up into the tree of the cross whose branches stretch across the world. Crushed in the mortar of the passion, its fruit has produced seasoning enough for the flavourings and preservation of every living creature with which it comes in contact. As long as a mustard seed remains intact, its properties lie dormant; but when it is crushed they are exceedingly evident. So it was with Christ; he chose to have his body crushed, because he would not have his power concealed....

Christ became all things in order to restore all of us in himself. The man Christ received the mustard seed which represents the kingdom of God; as man he received it, though as God he had always possessed it. He

sowed it in his garden, that is in his bride, the Church. The Church is a garden extending over the whole world, tilled by the plough of the gospel, fenced in by stakes of doctrine and discipline, cleared of every harmful weed by the labour of the apostles, fragrant and lovely with perennial flowers: virgins' lilies and martyrs' roses set amid the pleasant verdure of all who bear witness to Christ and the tender plants of all who have faith in him. Such then is the mustard seed which Christ sowed in his garden. When he promised a kingdom to the patriarchs, the seed took root in them; with the prophets it sprang up; with the apostles it grew tall; in the Church it became a great tree putting forth innumerable branches laden with gifts. And now you too must take the wings of the psalmist's dove, gleaming gold in the rays of divine sunlight, and fly to rest for ever among those sturdy, fruitful branches. No snares are set to trap you there; fly off, then, with confidence and dwell securely in its shelter. (SERMON 98)

Do you allow the seed of God's word to take deep root in your life and transform you into a fruit-bearing disciple of Jesus Christ?

Psalm 92:1-2,12-15

1 It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O Most High;
 2 to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night,
 12The righteous flourish like the palm tree, and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
 13They are planted in the house of the LORD, they flourish in the courts of our God.
 14They still bring forth fruit in old age, they are ever full of sap and green,
 15to show that the LORD is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

Daily Quote from the Early Church Fathers: *God gave us what was most precious*, by Isaac of Nineveh (a Syrian monk, teacher, and bishop), 613-700 A.D.

"The sum of all is God, the Lord of all, who from love of his creatures has delivered his Son to death on the cross. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son for it. Not that he was unable to save us in another way, but in this way, it was possible to show us his abundant love abundantly, namely, by bringing us near to him by the death of his Son. If he had anything more dear to him, he would have given it to us, in order that by it our race might be his. And out of his great love he did not even choose to urge our freedom by compulsion, though he was able to do so. But his aim was that we should come near to him by the love of our mind. And our Lord obeyed his Father out of love for us." (excerpt from *ASCETICAL HOMILY 74.28*)

OPENING PRAYER: - Lord Jesus, fill me with your Holy Spirit and transform me into the Christ-like holiness you desire. Increase my zeal for your kingdom and instil in me a holy desire to live for your greater glory. **Amen.**

CLOSING PRAYER: - Lord, look upon your flock that have been stricken with illness throughout the world with eyes of mercy. May your healing hands rest upon them, may your life-giving powers flow into every cell of their bodies and into the depths of their souls, cleansing, purifying, restoring them to wholeness and strength for service in your Kingdom. A special mention for Fr. Leo & Fr. Joesph. **Amen.**