

Text: Mark 4:26-34

Occasion: Pentecost 3

Date: June 13th, 2021 – 10 am

“It May Not Seem Like Much”

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ. Amen.

There have been times in my life where I wondered if my role as a father was doing any good. I say this because there were times in my life when my children were not listening or paying attention. At times my work as a father seemed so simple and so small and so ineffective. And I wondered what good does it all do?

It brought to memory a study that came out a number of years ago called the Max Juke study. In 1874 there was a man who was hired by the New York prison commission. His name was Richard Dugdale. His job was just to go into the prisons and work among the prisoners. And as he is working among these prisoners, he noticed something interesting. A lot of the prisoners were related.

They were able to trace back to a single family unit to a man named Max Juke, who was born in the 1700's. He and other colleagues started studying his family tree. But at the same time they started to study the family tree of another man named Johnathan Edwards, also born in the 1700's. So as they are tracing Max Juke's family tree, here is what they found. Of his descendants, 27 of them were murderers, 190 of them were prostitutes, 300 of them were convicts, and over 500 were drug or alcohol addicts. That's Max Juke's family.

Then, in studying Jonathan Edwards family they found the same impact but in the opposite way. Of his descendants, 11 were congressmen, 99 of them were university and college professors, 190 of them were doctors, lawyers, or judges, and 430 of them were ministers.

These two studies of Max Jukes' family and Jonathan Edwards' family tree, led sociologists to talk about what they call the five generation rule. That the way you parent has an impact to the fifth generation. It not only impacts your children, but it impacts your children's children and their children's children to the fifth generation. So, depending how you look at it, it is either exciting or terrifying as you look at the rest of your family. (I'm kidding, of course).

But when we read a study like that it reminds us that even though it seems so small, the work or the role of a parent has impact . . . great impact. That's an example of parenting, but have you ever thought the same thing about God's Word? Maybe you thought to yourself this morning, "Well, what good is spending my time this way going to do?" What good is it going to do spending one hour participating in Divine worship? What impact will this time have on my week?

Do you ever wonder as you share a Biblical truth . . . maybe you share a Gospel comfort with a friend . . . do you ever wonder what good that is going to bring? It just seems so small . . . it doesn't seem to have any impact. Or maybe reading your own Bible at home. You get through a long, hard day and you think, "Ah. What good is spending a few minutes reading a couple verses going to do?" Does it matter . . . does it have impact? And the answer is, YES IT DOES!

Today Jesus does not use sociological studies, but He tells two stories to remind us of the impact of His Word. And He plants those truths deep in our heart. We are going to look at these two stories and ask three questions. First question is: **What's the story?** Second question is: **What's the point of the story?** And the third question is: **Why are You telling us this, Jesus?**

OK. The first story comes from Mark's Gospel, the fourth chapter. Jesus says this: **"The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts**

and grows; he knows not how. The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.” What’s the story?

When you were in grade school as a child, do you remember going on field trips. Well, Jesus is quite literally taking us on a field trip. We are in a field with a farmer and in those days they did not have the large and fancy equipment that we have today. So they would take their seeds from a pouch or bag and they would scatter them as they walked. And so we watch this farmer as he walks through this field scattering his seeds. And then he goes home and sleeps. The next day he comes out and he again scatters the seeds and he returns home and sleeps. And he keeps doing this. And it seems so small . . . it does not seem like much.

You might be thinking what good is that scattering of seed going to do. But then time passes and all of a sudden there comes this little sprout. First the blade and then the ear and then the full grain in the ear . . . there is a field ripe for harvest.

What’s the point of Jesus’ story? Seeds are planted and it leads to this harvest. If you noticed how Jesus started His story, He said, **“The Kingdom of God is like . . .”** So He is drawing a comparison. There is something in God’s Kingdom that is like this powerful seed. Something that when it is planted, it starts to sprout, and it starts to grow, and it leads to this abundant harvest.

What is that seed? 1 Peter 1:23 says, **“You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable through the living and enduring Word of God.”** The seed is the Word of God . . . that when it was planted in our heart, it produced faith and it began to mature that faith and it planted those truths of Jesus’ death and resurrection into our hearts. God’s Word is that imperishable seed that can bring a calmness when your heart is troubled. It brings the peace and forgiveness of Jesus to us.

Why is Jesus telling the story? Why would Jesus want us to know is that His Word is like that seed, that when planted it grows? Well, He wants you to know the power of the seed and the power of His Word so that you can trust His Word. We don’t always do that though, do we? Here is a silly example.

Let’s say a farmer knows that the most precious asset he has is his seed. But imagine if the farmer says, “You know what? I’m not going to plant any seeds this year. I’m going to plant candy.” So he goes out and he scatters candy in the field. Is he going to have a harvest? Of course not. Why? Because he is not using his most precious resource. Pretty silly for us too, isn’t it, when we turn to something other than the Word of God for blessings which He says He brings to you through His Word? So you get home after a long and stressful day. Is the first thought in your mind, **“You know, I really need to open up that book, where God has made promises to me . . . where He says I will give rest for your soul? I really need to spend some time with Jesus.”** Or, is that about the last thing on your mind? It seems so insignificant . . . seems so small.

You know when we have such thoughts, “What good does the Word do?”, we need to go back to this parable and watch as the farmer scatters the seed, up comes the sprout, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear, and it’s ready for harvest.

God’s Word is like that, and there is no other substitute for it. So, trust what God has given to you. That in that Word He comes to you with the peace of Jesus . . . that in that Word He gives us growth. In case you missed the point, Jesus repeats it.

Let’s listen to the second story. Jesus says, **“With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? ³¹It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, ³²yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”**

³³With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. ³⁴He did not speak to

them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything. So, let's follow the pattern. **What's the story? What's the point? And why are You telling me this, Jesus?**

Well, first of all, these stories are very similar. In the first one, you have a man who plants the seed and the seed sprouts and grows. And now Jesus holds up tiniest seed known to His audience at that time . . . a mustard seed. A mustard seed is the type of seed that if you were to hold it in your hand, you might say, "What good is that going to do?" It seems so small . . . so insignificant . . . But Jesus has you fast forward and says, "OK. Now watch . . . this mustard seed was planted over there. Look how big the tree has become!

So big that the birds in the area would fly to the tree, eight to ten feet tall, and they would perch in its shade." That's the story. **What's the point of this story?** Well, again Jesus makes a comparison. He says there's something like that in My Kingdom . . . something so small that it seems so insignificant . . . so tiny . . . but it leads to this great growth. **What's that thing?** It's the Word of God . . . the powerful, living, and active Word of God. But I think you and I can focus our attention a little bit more.

What is a little bit different with this parable in contrast to the last one is Jesus talks about size, how small the seed was and how great the growth was. That through that small seed of His Word God can grow and do big things. He grows a Kingdom.

Do you ever need to be reminded of that? Sometimes we come to church or we sit at home and watch it on Facebook and we say, "I guess we do not really have that big of a church. What good is this going to do? Sometimes you might wonder what good is it going to do if I have struggles in my life and I open up that Bible. It just seems so small, maybe a couple verses or 5 minutes in God's Word. What good is it going to do if I actually share my faith with someone else?

It is so small and this world is so big, and the problems are so massive? But in that tiny mustard seed – in God's Word – God the Holy Spirit is at work to grow and build the Kingdom to do tremendous things that this tiny mustard seed would become this great tree. God works through that Word to grow this wonderful, strong Kingdom.

"Why are You telling us this, Jesus?" Well, He wants us to trust His Word. And you and I need to be encouraged that those small moments you spend in His Word – those small truths you plant in others – that are not without impact. No, you may not always see the growth, but that does not mean God is not at work.

Sometimes the Word of God seems so small, so insignificant, when we take time to participate in a service like this or when we open our Bible at home and read a few verses. But know this, God is doing big things. We have to be patient at times. It would be silly if a farmer one day plants seeds, and the next day he walks out and says, "Oh. No harvest! This was worthless . . . this was futile . . . No, it takes time.

This is true of the growth in our lives and the Gospel in this world. Keep planting the seeds and God will bring about the growth and the harvest according to His plan, according to His time and according to His wisdom. So, sow the seed and trust the Word. In Jesus' name. Amen.