

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Paul Gunn, Pastor

Sermon title: The Parable of the Mustard Seed, Mark 4

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INTRODUCTION: Two weeks ago, I preached about the parable of the seeds. The summary statement is: The farmer tried numerous times, and he finally had success. The disciples asked Jesus to explain his parable, and he compared the birds, which came to eat the seed, to Satan. He said people who have no root will fall away when there is trouble or persecution. The seed sown among thorns is seed choked by the worries of this world. And, then finally, the farmer had success because he sowed seeds that fell on good soil and under the right conditions.

Now, just a few verses later, he continues talking about seed, this time the mustard seed. And, this brings me to the two points I want to make this morning:

1. Jesus' reference to the seed was specifically about the Kingdom of God.
2. For the seed to grow, it must first be planted.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 4:30-34 ³⁰ *Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it?"* ³¹ *It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth.* ³² *Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade."*

³³ *With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand.* ³⁴ *He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.*

EXPLANATION: Let's look at the mustard seed. I've seen one, and it's a very tiny seed, and yet, it produces a very large plant. If there is no seed, there will be no plant.

First, JESUS' REFERENCE TO THE SEED WAS SPECIFICALLY ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

Right then and there, Jesus talked to only twelve disciples. Jesus planted the seed of the truth in them, and in turn, they told others. In 1 Corinthians 15, there were about 500 believers. On the day of Pentecost, there were 3,000 believers. How many believers are there in the world today? It depends on who you ask. There are different figures. I've been humored how sometimes our Baptist maps tend to define a county as unreached if we don't have Baptist work there. Really, we do not know.

Let's say it this way: After Pentecost, the Gospel spread at a rapid rate, and it continues to spread. The original twelve disciples—the mustard seed twelve—multiplied throughout history from continent to continent, until one day someone reached out to you and told you the Good News of Jesus. Maybe no one told you. Perhaps you read a Bible in a hotel room, but someone put that Bible there.

So, when Jesus said the Kingdom of God was like a mustard seed (that is really small but when planted, becomes a tree), the disciples didn't know exactly what he meant. But, over time, I am sure they figured it out.

Since the humble beginning of Jesus and his disciples, believers in Jesus Christ have been persecuted. And, every time Christians are persecuted, the Gospel spreads. In the second century AD, persecution was rampant, and one of the preachers of that day, a man named Tertullian, said, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."

Jesus planted that tiny mustard seed with his disciples. And, today, we must plant seeds too. Our church must continually plant and nurture those seedlings, then saplings, then large plants.

Jesus talked about the mustard seed another time in Matthew 17, and this takes me to my second point—

Second, FOR THE SEED TO GROW, IT MUST FIRST BE PLANTED.

Let's look in Matthew 17:14-20—

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 17:14-20 ¹⁴ *When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him.* ¹⁵ *“Lord, have mercy on my son,” he said. “He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water.* ¹⁶ *I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him.”*

¹⁷ *“You unbelieving and perverse generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.”* ¹⁸ *Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed at that moment.*

¹⁹ *Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, “Why couldn't we drive it out?”*

²⁰ *He replied, “Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”*

EXPLANATION: Even though Jesus said the mustard seed parable related to faith in regard to the casting out of a demon, I believe this parable is also a metaphor for a productive life. The Bible talks a lot about faith. Romans 14:23 tells us, *“what is not of faith is sin,”* and Hebrews 11:6 tells us, *“without faith it is impossible to please God.”*

APPLICATION: Think about that great idea you've thought about through the years and have been waiting for the right day to actually start it. How much time has passed? What if you had planted that seed 30 years ago?

ILLUSTRATION: A few years ago, a good friend of mine retired in his 50's. I talked with him about his retirement stocks. He said as an over-the-road truck driver. He listened to financial advice on the radio during his many hours of driving. He said he used the “Law of 72” to determine when to move his stocks around. In time, he had made enough money and was able to retire well. But, here's a point he made: You have to start. Until you put the first dollar into retirement, all you are doing is talking. He went on to say how many people talk about saving for retirement, but talk doesn't accomplish anything. You've got to actually do something with money.

ILLUSTRATION: One day, I was at the Dollar General store. While I was in line, the young cashier talked about her dream of going to art school someday. All I did was make a passing comment like, “Maybe you can do that,” and her reply was that she’d rather live with the dream than actually do it. I don’t understand that type of thinking, but I know it’s out there.

APPLICATION: Is there anyone here who lives in fear of planting that mustard seed? Hey, give it a try, because just thinking about it accomplishes nothing.

CONCLUSION: Let’s talk about salvation for a minute. When you repented of sin and trusted Jesus as Lord and Savior, it was a beginning. It was a planting of a tiny seed of faith. And, now, if you’ve matured in the Lord, look what your life has become. What if you were still holding on to the idea of planting that seed of faith in Jesus some day?

Think about it—*Jesus said faith as small as a mustard seed can move a mountain.* I’ve never moved a mountain and neither have you. That means our faith is smaller than a mustard seed.

John Wesley, the one whose teachings led to the Methodist movement, said, “*Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as ever you can.*”

William Carey was a missionary, known as the father of modern missions. He served in India. He was faithful even though his first wife died, his second wife died, and two of his sons died. He was on the mission field for 41 years and never took a furlough. He is known for this saying, “*Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God.*”

Let’s look back the words of Jesus. The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, very small but when planted, becomes large.

Maybe you are here today, and you know the truth. Metaphorically speaking, you’ve got the mustard seed, but you’ve never planted it. A mustard seed only becomes mustard seed faith when planted.

Today is the day for you to repent of sin and follow Jesus. Today is the day for you to plant that seed and start your life with Jesus.

For the one who is already saved, it's time to plant another seed if you haven't already—the seed of faith, the seed that will grow the Kingdom of God.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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Thanks to Judy Andrews, Kori Bailey, and Nancy Claire Smith for their editing assistance.

Sincerely, Paul Gunn
Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
Nashville, Tennessee
USA