

# Don't Despise the Day of Small Things

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- Farming is a risky venture. Gardening is great when you do it for fun, but if your livelihood depends on it, it can be a nail-biting enterprise.
- It is easy to take the vegetables that we eat for granted, but the process of growing food (or anything else) is truly miraculous. Carrots, Tomatoes, Broccoli, Wheat, all of these things start as seeds and grow without anything but dirt, water, and sunlight. They literally appear out of nothing.
- The gardener can do a little bit here and there, but ultimately, it is God who makes the tomato. If you did nothing but scatter some tomato seeds you would probably get some tomatoes.
- Story about not cleaning up our garden well and tomato plants appearing the next year!

## Scattered Seed

- This is exactly the case with the gardener in Jesus parable. He does nothing but scatter seed. And yet the crop grows so at the end of the season he can harvest it.
- v. 28 "the earth produces by itself" the Greek word for "itself" is "automatē" the same root as the word automatically.
- The farmer doesn't know how this happens, he just knows that it does.
- A parable is a short story with a point. They often start as this one does, "The Kingdom of God is like..." What does this parable about a lazy farmer say about the kingdom of God?

## Mustard Seed

- The next parable is about the mustard seed which starts small and gets very big.
- "Although an herb, the mustard plant could grow to heights of ten to twelve feet and attain a thickness of three or four inches."<sup>1</sup>
- Together I would say these parables are about *the unstoppable and yet sometimes imperceptible growth of the Kingdom of God through the power of God.*
- In the end there is really not much we can individually do to grow the kingdom of God. And this is only right. Otherwise it would be the kingdom of Chris, or [insert your name here]!
  - Jesus may have been trying to reassure his disciples that even though it didn't look like what they expected, the Kingdom of God was and is coming.
  - They were expecting a revolution and what they got was resurrection!
- We can see this mustard seed kingdom growth on a number of different levels.
  - Spiritual growth - no one goes from sinner to saint overnight!
  - Congregational Revitalization - whether planting a church from scratch or revitalizing an existing one, it takes time, and sometimes it looks as if nothing is happening at all.
    - It is better to focus on the health of a church rather than on the growth of the church. The growth will be a natural result of the health.
  - Ultimate fulfillment - The kingdom of God began with a small band of 12 apostles and it has grown enormously. Today 2.3 billion people are Christians (out of 7.3 billion).<sup>2</sup>
    - And yet, there is still so much growth that needs to happen. There are 5 billion who aren't Christians.

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<sup>1</sup> James A. Brooks, Mark (vol. 23; The New American Commentary; Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 85.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/04/05/christians-remain-worlds-largest-religious-group-but-they-are-declining-in-europe/>

## The Day of Small Things

- It can be easy to get discouraged when all we see is how much work there is yet to do at all of these levels.
- This was the case with the Jews who had returned from the Babylonian exile to rebuild Jerusalem. They began to rebuild but then the work stopped and the people were discouraged. Both the prophet Haggai and the prophet Zechariah spoke challenge and encouragement to Zerubbabel the governor telling him that he was to complete the temple.
  - Zechariah 4:6-10 - The day of small things is not to be despised rather it is to be embraced with excitement for the things that are to come.
- “Start small, while intending great things.” Bp. Alfred Stanway’s interpretation of the CMS Venn Principles.
- Personally, I don’t like the baby steps, I like to jump in at a more advanced level, but I do myself a disservice when I do this.
  - I bought a number of woodworking tools this year with the idea that I could use them for projects around the house, and maybe do a bit a furniture building. We needed a small bookshelf, but instead of choosing something simple, I found a very complicated project! It still isn’t done!! Or even begun!!!
- The day of small things is important, laying the foundation for that which is to come. So we much embrace it, waiting with eager anticipation.

## Waiting

- Waiting can be such a hard thing to do. And yet, so many of Jesus’ parables are about waiting and being ready when the day finally comes.
- Today’s parables are no different. The man scatters seed, waits, and then participates in the harvest! This is the kind of evangelism and mission we are all supposed to participate in.
  - We plant seeds by building relationships and sharing our faith in Jesus.
  - We wait watching people’s lives as they are transformed through Jesus’ love.
  - Finally, we bring in the harvest when the time is right.
  - Sometimes this process takes a long time (like asparagus) other times it happens rapidly (like radishes). This is something we all can do, and something we are all called to do, without exception. Our charge is to be farmers for the kingdom of God. Planting seeds, waiting, and harvesting.
- Each of us has a part to play, but it is God who does the real work. (1 Cor. 3:6-7). God can do it without us, but he wants to do it with us. If you don’t plant seeds, you don’t observe growth.
  - Illustration: Happening ministry time. If you don’t have relationships, no one comes to you for prayer.
- It may seem, at times, like the work we do in God’s kingdom is small and insignificant, it may seem like one small drop in the bucket compared to all of the work that is yet to be done.
- But there is much rejoicing in heaven over each and every victory in the kingdom, and all of the small victories are moving towards their ultimate fulfillment with the return of Christ.
- Zechariah 4:6 “*Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.*”