

Small Seeds

8:00

One of the hallmarks of my childhood was moving. Our family lived in 5 different cities between the time I was born and the time I left for college. There were some great things about those experiences that stay with me even today - I am very adaptable and I try to see what's good and interesting in all the places I've landed.

But there are hard parts, too. Leaving aside my parents' herculean task of packing up our belongings and moving four children from one city to another, there are challenges that come with leaving what you know and entering a new community.

I was the new kid in school 5 times, having to make new friends, learn unfamiliar hallways, changing from walking to bussing to biking to campus.

We joined new churches in every new town, so we got to experience the network that connected them all as well as the local practices that made them each a little bit unique.

In all those places, there was always a little bit of the terror that comes with not knowing anyone and wondering how long it will take to make friends. Do I have to say hello first or will they? Will someone invite me to play or will I be left out?

Yet sure enough in every place we lived, there were people who became instant friends. These were the people who did small things like knock on our front door to introduce themselves or give my parents advice on the best grocery stores. They were the people who crossed the aisle at church to shake our hands because they could tell we were new. They were even the strangers who could tell we were lost and stopped to give us directions.

These are tiny, tiny things. Small as mustard seeds. But they made all the difference to me and our family - because they made us feel part of the community. Blended in as yeast is in bread dough.

Paul tells us that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ. And when we read it the passage comes with a list of BIG things like death, life, angels, rulers, powers...and so it is interesting that none of those BIG things can separate us from the love of God. And yet the love of God itself - which is one way of talking about the kingdom of heaven - is so very small. Small as a mustard seed. Small as a teaspoon of yeast.

It is small and yet it is all around us. Because if nothing can separate us from the love of God, then the love of God must be right up against us all the time. Even right now. It is already here.

Sometimes it is hard to see the love of God or to feel it in our lives. But in the parables from Matthew's gospel today, Jesus tells us that the kingdom of God is like the smallest things we can think of. Things as small as mustard seeds or the little bit of yeast you put in bread dough.

These things are tiny, and yet, like the kingdom of God they grow. Seeds grow into bigger plants and the mustard seed of this parable grows big enough to offer shelter to birds. A tiny bit of yeast can make a whole lot of flour rise into loaves of bread. The flour can't do that on its own - it needs the little bit of yeast to do that.

Later this morning, St. Mark's will baptize a young boy. I've been talking with his family and preparing them for this baptism, they have selected godparents. Today will be the beginning of a journey for them all in the Christian life and faith.

In baptism, a seed is planted in us that grows the rest of our spiritual lives. It is a seed of the kingdom of God and grows when we experience and live out kingdom values. We commit ourselves to these values in our baptismal vows - which we renew every time we baptize another new Christian.

We commit ourselves to learning with each other, praying and breaking bread together

To resist and renounce evil, and when we recognize our sin we repent
We commit ourselves to share the Good News, seek and serve Christ
in all persons

Strive for justice and peace

Respect the dignity every human being

The seeds of these kingdom values will be planted in a small boy this morning. A seed of God's love that will grow! That seed begins as a small thing, barely noticeable. And yet as it is nourished it grows until becomes great. Great enough to provide love to others as a mustard plant provides rest for many birds.

The kingdom of God is like that - it starts small, it seems insignificant or unexpected at first, and it grows.

Theologian Henri Nouwen wrote this about the spiritual life,

One of the greatest acts of faith is to believe that the few years we have on this earth are like a little seed planted in a very rich soil...How different would our life be were we truly able to trust that it multiplies in being given away! How different would our life be if we could but believe that every little act of faithfulness, every gesture of love, every word of forgiveness, every little bit of joy and peace will multiply and multiply as long as there are people to receive it...

These small things - acts of trust, faithfulness, gestures of love, words of forgiveness, joy, and peace - are like the first steps of welcome my family and I received whenever we landed in a new town. They are like the very small things **you** do every day to show kindness, generosity, welcome, patience, and creativity. These small things are the seeds of the Kingdom of God and when you do them, they grow.

The Kingdom of God is all around us - Paul tells us that nothing can separate us from it. Where do you see it in your life? Where do you experience it or live it?

Look to the small things to see how the love of God in Jesus, how the Kingdom of God is all around you.

AMEN

