

OCTOBER 8TH

SMALL BEGINNINGS

"Why does Jesus replace the mighty cedar tree, a symbol of power, arrogance, and empire, with a weed? Would the crowds have understood God's mustard-seed empire to be like Jack's beanstalk, reaching against all expectations, up to heaven and bring all the nations low? Is the kingdom of heaven a surprise that brings redemption, or a threat that must be eradicated, or both?"

-Stanley Saunders



"Again he said, 'What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. 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.'"

Mark 4:30-32

FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

We find this parable in four versions (the three Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of Thomas). Some place the sowing of the mustard seed in a field, others in a garden. No (Jewish) person would intentionally sow mustard seeds in a garden—not only because the plant is wild and hearty, but because of the pungent properties of mustard. Where one culture saw this small seed as a nuisance to be avoided, the Romans, however, considered it beneficial for a host of gastrointestinal and other processes. Jesus tells this parable to show us how subversive the Kingdom of God really is. God plants this weed in the world on purpose.

1. In light of this parable, how are we invited to treat the “weeds” in our lives?

2. Where might one find the hope in this parable? Think especially in terms of those of us who feel like tiny seeds in a world that only trades in “big” things, for those who feel like dispensable failures rather than those who boast of glamorous success.

3. List and reflect on/discuss ways in which you can sow good seeds at home, at work, and in your church/community.

PRACTICE

ACT OF KINDNESS

What is one small thing you might do this week to bless someone else without being asked? Can you ask them to “pay it forward” to another person?