

## Underestimated – Pr Jim Sprengle, Pentecost 3 – June 13, 2021

- I. **Mark 4:26-34** previously read –
- II. **Sometimes, the smallest things make a huge impact.**
  - a. You've probably all seen movies or read books where the storyline takes an unlikely hero or small act, and it grows into something much bigger.
    - i. We recently watched a biography of Erin Brockovich, who was an unlikely person to make a difference in environmental laws, but became part of the largest settlement in history.
    - ii. Another one is the movie, "Pay It Forward," where a 7<sup>th</sup> grader comes up with an idea for a homework assignment...
      1. Go out and do something good for 3 different people that they cannot do for themselves, then tell them to pay it forward to 3 more people – it becomes a huge movement of good
    - iii. I've also used this as an example before, but maybe you've heard of the guy who started with a red paper clip...?
      1. He traded up for something bigger and better each time for an entire year, until he traded for a house!
  - b. No one can understand how these things take place – most of the time we would all just laugh it off and expect nothing to come of it... but sometimes in a great miracle, the smallest things grow into something huge.
- III. **Jesus is telling us about the growing seed and the mustard seed today...**
  - a. Not only does the seed grow, and we don't know how... sometimes it grows into something much bigger than we could expect.
  - b. God's kingdom is like that – it sprouts and grows without our understanding – but also develops into something that makes a big impact.
  - c. Jesus begins this chapter with the Parable of the Sower, as a man scatters seed all over the place, some lands on fertile ground.
    - i. By the way the story is told, about 25% of the seeds sprout in fertile soil, while the rest have trouble surviving
    - ii. Jesus is talking about Word of God is preached and shared, it plants seeds that can grow into faith – sometimes...
  - d. He then keeps with the seed and growth theme with these short parables today – the seed planted sprouts, but we don't know how, and the tiny seed can grow in amazing ways.
  - e. "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground" (v 26)... as again Jesus says that we scatter the seeds indiscriminately – without regard for where they land.
    - i. Then, as verse 28 says, "The earth produces by itself".
      1. The Greek word here is "automatically"— In other words, nothing further needs to be done – and a sprout, a blade, the full grain and a harvest all happens with or without our help.

- f. Not only that, but sometimes the smallest seed will sprout into a huge plant – which points to the power of God to grow things beyond our limited understanding.

IV. **Have you ever tried to get a seed to grow? A plant to grow big?**

- a. Maybe you could try this... scatter some seeds in your garden and force them to sprout – you have to admit, it's not really up to you, is it?
- b. The kingdom of God is like that... and we don't like that too much.
- c. How many of you see the church and Christianity in decline?
  - i. What do you think is the answer?
    1. We can hire a youth minister to reach out to the young people
    2. We can have a program or ministry idea to get people in the church somehow
    3. We can have a foodbank, or a childcare center, or (you fill in the blank)
    4. Maybe if we go door-to-door with Gospel tracts we can turn the tide...
- d. How many of you know someone you care about who is disconnected from the faith?
  - i. We ask the question – How can I get them back to church and back to Jesus?
  - ii. What can I say... what can I do? Pastor...what can you do to help?
- e. Even when it comes to our own faith and life in Christ...
  - i. Sometimes we like to take credit for our growth because we've been going to church more... studied our Bible more... prayed a little harder
- f. We have a tendency to overestimate church programs, our words of wisdom, and how holy and good we as Christians.
- g. You see, the truth behind how to fix a dying church, or how to get our loved ones to believe, or how to increase our own holiness and walk with Christ is not by figuring out what we can do, but what's already been done!
  - i. In other words, asking how WE can do these things assumes that we are underestimating God and HIS ability bring about the kingdom and its purposes.
  - ii. We are constantly trying insert ourselves into the process of a seed sprouting – and it's not really our business!

V. **The growth of the kingdom of God is up to Him, not us.**

- a. Jesus makes that abundantly clear in our first parable today... only God makes the seed sprout and grow to a fruitful harvest.
- b. Sure, we can scatter the seeds around, but only God is able to make anything happen with them...
- c. When Jesus went the way of Calvary, one seemingly insignificant Person died... but through that death came the power of God.

- d. Not only did He die to redeem the whole world, He rose again as an exclamation point that we should never underestimate the power of God and His love for us!
  - e. Let me tell you something – whenever you tell that story – whenever you hear that Gospel message preached – the kingdom of God is being sown!
    - i. And that includes in you and me... in the Church that seems like it's dying... in your loved one who doesn't believe in Jesus... in any situation you want the Lord to intervene.
    - ii. Never underestimate what the Gospel and God's Word can do as you share it with those around you.
  - f. But remember, the only growth that will happen when you scatter the seed is by God's design...
    - i. It will not happen because of your effort... pressure... stress... or nagging.
    - ii. It WILL happen automatically when God does His part.
    - iii. Much of the time it happens in ways we could never imagine or plan on our own – and in bigger ways than we could imagine too, but that's not our business anyway.
  - g. We are simply the sowers – while the result is the perfect plan of God.
- VI. **So, what do we do then?**
- a. If God does the heavy lifting, what are we supposed to do about churches that are declining... or loved ones who seem to have lost their faith... or even increasing our own faith?
  - b. Just check out verse 27... “[The sower] sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how” – we just keep on keeping on – and let God deal with the outcome.
  - c. We've been studying something really important in the Christian faith over the past several weeks in the Adult Bible Class... Vocation.
    - i. You see, each of us who have faith in Jesus also have the ability to live out our lives of faith in our God-given vocations day by day.
  - d. The unbelievable love and mercy God has shown us can be shared... as we just go along sowing seeds in our workplaces and schools and the community where we live... with no idea if it will sprout and grow.
  - e. By God's power, the smallest of words and interaction might begin to sprout and grow in someone until their faith grows to make a big impact.
  - f. So rather than stressing out, just know that God's got this...
    - i. By the death and resurrection of our Savior, God is able to bring about incredible growth... but it will be in His own time and way.
    - ii. For now, live in patience and peace, knowing that God is faithful – and praying in hope for the growth that He has promised will come. Amen.