

Growing Point

Garden lessons in the Bible

Week 5: Growing Giant Things from Tiny Seeds

Jesus put before them another parable: 'The Kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown, it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.' - Matthew 13:31-32 NRSV

A parable is a simple story illustrating a moral or religious lesson. The Parable of the Mustard Seed is but one of many parables that Jesus told to help people think about and understand what the Kingdom of heaven (or Kingdom of God, depending on which translation you read) is like. This particular parable is retold using slightly different words in three of the gospels – Matt 13:31-32, Mark 4:30-34, Luke 13:18-19.

In the parable of the Mustard Seed, Jesus compares God's Kingdom to a mustard seed. The mustard seed itself is tiny – smaller than the tip of a ball point pen. But when this seed is planted in the ground and carefully cared for through watering, weeding, and fertilizing, the seed will grow up to be a giant tree. In the beginning the seed is tiny and completely dependent on others to nurture it. In the end, the seed has become a giant tree, which still benefits from being nurtured, but now also has the ability to nurture others – providing shelter for the birds.

Jesus would say that we each have a mustard seed in us when we are born – the very beginning of an understanding of faith. Our faith grows as we are nurtured by our parents, by going to church, by attending Sunday School, by reading the Bible, and by gardening. As our faith grows, it becomes a bigger and more important part of who we are and it becomes a more significant part of our life.

Jesus would also say that since we each have a mustard seed of faith in us, it is important for each of us to reach out and nurture those around us – care for their mustard seeds. As our own faith grows, we will become like the tree and take care of and nurture those around us.

Soul Water

Nurturing your soul through prayer

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Dear Giant God, keeper of tiny things,

Thank you for seeds, especially the ones that grow into my favorite vegetables.

Thank you for the seed of you that is inside me.

Thank you for my parents, my teachers and my friends who nurture and care for me and help this seed grow.

I know you are an “idea” seed rather than a “real plant” seed.

But it is still fun to imagine what you would look like if you were a real plant really growing inside me.

Thank you for reminding me that tiny seeds can grow into giant things.

As a child, my body is/was small.

But then I grow/grew up and my body is big.

Today my faith is small.

But, just like a mustard seed, my faith grows bigger and bigger every day.

Amen

Earth Explorations

Nurturing Connections to the Soil

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What do you know about Mustard Seeds?

The plants that make the seeds from which mustards are made are part of the broad genus Brassica which also includes members of the broccoli, cabbage and turnip families. Inside this group include three types, 1. hirta which gives us the white and yellow seeds, 2. juncea which gives us brown and Oriental seeds, and 3. Nigra which are black seeds.

Yellow seeds are slightly larger and a pale straw color. These have a tart flavor but not as much pungency as the other varieties

Fun Mustard Facts

- Pope John Paul XXII loved mustard so much that in the early 1300's he created a new Vatican position of mustard-maker to the pope - grand moutardier du pape.
- Americans use more mustard than any other country in the world.
- National Mustard Day is celebrated on the first Saturday of each August at The Mount Horeb Mustard Museum in Wisconsin.
- In one year at New York's Yankee Stadium more than 1,600 gallons plus 2,000,000 individual packets of mustard are consumed.
- Most of the mustard seeds used in Dijon, France are actually grown in the United States and Canada. Canada produces about 90 percent of the world's supply of mustard seeds.
- Over 700 million pounds of mustard are consumed worldwide each year.
- George J. French introduced his French's mustard in 1904, the same year that the hot dog was introduced to America at the St. Louis World's Fair.

Celebrate National Mustard Day

National Mustard Day is celebrated annually at the Mount Horeb Mustard Museum on the first Saturday in August (In 2008, this is August 2). It is a fun-filled day for the whole family and has traditionally included "free" Oscar Mayer hot dogs as well as music, games, other entertainment, mustard samples, and more. The Mustard Museum has been the official sponsor of this event since 1991. For more information, check out <http://www.mustardweb.com/mustard-day.htm>.

Make Your Own Mustard

There are lots of mustard recipes online. One website suggests: Use dried mustard seeds. There are a variety of seeds. White, or yellow seeds make a yellow mustard. Brown seeds make a stronger, more pungent brown mustard.

Place seeds and a small amount of water or vinegar into a blender. Avoid using too much liquid, or it will be runny. You can also use almost any liquid, including wine or even beer. Run blender until the mixture is smooth. Store mustard in the refrigerator.

Tip: Experiment and create your own mustard flavor. Add tiny amounts of other spices before processing. Salt, black pepper, and honey are popular choices. For some zip, add a little (very little) Jalapeno peppers.

Or, if you would prefer to try making mustard from powder rather than seeds, try the following.

- 4 T. yellow mustard powder
- 4 T. brown mustard powder
- ¼ c. cold water
- ¼ c. red wine vinegar
- ½ t. salt
- ½ t. ground or rubbed tarragon
- ½ t. cayenne pepper

Mix mustard powders and water until it becomes a thick paste (about 1 or 2 minutes). Let sit for 20 minutes. Add red wine vinegar, salt, tarragon and cayenne and mix well. Store in an airtight glass jar. For best flavors, let the mustard sit for two to three weeks before using. It will store in a refrigerator for several months. Makes about 1 cup.

Seeds for Thought

Additional Resources to Nurture Soil & Soul

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Questions to Ponder

The next time you are wondering what your family might do together, or the next time there is a lull in conversation at the dinner table, consider pondering the following questions.

- If you imagine your faith as a seed inside you, what kind of seed would you imagine it to be?
- In the parable of the mustard seed, Jesus compared God's Kingdom to a mustard seed. If you were to write your own parable about God's kingdom, what would you say God's kingdom is like?
- What people in your life help to nurture your faith?
- What things do you do to nurture your faith?
- What things do you do to nurture other people?
- Think of a skill/gift/talent that you have that is small right now (you aren't very good), but can grow into something big and wonderful if you take care of it and nurture it (practice).
- Which do you think is bigger, a tomato seed or bean seed? Explore and compare the seeds for different vegetables you like. Do the bigger seeds grow into bigger plants?