

HE EXPLAINED EVERYTHING

Mark 4:26-34 Text vs. 34 *“He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when He was alone with His own disciples, He explained everything.”*

They say power corrupts. And that absolute power corrupts absolutely! But today, I want to tell you about a power that never corrupts, and it's greater than any power any monarch or dictator in this world has ever seen. It's a power that makes people better! And it's found in the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is referred to more than 80 times in the New Testament, and it's not just about physical space or territory. It's about kingship. It's about God's sovereign rule. It's about God as king. The Kingdom of God where Jesus Christ rules at the right hand of God, eternally.

Jesus' authority in heaven is found in various passages of the New Testament. Romans 8:34 says, *“Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God, and is also interceding for us.”* This verse emphasizes the assurance of God's love and grace. And other Scripture reminds us that Jesus intervenes on our behalf. 1 Peter 3:22, describes Jesus as being in heaven and at God's right hand affirming our Christian faith that Jesus' resurrection assured His eternal role as a mediator between God and humanity. John the Baptist said, the Kingdom of Heaven is near. In Matthew 3:2 he proclaimed, *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”* Jesus preached it. *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* (Matthew 4:17) Jesus taught you enter the Kingdom of Heaven by doing His Father's will. He said, *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”* (Matthew 7:21) His parables revealed secrets. He said, *“The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them”* (Matthew 13:11) which means, His disciples received deeper spiritual insight than others who remained unaware of these hidden truths. And it shows the idea that understanding God's kingdom requires being open and receptive to it. Jesus urged His followers to pray for its coming, by praying *“Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”* (Matthew 6:10) It's not just for the future. But for now! It's a present spiritual reality for God's people. *“For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves.”* (Colossians 1:13)

Now, our text for this fourth Sunday after Pentecost tells a story of seed and Sower working together. The seed grows into a great bush whose branches offer abundance. The mustard seed could grow into a bush the size of a house making it a great nesting place for birds who eat the seed pods, which can also be ground into a powder for curries and condiments. The leaves? They're edible and can be eaten raw in salads or cooked as mustard greens. So, this parable of Jesus should remind us, we are *co-creators* with God. And when we respect relationships. When we support one another, the kingdom of God is revealed as a place of plenty. A place where all God's creation can bloom and grow and flourish. But when we neglect relationships, all creation suffers.

Martin Luther King Jr. wrote of this in his Letter from a Birmingham Jail. *“We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one, directly affects all indirectly. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”* And we are like the phrase attributed to Graeme Goldsworthy, an Australian theologian who really captured the spirit of the Kingdom of God with this! *“God's people, in God's place, under God's rule.”* A community of believers. Living in alignment with God's will. The Kingdom of God. Both a promise and a present experience for believers.

But God's Kingdom began amazingly small. Like a seed. It had great power to produce invisible growth. But just as a farmer can't make growth happen, neither can we cause spiritual growth to happen. A seed doesn't grow, unless it's sown. And we must not become discouraged by doing the work of sowing. Our work is necessary. We are the Sowers! Jesus said, *“This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man throws seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how.”* Soil produces grain all by itself. Sometimes God's work happens quietly. Mysterious automatic growth! Like a mustard seed. Small, but powerful! When planted, it grows into the largest of all. In this day of larger is better, we're led to believe that we, as a small church, are not important. Or that what we do doesn't play a role in bringing forth God's Kingdom.

Well, when the movement Jesus started, it seemed not important to those on the outside. There was nothing magnificent or grand about the kingdom that Jesus and His small band of twelve disciples represented. For certain, Christianity had a small and obscure beginning. Even the teachings of Jesus seemed to be doomed from the start. Who ever heard of loving your enemies? Turning the other cheek? Walking an extra mile? Receiving by giving? Wow, Jesus' teachings were as revolutionary then, as they are today in our secular society. But let's not miss the main point here! His parable was comparing the smallness of a seed to the greatness of the results it produced.

There's potential in Kingdom building. Shocking results can come from a small seed which was expected to yield nothing. Jesus said, the mustard seed produced a plant that became greater than all other plants. But why a mustard seed?

Well, God's work in our lives may seem small right now. But it has great significance! We don't always understand how God's work unfolds. But God's work leads to a glorious, eternal kingdom.

A little over 75 years ago, a little-known American inventor born of Russian descent named Vladimir Kosma Zworykin began working for the Westinghouse Electric Corporation. Over the next few years, Mr. Zworykin worked on two ideas. He called one an iconoscope. And the other a kinescope. The kinescope would eventually come to be known as the Cathode Ray Tube. While they are no longer widely used since the advent of flat-panel technologies like LCD (liquid crystal display) and LED (light-emitting diode) they played a significant role in the history of television and computing. Mr. Zworykin revealed his great invention to the world in a much-publicized demonstration at a convention of radio engineers on November 18, 1929. He demonstrated a television receiver containing his invention the kinescope. His demonstration marked a crucial moment in the development of television. The iconoscope became a TV camera for broadcasting. And the cathode ray tube became the TV receiver in your home. All this came about because of the small seed of an idea in the mind of one man. Now, because of that idea, we all sit and watch our TV's that grew from the small mustard seed of an idea into a worldwide multi-billion-dollar industry. As you can see, from the small seed of an idea, great things can grow.

And it's the same with your faith in God. With the presence of the Kingdom of God in your heart, the Bible says the Kingdom of God can be in your life, right now! At other times, it's in the future. The apostle Paul said, yes the Kingdom is part of our present spiritual life: *"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."* (Romans 14:17, ESV) Eating and drinking are things like dietary rules or rituals in the early Christian community. There were debates about what was permissible to eat. They were called *kosher* laws. Food that followed strict dietary rules in Judaism. But Righteousness? It's not about following legal rules. It's about having a right relationship with God! It's about faith. Repentance. And living a good moral life As His children, the Kingdom of God is our eternal inheritance, created out of His love for us. It's the final, and never-ending chapter in God's plans for humanity. *"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world'."* (Matthew 25:34) Jesus Christ, God's human Son, will be given the entire earth as His everlasting inheritance. (Psalm 2:7-8) And our inheritance, as believers in Him, is a future glory He will share with us forever.

And the idea of sharing the future glory with Jesus is rooted in the promise of eternal life and the belief in the Resurrection. According to the New Testament, in Romans 8:17, believers are described as co-heirs with Christ, meaning, they will share His glory. Glory that's connected with the redemption and transformation of believers. *"Our inheritance as God's children is eternal, full of glory, and secured forever. Even in our suffering we have every reason to rejoice."* (1 Peter 1:4) That includes not only spiritual renewal. But the promise of a resurrected body free from the sufferings of this present world. This shared glory is a present reality now, in the sense of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And it's a future hope, letting believers realize their inheritance is to be in the presence of God, forever. Our inheritance is a future glory with Christ. Imperishable. Spotless and unfading. (1 Peter 1:4).

So, the simplest way to understand the Kingdom of God is this: The Kingdom of God is where Jesus Christ reigns as King and as God's supreme authority. This Kingdom exists here and now in part, in the lives and hearts of the redeemed. And is perfection and fulfillment in the future. Jesus explained the Kingdom of God isn't about external rituals. It's about inner transformation. Righteousness. Peace and joy through the Holy Spirit. Yes, we have access to a power unlike anything in this world—the power of God's kingdom. So, keep sowing. Keep trusting that God's Word will produce growth beyond understanding. And that when we're finally, eternally with Jesus, He'll explain everything. And it doesn't get any better than that! AMEN