

# Sermons at First Church

**A Ministry of the Word**  
**June 7, 2015**

**First Presbyterian Church**  
**Clarksburg, WV**

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**Mark 4:26-33**

*The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. (Mark 4:26-27 N.R.S.V.)*

## **Planting Seeds of the Kingdom**

I am a child of God. I believe in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. And I believe he has the power to change my life and your life.

A father and his four-year-old son were having some bonding time. They were eating hamburgers at McDonald's. The boy said, "Dad, what are these little things on the top of the bread?"

His dad answered that they were seeds and assured him that it was okay to eat them.

The little boy thought about that for a moment and then said, "You know, Dad, if we were to plant these seeds, we would have enough hamburgers to last forever!"

Pretty good thinking for a four-year-old! We may not be able to plant hamburger seeds, but in our lesson for today from Mark, Jesus tells us that we can plant seeds for the kingdom of God. He also assures us that if we are faithful in planting, the harvest will be great.

The kingdom of God is the place where God's will is always done. In the Lord's prayer, we pray, "Thy kingdom come, they will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Jesus introduced kingdom living when he came to earth. And even though the kingdom of God will not be fully realized on earth until Christ returns again, we help bring in the kingdom of God in the way we live our lives. Every loving act that we do, every choice we make for Christ's sake, produces fruit for the kingdom.

The first thing we note about planting seeds for the kingdom is that we are not responsible for the growth of the seed. There is a bit of a lesson in humility here. Notice that in Jesus' story, the farmer does not cultivate the seed, nor even water it. He simply plants it, and God gives the growth. The farmer cannot make the seed grow faster by staying up later at night. The seed grows the same whether he is sleep or awake.

There is tremendous relief and freedom in this message. It is not our job to make the seeds of the

kingdom grow. That is God's job. Our job is to be faithful in sowing.

Sometimes we do see the growth of the seeds we plant. Often we do not.

Jesus reminds us that God is at work in the world and that through God incredible growth for the kingdom takes place. Jesus talks about how a tiny mustard seed grows into the largest of all garden plants. The mustard plant grows 10 to 15 feet high. It is like having a small tree spring up out of your garden.

God is at work in the world multiplying our efforts. One expert estimated that a single mustard seed can grow into a mustard bush that produces as many as 250,000 seeds in a single season.

The second thing I would lift up from this parable is that while we cannot make the seeds of the kingdom grow, we can be sure that we are planting the right kind of seeds. In the Disney movie, "Second Hand Lions," two old bachelors brothers are caring for their young nephew. They decide that they all need to plant a garden together. So they buy several different kinds of seed off of a traveling salesman. One scene shows lots of small green plants coming up in neat even rows. They are all taking a break leaning on their hoes. One brother asks the other one, what is planted in each row.

The other brother reads the names off of the seed packets carefully placed at the end of each row. Carrots, sweet peas, green beans, cucumbers, . . . The first brother takes another look at the small green plants, and throws down his hoe in disgust. Every row looks exactly the same. It turns out that they have planted nothing but corn in every row.

Every choice that we make in life is a seed that is planted. It doesn't matter what we call those seeds. It doesn't matter how good an excuse we make for our bad actions. Selfish, greedy, and hurtful choices or seeds, will not bear fruit for the kingdom. At the same time, every act of faithful obedience to God, every act of kindness and love will multiply in God's kingdom.

Jesus said, "For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will be no means lose the reward." (Mark 9:41)

Part of the point of this parable is that every Christian can sow good seeds for the kingdom. We are not to worry that we are not smart enough, or rich enough, or talented enough to make a difference. God takes what we have and multiplies it greatly.

At the same time, we are not to fall into the trap of thinking that all God wants is the leftovers in our life. God wants us to sow generously, trusting him to give the growth.

As I was working on this sermon, I was reminded of the story of the potato farmers and the marble potatoes. If you have ever planted potatoes, you know that you cut up good potatoes, making sure that each piece has at least one eye, or sprout in it. You then plant all of these potato pieces and a potato plant grows from each piece.

As the story goes, some potato farmers didn't want to sacrifice good potatoes for planting. So they saved all the little marble sized potatoes each year, the ones that were too small to bother with peeling them anyway. They planted these marble potatoes, these leftovers. The first couple of years that worked just fine. After that they began to notice that the potato harvest each year contained more and more of the marble sized potatoes, until after a few years, their plants bore only marble sized potatoes.

We are often tempted to do that with our lives. We want to give to God only the small, tiny portions of our lives that we won't miss anyway. As a result, our lives grow more and more spiritually barren. On the other hand, if we give sacrificially, God will multiply our harvest and our spiritual lives will grow ever deeper and richer. The apostle Paul reminds us, "The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." (2 Corinthians 9:6)

Amen.