

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ!

Jesus says, "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." We sometimes start to quibble about this parable, after all, we know there are smaller seeds than the mustard seed. But understand that in the time of Jesus, the people held it to be the smallest of seeds, and unlike the mustard you see in fields here, it can grow to a height of between 8 and 12 feet.

Here we need to know that Jesus is concerned with the contrast between this tiny seed and what it becomes, a veritable tree, big enough that birds roost in its branches. This image of birds roosting in the mustard tree fills out our picture of a seed growing into a tree.

Now what we know as Christianity started small, Jesus calling one, two then a handful of disciples in Galilee, a rural area in a backwards, troublesome region of the Roman empire. Insignificant beginning despised by many in Jesus' day, and it grows and becomes a very great kingdom indeed. The mighty kingdom of heaven emerges from Jesus and his little band of disciples. God's kingdom like a tiny seed that is sown, and sprouts, grows and ends up providing a safe refuge for God's people.

So what about us, you and me? This same tiny seed planted in each of us, in many cases while we were yet helpless infants, it doesn't seem like enough does it? It seems so small, so weak, surely there must be something we should be doing. But that seed planted, watered in baptism, nurtured through Word and Sacrament, and the seed, our faith grows, our trusting in Jesus grows until it takes over our lives, crowding out what the world tries to insert in us. That little seed of faith grabs ahold of us, making us a safe refuge, and place for creation to be at home, it gives us something outside of ourselves, a purpose serving God through service to others.

Now think about this parable, "the Kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened." Now according to people who know more about it than I do, the amount of bread would have been enough to feed fifty or more folks, three squares a day for a week. Little packets of yeast, looking dead and useless but teeming with life and thriving. This is what the kingdom of heaven is like, an unbelievable promise, foolishness, a stumbling block, a death on the cross, that death added to you and me and mixed in giving us thriving, teeming, life. God has ahold of us and kneads us like a loaf of bread and we rise into his new creation.

This is what we need to hear, God grabbing us, taking ahold of us, the kingdom not looking too impressive, nor for that matter, do we. But God takes over and makes us his own for eternity.

God meets us in our weakness, and the Spirit intercedes with us, God meets us in our foolishness, in what we might think of as our wasted lives, God comes when we are weak, when we don't know where to turn. God meets us in those moments when our faith feels like a mustard seed or a tiny bit of dead-looking yeast.

So what shall we say about these things? What shall we say about our lives? Are we to feel hopeless, thrown away? Loneliness, unemployment, debilitating illness, rejection, all these things that can cause us to consider our worthlessness. We ask, are we separated from the love of God?

Well, in our second reading this morning, from Romans, we heard "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Hear it again! "For I am convinced", Paul tells us, "that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, or things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation" in other words nothing, nothing, nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Nothing can separate us. That is security. That is our God who will not let us go. God has grabbed ahold of us and won't give us up, nothing can separate us from God. Not anything the world throws at us, nothing we can imagine can separate us from him. He is ours and we are his. Our Father's grip can't be undone, we are secure, held in the strong arms of our Savior, God's Kingdom in our lives like a tiny seed, like leaven, and by God's grace we are saved by faith and God will never let us go!

AMEN