

Seed is for Growing

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[0 : 0 0] Welcome to another Sermon on the Web from St. John's Shaughnessy Anglican Church in Vancouver, Canada. You are free to use this mp3 audio file and to redistribute it to others without alteration and without charge. After the sermon, listen for more information about St.

John's Shaughnessy Church and the St. John's website. The following message is from the August 20, 2000 service at St. John's Shaughnessy. The Reverend David Short delivered his message entitled, Seed is for Growing.

God our Father, we bow our heads before you. We have heard that your name is holy and terrible and yet we also know that you are the God of love. We pray now as your word is opened that our hearts might be opened as well to receive that good seed and that it may grow and bear fruit for the kingdom. For we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Please sit down. Now I wonder if you would take your Bibles and open to those two little parables that we came to in Mark chapter 4, page 36 in the New Testament.

We return to Mark chapter 4 after a number of weeks of moving in different places in the Bible. And it's great to come back to this chapter because Mark chapter 4 is essentially about one thing and that is that God intends his kingdom to grow.

[2 : 1 6] And you'll find this word grow comes back again and again. You remember in the parable of the sower that we looked at what seemed like years ago now. In verse 7 we read that the seeds fell among thorns, the thorns grew up.

In verse 8, other seeds fell in good soil and brought forth grain growing up. So the idea is that the word of God that comes into our hearts is meant to grow and meant to produce fruit for the kingdom.

And in the two little parables that we have today, in verse 27 we read the seed should sprout and grow. And in the parable of the mustard seed in verse 32, when it is sown it grows up.

God's intention is that his kingdom will grow in size and value. But it doesn't seem like it very often. Particularly if you look in your own heart or if I look in mine.

And that's why these two little parables of the kingdom are so important for us. And what Jesus does is, first he tells us about the process of growth.

[3 : 2 4] And the second is he tells us about the end result of the growth. So verses 26 to 29, the process of growth. We already know that Jesus is speaking about how the word of God, which is the seed, is planted in our hearts.

And the whole picture he gives in these verses is one of gradual growth. See verse 26? The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow.

He knows not how. In other words, God's kingdom grows in our hearts gradually, incrementally, in a hidden way, not suddenly.

In other words, if you're looking for immediate results of growth in your own life and in the lives of others, you will be disappointed. And I think this is very important for us.

If you're praying for your friends or for your family, and you're sharing your faith with them, and there seem to be no results whatsoever, the encouragement of Jesus is, keep sowing the seed.

[4 : 3 6] If you are a parent, and you've been sowing the seed of God's word into your children's heart, you don't dig it up every day to see how it's going.

The picture here is that God will give it growth. And the important point for us here is that in this little parable, we are involved in the sowing, and we are involved in the reaping, but both jobs have definite limitations, and the limitations are in verses 27 and 28.

You see, the sower, he sleeps, he doesn't know how it grows. Verse 28, the earth produces of itself. First the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.

You see, we don't know actually how God's word grows in our hearts and in the hearts of others. It is a mystery. It produces of itself.

We can't force it to grow. Now, the apostles understood this and drove it even further. If you keep your finger in Mark 4 and turn to the right, to 1 Corinthians, chapter 3, I wanted to show you a very important text, page 157.

[5 : 53] The Corinthians were fighting one another over who was the best preacher, who was the most important leader, which party they belonged to, Paulus or Paul or Peter or whoever.

Look at 1 Corinthians 3, verse 5. Paul says, What then is Apollos? Not who is he? What is he? What is Paul? Paul, servant, through whom you believed as the Lord assigned to each.

He says, I planted, Apollos watered, but who is it that did the real work? It's God, he says, who gave the growth. So, neither he who plants, neither he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

So, you see, what we are to do is we are to sow and we are to reap, but it is God who gives the growth. And that's why we have to be very careful not to trust any human agency. A trust must be in God through his word.

A trust cannot be in any human agency. Remember when we opened this gospel and John the Baptist arrived on the sea and he pointed to Jesus Christ and he said, Listen, I can baptize you with water, but he can do the real thing.

[7 : 03] He can baptize you with the Holy Spirit. It's the same today. We can't do anything ultimately spiritually in the lives of other people except what God gives us to do, to sow his word and to pray.

But if we receive God's word in our hearts, if you turn back to Mark chapter 4, if we receive it and if we believe it and if we obey it, then the kingdom of God will grow.

This is the process of growth in the kingdom of God. The seed and the soil must be brought together. The word of God must be brought into our human hearts.

You see, the seed by itself, this book by itself won't do anything. You can go to a hotel room and find a Gideon's Bible and it won't change you by itself.

Nor will the human heart, nor will the soil by itself do anything. It'll just grow weeds. But God's purpose is that the seed of God's word and human hearts are brought together.

[8 : 08] Then there's growth. So the whole purpose of the church, you see, is to bring together the seed and the soil. That's why we gather together here week by week by week. And what Jesus is saying here is that we must have confidence that when we bring the seed and the soil together, when we bring God's word together with our own human hearts and other human hearts, it will grow.

It will grow. We don't have that confidence that the seed of God, God's word will change us. We will do other things to find ways for growth and we won't take it into our own hearts.

I must say, one of the most depressing realities in the church today is that there are so many clergy who seem to have lost confidence in the word of God to change.

I receive over my desk brochures advertising conferences. There's a large foundation in the United States called the College of Preachers which gives glossy brochures inviting me, seducing me to go down and learn how to preach.

And there's plenty of oratory going on but the courses are all about storytelling to entertain. And preaching from the newspaper and being relevant. They're not teaching people how to preach God's word.

[9 : 28] They're not telling the preacher to place God's word into human hearts. And it seems to me if we're not going to do that we may as well wrap up. Remember in the book of James, receive with meekness the implanted word.

That is able to save your souls. God brought this world into being with his word and now God has begun a new creation and he is growing this new creation in our hearts and in this world through his same word.

That is the process of growth. And secondly and very briefly, what is the result of that growth? Well in verses 30 and 30, 30 to 32 we have this wonderful parable of the mustard seed which is a great combination of realism and optimism.

The mustard seed, smaller seed says Jesus, huge tree. Word of God seems so small, seems so irrelevant, seems so insignificant.

You pick up the newspapers, listen to conversations, watch the media. the message of the cross, the message that God sent his son to die for us and save us is utterly ridiculous.

[10 : 44] Completely foolish to think that the answer for all the human needs, the answer for Vancouver and for our families is Jesus in his death and resurrection.

I've always found it wonderful when the Apostle Paul says in Romans, I'm not ashamed of the gospel. It's the power of God for salvation. It shows, proves that he was tempted to be ashamed and he's resisting the temptation.

It doesn't seem clever. It doesn't seem to be the answer. It's the tiniest thing. But Jesus says this, when it is sown, it will grow. And from this tiny seed in our hearts and in the hearts of those around us, from this tiny seed will grow a kingdom unlike any other kingdom this world has ever seen, a kingdom that is eternal.

that is glorious, that embraces people from all nations. So as we head toward this fall term together, Jesus says that God's intention is to grow his kingdom and that he does that by bringing together God's word and human hearts.

Be patient. Do not lose heart. If we do God's work in God's way, he will grow his kingdom quietly and gradually until finally it will place everything else under its shadow.

[12 : 13] Amen. www.stjohns.org www.stjohns.org www.stjohns.org On the website, you will also find information about ministries, worship services, and special events at St. John's, Shaughnessy.

We hope that this sermon on the web has helped you and that you will share it with others. Thank you.