

Scattered and Sown

Text:

Mark 4:26-34

A sermon preached by

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Mark 4:26-34

[Jesus] said, “The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, ²⁷and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. ²⁸The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. ²⁹But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.”

³⁰He also said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? ³¹It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; ³²yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

³³With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; ³⁴he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.



“So, you know, Bud Light isn’t really a beer, right?”

“Really?,” replied the server who had just shown me the beer list – bottles and drafts – and then told me \$2 Bud Lights were the evening special.

“Nah, it’s basically just water.”

“Well, I guess that explains the ‘Light’ part. I don’t drink beer, so I wouldn’t know. Now hard liquor, I could tell you.”

It was the usual restaurant banter that Lydia in one sentence claims is flirtation and in the next tells me it’s a wonderful gift that I have. Evangelism, basically – immediately engaging in a conversation with a stranger who I know nothing about simply because she is another of God’s children. Flirtangelism.

By the end of the night, I knew her name is Crystal, that she is 30, married for less than a year, and is now 7 weeks pregnant. The first child of an only child of an only child. Everyone is thrilled.

So she’s not drinking at all these days – not beer or hard liquor. I heard about her intolerable morning sickness and that she’s been told to keep saltines by the bedside so she can eat them before getting out of the bed as soon as she wakes up.

“During *my* pregnancies,” I slipped into the exchange, “Graham crackers helped.” She gave me that baffled look of confusion that often is the response to my random statements.



Pregnant, little, middle aged, white man – cognitive dissonance flashed across her face.



God is in these moments. Be they flirtations or evangelism or ramblings or profundity. God is in these moments because it is in each other's faces and through our small interactions that we can today experience God. A beer in the bar, a baby in the belly; a smile, a word – God is there.

Will I ever see Crystal again? I told her I would stop by and check on how she's getting along. The place is within walking distance of my house but I rarely go there. Will I check in on her?

Maybe. Maybe not. Yet, whatever, God is there.

In that small exchange this week, God was there. In each encounter we have with another person, we experience God who lives in our lives.



“The kingdom of God” – the reign of God, the kin-dom of God – “is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth.” The smallest seed – or perhaps the smallest, briefest, random encounter that we might have – when it grows it becomes something else.



It becomes like God’s reign which permeates our lives – or God’s “kin-dom” as many believers are calling it now to remind us that we are all kin and to eliminate the royalty language of the King James Bible – of which we are co-creators if we are to believe what Jesus has told us.

Jesus’ parable has some quirky little bits to it.



He calls the mustard seed the smallest of all – its small, but it’s not invisible and there’s probably smaller.



He says that when it’s “sown upon the ground” – well, no one plants mustard seed, especially a farmer in the arid fields of 1st century Palestine, because basically it’s a pesky weed that grows where it’s not wanted.



He builds the parable up to its climax – “when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all” ... drum roll please ...

“*shrubs*.” – shrubs? – yeah, a shrub.



I gotta tell you, even a shrub that “puts forth large branches” ... is still just a shrub. These quirky little bits would have gotten Jesus’ listeners attention. In fact, they might very well have been laughing or nudging each other or scratching their heads.

“Where’s he going with this one?”

“Just wait for it. I’ve heard him do this before. There’s a point to this story. There always is. Just you wait.”

... so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”



Zing. There it is. The birds of the air can take refuge in the shade of this uncontrollable, annoying, weedy, little – sorry, “huge” – shrub that grew from the tiniest of all – well, maybe not the itsy bitsy-est of them all, but pretty darn small – seeds.

That, my friends, is what God’s kin-dom is all about. That is what

we are co-creators of with God taking the lead. That is what must be done in this world that if left to its own inclinations would just as soon stranglehold us like weeds usually do.

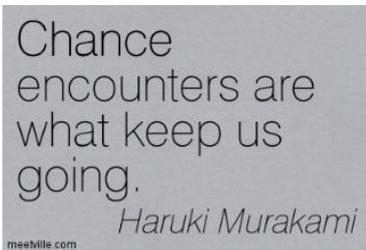


Maybe we call them random acts of kindness.

“The smallest act of kindness is worth more than the grandest intention.” Oscar Wilde

“If we all do one random act of kindness daily, we just might set the world in the right direction.” Martin Kornfeld (artist)

“A single act of kindness throws out roots in all directions and the roots spring up and make new trees.” Amelia Earhart



Or chance encounters.

“Chance encounters are what keep us going.” Haruki Murakami

“Sometimes the people you meet unexpectedly have the biggest impact on your life.” Anonymous



Call them what you will but they are little pieces of God that we share with each other. Those moments when we are face to face and our hands are open and our hearts are exposed – these are the seeds that grow into mighty shrubs that just might shelter those in need of shade for a brief moment.



Those tiny seeds scattered or sown in the world around us, are what grows God’s kin-dom in our midst.

At times they seem like pesky weeds. I’m sure not every table server wants my random acts of profundity, annoying little weeds that slow down the task at hand, but such is God’s kin-dom. All we can do is scatter and sow, God brings the outcome. “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth,” Paul wrote to the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 3:6)



Scatter and sow. Whoever you encounter this week, wherever you encounter them, however the circumstances present themselves, plant the seed from which God's kin-dom will sprout. Who knows – well, God knows – you just might be creating a moment of shade in a life that needs a respite from that which overshadows that life.



Scatter and sow. Weeds will grow. Shade that protects. God's kin-dom on earth.

Amen.