

Patience! The Seed Will Grow!

26 He said, "The kingdom of God is like this: A man scatters seed on the ground, 27 and while he sleeps and rises, night and day, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. 28 The ground produces fruit on its own: first the blade, then the head, then the full grain in the head. 29 When the crop is ready, he swings the sickle without delay, because the harvest has come."

30 Then he said, "To what should we compare the kingdom of God? Or with what parable may we picture it? 31 It is like a mustard seed, which when sown on the ground is one of the smallest of all the seeds planted in the ground. 32 Yet when it is planted, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches so that the birds of the sky can nest under its shade."

33 With many similar parables he continued to speak the word to them, as much as they were able to hear. 34 He did not speak to them without a parable. But when he was alone with his disciples, he explained everything to them." The Holy Bible, Evangelical Heritage Version®, EHV®, ©2019 Wartburg Project, Inc. All rights reserved.

In 1844 archaeologists opened the burial chamber of one of Egypt's great pyramids. Among the treasures stored there were some jars filled with grain that had been buried with the Pharaoh centuries before. On a whim they decided to plant some of the grain and to their amazement it grew! I remember reading a *National Geographic* article about the discovery of a sunken Greek merchant vessel from around the time of Christ. In it they discovered some air-tight jars containing seed. When planted this seed, too, grew.

Dear friends, Jesus speaks to us today in parables. Parables are stories Christ used to explain some particular aspect of God's Kingdom. For example, in the parable of the sower Jesus teaches us how the Word of God is received by different people. The parables of the hidden treasure and the priceless pearl teach us to value the Kingdom of God above all else. The parable of the net teaches us to cast out the net of the gospel and to let God do the judging of the results on Judgment Day.

What do these two parables we have today teach us? Both teach us patience. Be patient with the Word of God because God's Word alone has the power to give us life in Christ. Also, be patient with the Word of God because like the mustard seed God's Word builds us up into God's mighty Kingdom.

I. Be patient! God's Word will grow in your life.

"26 He said, "The kingdom of God is like this: A man scatters seed on the ground, 27 and while he sleeps and rises, night and day, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. 28 The ground produces fruit on its own: first the blade, then the head, then the full grain in the head. 29 When the crop is ready, he swings the sickle without delay, because the harvest has come.""

We are so impatient. Fast food restaurants are working at serving it faster. There are drive-ins at the bank, restaurants, and liquor stores. I saw a pharmacy vending machine. How many times have you hung up while on hold? How many times were you told there is a forty minute wait at a restaurant, so you left? We can't wait.

We also become so impatient with God. He doesn't seem to answer our prayers soon enough. We want the benefits of God's Kingdom now. ***"We groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling,"*** as Paul puts it in our epistle reading. We don't want to face temptation anymore. We don't want to bury another relative. "Just take me now," we pray.

So Jesus encourages us, "Be patient." When a farmer plants a seed, there is not much he can do to coax it to grow. He gets up every day, does his chores, comes home, spends some time with the family, and goes to bed. He doesn't go out at midnight and stand watch over his seed. He can't make it grow faster. Nor can he speed up harvest time. The seed will become ripe in due time.

It doesn't take a theological genius to know that the seed represents the Word of God. And the first lesson we learn here is it is the power rests with the Word and not the planter. We put so much pressure on ourselves. We teach our children, we go to church, preach sermons, read the Bible at church or at home, but the power rests with the Word and not us. Kids believe not because we took them to church. They believe because the Word at church works on their hearts. I mean, have you met a Christian who has never been contact with the Word of God? Be patient. All we can do is plant the Word.

Be patient, also, as the Word makes your faith grow. ***"28 The ground produces fruit on its own: first the blade, then the head, then the full grain in the head. 29 When the crop is ready, he swings the sickle without delay, because the harvest has come.""*** I wouldn't expect a three year old to make an important family decision. Physically we must mature, and mentally and emotionally, too. I wish I knew as much as I do now when I was eighteen. And the same is true with the Christian. Thank God that salvation does not depend on the quantity of one's faith; whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved. Even the spirit wrought faith in an infant through Baptism is enough. But faith is a living organism that can grow or lose weight. Like a plant our faith begins as a small seedling. But as the seedling grows so does our faith through the Word. For example, it would be a big thing for a recent convert to give five dollars to church. For a long time, mature Christian, five dollars is way too little. Be patient; the Word will make you mature, and don't be surprised if that recent convert eventually gives more and more.

Also, be patient with God's harvest. God knows when to call a Christian home. It could be as an infant or teenager or after a hundred years. But God knows when. And soon Christ will return and give us a new heaven and a new earth. I know, it has been two thousand years. Be patient. The harvest will come.

Now the farmer could do things to prevent the seed from growing. He could refuse to plant it. He could pour poison on it or stomp on it. We, too, could refuse to plant the Word of God. We can poison our faith or stomp on it as we let the love of the world or self or human teachings replace the Word. I pray we don't do that. Rather, plant it, and plant it often. But be patient; let the Word work and mature us as we await the harvest of souls.

II. Be patient. Let the Word build a mighty Kingdom.

But there is another parable before us today. What aspect of God's Kingdom does it teach us? Also, to be patient. Be patient as God will produce a mighty Kingdom.

³⁰ Then he said, "To what should we compare the kingdom of God? Or with what parable may we picture it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which when sown on the ground is one of the smallest of all the seeds planted in the ground. ³² Yet when it is planted, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches so that the birds of the sky can nest under its shade." The mustard seed is one of the smallest seeds around. Yet this seed grows into a large tree, as much as ten or fifteen high, large enough that birds can come and nest in its branches.

Jesus is speaking here of nothing else than the Kingdom of God. This is no ordinary kingdom. It is not located in this country or that, or only in this denomination or that. It is invisible. It exists wherever the Word is present and people believe it. It consists of believers both in heaven and earth. And it had a humble beginning. It all started as a small seed with a handful of disciples. Then 3000 were added on Pentecost Day and it has been growing ever since.

As Ezekiel prophesied, ***"Birds of every kind will nest in it."*** In its branches we find some rather unlikely birds. Mitsuo Fuchida was one of the Japanese pilots who led the attack on Pearl Harbor. He later read some tracts on Christ and the gospel of Luke and became a believer in Jesus Christ and a Christian missionary to Korea. Another unlikely bird is William Murray, the son of Madalyn Murray O'Hair, one of the leading atheists in our country. In his book, *My Life Without God*, he outlines how he became a believer in Jesus Christ. Another unlikely bird is Chief Alchesay who was an apache scout for the government in the Apache wars. He met one of our WELS missionaries, Edgar Guenther, who opened the Bible up to him. He, too, became a believer and a leader in our church in Apache land. Other unlikely birds include you and me.

But why would birds from every nationality want to nest in the branches of God's kingdom? Nowhere else will we find the shelter of God's forgiveness. The seed, the Word, opens our eyes and shows us our sins before a holy God in heaven. Yes that is sinful, too. We need that so we realize we need help as we lament with David, ***"Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me."*** But this is where the life-giving power of the seed goes to work. Through his Word God shows us the love he has for us as he sent Jesus Christ, his son, to be the sacrifice of our sins. The Holy Spirit makes that seed powerful as he works faith in our hearts. This is the purpose of God's Word as John declares, ***"These words are written that you may believe that Jesus Christ is Lord."*** And prompted by faith, we consider the world rubbish and Christ gain so we declare with Paul in our epistle reading, ***"We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So we make it our goal to please him."*** This is the mighty kingdom of God. This is the tree in whose branches we and birds of every kind find shelter.

We know that seed grows. So does God's Word. Don't put the pressure on yourself. Instead, plant the Word through your study, in your children, in your unchurched neighbor, and let the Word do its thing. Just be patient. God has made us members of the mightiest empire. Not even the gates of hell can overcome it. Be patient and wait for one day the church militant will be the church triumphant. Why hasn't God come and harvest us to heaven? There is a world full of all kinds of birds who need to find shelter in the branches of God's kingdom. God wants them in his branches, too. Look for ways you can be a planter as you make your offerings, as you conduct yourselves, as you make friends. INJ Amen.