

IT ONLY TAKES A LITTLE –Three Kingdom Parables
October 21, 2012 –Election of Officers –Matthew 13: 31-32
The Church of the Covenant

I remember sitting at my desk in a former church, down and a little discouraged. There was a speaker coming to town and I knew that God wanted this person to speak, but I just didn't know how we could swing it. Our part of funding the speaker came to \$2,500 and while we probably had the money I had already asked the Trustees too often and as we all know, "you go to the well too often and the well runs dry". Frankly, I didn't have the heart or the energy to go to them one more time with one more request. I think my discouragement was what was really in charge of my thinking. So I'm sitting there at my desk and I decide to pray. I don't have very much faith in that moment, mostly discouragement, but at least I have a grain of mustard seed. So I bow my head and I pray: "Lord, I don't know how you're going to do this but *you're* going to have to do this. I confess I am tired and worn down and discouraged. I've run out of resources on my own. I do believe you want this to happen. But I don't see how it can happen. Lord, you take charge. Please provide in spite of my small, weak efforts. In Jesus' name. Amen." So the mail has come and is sitting on the edge of my desk. If you've ever seen my desk you know why I have to open new mail immediately, lest it be lost forever in the Himalayan mountain of paper and debris on my desk. So I open the first envelope and within it is a nice note thanking me for baptizing their grandchild and how grateful they are and, O, by the way, enclosed is a check for....you guessed it...\$2,500 to be used at my discretion for whatever priority I think. The answer to my prayer was sitting right in front of me on my desk...all the time I was grousing around about how impossible everything was...the possibility was right in front of me all the time. The tiniest little bit of faith caused me to bow my head and ask God to do what I couldn't do. But the speaker came and produced huge amounts of good fruit for the Kingdom; planted innumerable seeds for the Almighty into the hearts of people. Beloved, in the Kingdom of God IT ONLY TAKES A LITTLE to make a lot happen for God...

In October we're looking at parables of Jesus from the Gospel of Matthew in order to figure out what the Kingdom of God is really like. The Kingdom is here right in front of us today; it is all around us; it is in us; it is for us; it is an unstoppable Kingdom that one day will come down from heaven completely and in all its fullness. But today we can experience a foretaste of the Kingdom; we can see God's hand at work; we can understand the way God wants our world to be. When we pray in the Lord's Prayer –"*Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...*" we are asking to get a foretaste of that Kingdom in the here and now. Yes, there is a day when the Kingdom will come in all its fullness, when the heavens will be wrapped up like a scroll, and the trump will sound and Jesus will come again. That's eschatology; that's a high falutin' word meaning the study of the end times. But there is also what is referred to as "realized eschatology"; that's the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God in the here and now. We don't have to wait for pie, by and by, in the sky. We can taste and see that the Lord is GOOD right now, that God is at work right now, that indeed the Kingdom is coming, right now, right here, today and right here in this sanctuary we can feel it and sense it and know it is coming. It is right in front of you, right now. Do you have eyes to see it and ears to hear it???? So Jesus tells us a group of parables to help us understand what this Kingdom is like. If we have ears to hear and eyes to see we will not just understand the Kingdom better but we will more and more see it at work all around us every day. Jesus tells us the Parable of the Mustard Seed: "*The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in the field; it is the smallest of all seeds but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree...*" (Matthew 13: 31-32) In the Kingdom of God, from the smallest of things, comes the greatest of all outcomes. Small is good. Start small and God adds the increase. God is able to take the smallest of things and by His work, and by His power, and by His Spirit, turn it into something HUGE for the glory of His Son, Jesus Christ.

In the Parable of the Sower from last week, God is the sower. It is HE that sows the seeds of faith into our hearts. It is HE who sows the smallest of seeds, the mustard seed, into our hearts. Small seed but it contains Jesus; small seed but it contains the Holy Spirit. That is what is sown into the heart of the believer. The Holy Spirit comes and sows the seed of Jesus Christ into our heart. We don't sow the seeds; God sows the seeds. We don't have the seed of faith grow within our heart; God causes that small seed to grow. When God answered my prayer and so directly and so coincidentally and provided in a way that can only be described as miraculous, how much do you think my faith grew? What is impossible with men is quite possible with God. By the way, new officers, it doesn't take everything to accomplish the sense of calling to which you are called –an elder, a deacon, a member of the search committee. It just takes a grain of mustard seed.

Notice the contrast between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world. In the Kingdom of God, He starts small and creates something huge. In the kingdoms of this world we have to have publicity campaigns and commercials and hoopla and bands and PR agents. Gotta make a big splash. But in the Kingdom of God, God starts small and God starts with people, and God sows the smallest of seeds of faith into our hearts. And out of and from that small seed comes the great changes and transformations, not just for us, but for our community and world. Want to change the world then change yourself first. Want to change yourself first, then be transformed by having that small mustard seed of faith planted in your heart by God! God starts small and God starts with us.

Now there are huge problems here in Washington and out in our world. What, 200 kids start at Wash High in the 9th grade but only 60 to 70 graduate by the time they are Seniors. Huge problem. Some 50% of the elementary kids here in our city are on subsidized food programs and when they go home on the weekend many of them go home to no meals until they come back to school on Monday. Huge problem. The W&J Student who was killed just a couple of blocks away from here. Huge problem. All the kids getting hooked on drugs and even a drug like heroin right here in our community. Huge problem. The problems seem insurmountable; the problems seem so big and so complex and so impossible to take on. We've grown weary even talking about it. We've ceased to believe that anything or anyone can make a difference. We're overwhelmed and discouraged and broken and beaten down.

And by the way, there are things we face in our own personal life that make us feel exactly the same...

Ah, but we have a grain of mustard seed alive in our heart. It may be small. The world would mock it, it is so tiny. But, O my beloved, it is MIGHTY. And in God's Kingdom, God doesn't want kids dropping out of school. And in God's Kingdom, God doesn't want kids going home hungry. And in God's Kingdom nobody gets murdered walking back to their dorm room and nobody's addicted to anything other than the Lord God Almighty Himself. God doesn't want people hurting and down and discouraged and thinking there is no hope. Because the Kingdom of God is what Jesus lived and died and was resurrected to bring to life here in His Father's world.

A small mustard seed PLUS the power of God equals victory. Our faith plus God's working equals the foretaste of the Kingdom of God here on earth. You say, all you have is a small mustard seed? Beloved, it is enough. *With God ALL THINGS are possible.* Lord, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, here in Washington, as it is in heaven. Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*