

**June 13, 2021  
Christ the Servant, Reston  
Pentecost 3  
Mark 4:26-34**

**So let me begin with a statement which I may later regret making. But, for now and for this sermon, I'm in the mood to make it and you can hold me to it – at least for the time being! The statement is this: Maybe it *is* ok to daydream during a sermon. There. I said it. I will say it again: Maybe it *is* ok to daydream during a sermon. And I'll go even one further: I'll bet, if I were listening to one of Jesus' sermons, I would daydream. And I think that would be ok. Here's what I mean:**

**Jesus would be preaching along giving advice about this and that, telling about new ways to live in a challenging world, and all of a sudden he would be into a story about something. The stories would be short, but just enough to put the listener into “story mode” and once you put a listener into “story mode” it's hard to get them back on track again. Why? Because their minds are still thinking about the story and they begin spinning off other thoughts about it. They begin to imagine and visualize things long after the story is ended. But I think that is what Jesus intended.**

**Often his stories would be about seeds, like the two tales we heard about in today's gospel from Mark. Jesus was talking to them about “the kingdom of God” – an abstract concept which has one foot in reality and the other foot in hope, one foot on the ground and one foot in the clouds. The “Kingdom of God” is a tricky concept. But seeds aren't. They're simple. He told a story about a person who sowed seeds on the ground and went to sleep. Then the seeds just grew by themselves, all the way to**

harvest. He told a story about a mustard seed which he claimed to be the smallest of all seeds and which grew into a shrub-like tree which was the largest of all the shrubs. It was neither the first nor the last time Jesus would tell stories about seeds.

Jesus' stories, or parables, have often been said to be metaphors, or analogies, or similes. One thing is like or equal to another. "A" is really a story about "B." You've heard sermons where the seeds in today's lesson equal the growth of the church or the growth of the individual Christian. The seed grows by itself without any help from our part just as the Holy Spirit grows the church or helps us grow in faith. The mustard seed equals the potential God gives each of us. Just a small seed of faith can grow to be a large witness. Mustard seed faith. You've heard those sermons. I've preached those sermons and will do so again.

But, for *this* sermon, I'm wondering if Jesus didn't tell a story to get their minds wondering, to get them daydreaming. Jesus tells them a story about a man who plants a seed, falls asleep, and wakes up to find a plant growing toward maturity. The listener begins to reflect: Seeds. Hmmm. Earth. I love earth. Love to get my hands down and dirty in it. Gotta tend my garden today. Last time I was out there those pepper plants were outta control. I love pepper plants. Earth is good. Gotta take care of the earth. Plants are good. Gotta take care of the plants. I'm gonna make stuffed peppers out of those things. That will be a feast yet to come. A feast yet to come. What's he talking about? The Kingdom of God? Earth. Feast. Food. Jeez I love stuffed peppers. That'll be a great feast. Gotta wait now. Gotta be patient. Kingdom of God. Patience. Faith. Feast to come! Daydreaming.

Now, I'll go you one further. Not only may Jesus have been hoping listeners would daydream during his sermons, but Jesus may have been

daydreaming as he preached this one! Yep. He's telling them about a mustard seed growing into a large bushy tree. Well, here's the thing: In Jesus' day, mustard seeds were not the smallest of all seeds as he said. Others were smaller. And they did not grow into bushy trees, even back then. Mustard then was the same as mustard is today as you look out over wavy fields of yellow.

So, now, his listeners are like; What was that he said? Mustard trees? Birds sitting in mustard trees. That's not right. That's just a fig newton of his imagination. Kinda like it though. Mustard trees! Spread that one on your footlong! Boy, this guy gets wound up. One minute he's talking about the Kingdom of God and another minute he's making up stories about things being much greater than they are now or much greater than I ever imagined them to be. Hmmm. Mustard trees! Far-fetched. Absurd. Bizarrrre. Can't imagine it. Kind of humourous, actually. What's he talking about? Kingdom of God. Far-fetched. Stretches my imagination. Explosive. Kinda like mustard trees. A possibility I have fun imagining. Kingdom of God.

So, a sermon illustration from Jesus starts them daydreaming about how things grow for the good and how sweet things can be. Wherever the mind is wondering, it is beginning to picture a world which is better than it is now and it is beginning to picture a kingdom beyond this world which may be beyond imagination but not beyond hope.

I'm telling you ... if Jesus were at this pulpit now telling stories about earth and seeds and mustard trees and if I were sitting in the congregation I might begin daydreaming about how things can grow and change for the good. I might be thinking about absurd and fantastical things happening. I might be daydreaming about living in a nation where gun violence is made better by simple things like background checks or

reasonable things like banning assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.

I might be moved to imagine that it is actually possible for congress to pass the “For the People Act” which expands voting rights, limits the influence of money in politics, and creates ethics rules.

My imagination might begin thinking about how one particular police violence incident in Minneapolis has grown and grown into a movement which people wouldn’t have imagined. If we can imagine mustard seeds growing into trees we can imagine the passage of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act now which would combat police misconduct, excessive force, and racial bias.

Oh, if Jesus were preaching these stories to me my mind might wonder to lots of good things. And, as I sit and look at the bread and wine on the altar or these marvelous collections of paintings of members holding the body of Christ my daydreaming self might be thinking about what a feast that bread looks like and what a communion of saints we might have at the table. And when I hear that all of this is just a foretaste of the feast to come I try to imagine a future with God which I can’t really imagine because part of what the Kingdom of God is is beyond my comprehension. But I am left with the taste of hope in mouth that, if God can grow trees from mustard seeds, God can, indeed, make all things new. Including me. Including you. Now. And forever.

Amen