**PARABLE OF THE SEED 15th June 2025**

**WHAT’S THE POINT, IT’S ONLY A SEED**

What did the left eye, say to the right eye?

“between you and me, something smells!

What do you call a pony with a cough? A little horse!

A man tells his doctor, “Doc help me. I’m addicted to Twitter!”

The doctor replies “Sorry, I don’t follow you!”

A bear walks into a shop and says give me a pie and…….. a Coke”

Why the big pause?” asks the shopkeeper.

“Isn’t that obvious”, he asks. I’m a bear, I was born with them!”

Jokes work because they have a punch line. They create a reaction, cause you to laugh as a result of a twist or something surprising. If you explain a joke, you may understand why it is funny. But there is no reaction. No laughter!

Parables are a bit like this. The point of the parable is not primarily to increase our understanding, but to create a reaction or cause a response, bring change. Change in perspective, change in understanding, change in behaviour! Or they are a bit like a splinter. Niggling away – until they have done their work.

*And he said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.” And he said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.” With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything. (Mar 4:26-34)*

PRAYER

Unlike the parables before, Jesus introduces these 2 with a clue: “The Kingdom of God is like….”. This, the “Kingdom of God”, is a phrase Jesus uses often. In fact, Mark in the first chapter tells us that Jesus proclaimed the good news saying: *“The time has come, the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe this good news.” Mark.1:14.15*

For Mark, for Jesus… the gospel, the good news – is that *“The Kingdom of God has come!”*

But what is the Kingdom of God? How do we understand it? How does it work? Who is a part of it? And here with these 2 stories about seeds – Jesus starts to tell us! He begins to help us see!

The first story is about how seeds work. And in the second - about a tiny mustard seed - we begin to grasp its impact! The difference the Kingdom of God makes!

There have been periods in my life where hanging on to God has been tough. When either I haven’t been paying attention, or at least, according to my estimation, God has been silent, inactive, perhaps even absent. Certainly it felt as if he didn’t care about, or even notice me!

Perhaps you have wondered this, or are even wondering it now!

“If God exists, does he care, is he bothered…

does he even notice me or hear my prayers!

Do I matter to Him? Do I matter at all?”

After my mum's death in a car accident ... I found it hard to believe in a God who was present and cared. Certainly it didn’t feel like he was at work in my life or circumstances! I felt alone, abandoned, unnoticed!

It is not unusual to wonder! Given the state of this world, the challenges we face, or the insignificance we feel, it is easy to doubt - is God at work, does he care, do I matter?!

If these are things you are wrestling with…

If you wonder about God…

His ability or willingness to be involved in your life…

In the world….

If you are wondering about whether you matter, or if there is any point, then these 2 parables are for you!

The first story I call THE PARABLE OF THE DISAPPEARING SEED.

At first glance there is nothing odd about this story, nothing jumps out at us or appears unusual. And in a sense that is true! Except for a remarkable, and now understood truth about creation! An oddity about the very nature of how seeds work. When a seed is scattered, it disappears and is gone… except… it isn’t. It hasn’t!

A dried-up brown speck is spread randomly around… or perhaps placed carefully in the soil. But then it immediately disappears! It appears as if nothing has changed, nothing is going on! What a waste! What was the point! And this apparent nothingness goes on for days, weeks…

Is this how God feels for you? You work and work, you pray and pray… you agonise with God, or struggle to overcome a particular sin, or spend hours caring for your neighbour… hoping for the opportunity to share your faith. You face your personal demons, seeking professional help. Or bite your tongue, count to 10 and pray for your boss…hoping it will all get easier… But whatever you do, doesn’t matter how much you struggle and strive – nothing appears to change. Nothing makes a difference….

It’s a bit like a seed – scattered, disappearing into the ground… and nothing is better. Night and day. Whether you sleep, or pace up and down… nothing appears to be changing… But – what you don’t know, can’t see, is exactly what should be happening. It is exactly what is needed for it to bear fruit.

*“The seed sprouts and grows, though it does not know how!*

*All by itself the soil produces grain, first the stalk, then the head then the full kernel in the head…” 27,28*

The Kingdom of God is like this. The way God works is like this! So don’t lose hope. Don’t give up. Don’t dig up what you have begun – because in doing so you will kill it! Instead, find your hope in God. Rest in Him. Trust Him.

You may not see God at work. You may not know what He is doing. Or how He is doing it. But He is. He loves you. He cares for you. He is with you. And He is doing in you what He always intended. What you were created to produce.

So, keep the faith, be encouraged and keep going! Because you never know what may happen next, nor what God is really achieving. In fact, what may be about to occur will be just like THE MUSTARD SEED!

At this point I need to make another comment about parables. One of the keys to hearing them rightly – is to find the main point. For while they have lots to make us think, they only have one key point!

A hint in looking for that point is to find the aspect of the parable that is odd, that sticks out, perhaps that is not in keeping with real life. In the parable of the Sower the key was how the farmer indiscriminately scattered seed. Those hearing that story would know this would never happen. Seed was far too valuable to be wasted!

This time Jesus grabs our attention through exaggeration: In Matthew’s account, Jesus emphasises that it was *the smallest of all seeds, it grows larger than any garden plant and becomes a tree. Mat 13:32* Which everyone knew was not true!

Sure Mustard seeds are small – (but not the smallest)

Sure Mustard plants are largish (in comparison to, say, a strawberry)…

but by no means a tree.

For this reason some commentators argue that Jesus was speaking of something other than the common mustard plant! But that’s not the point – or should I say – that is exactly the point!

Jesus makes this ridiculous, exaggerated claim to highlight His point.

*“Look here you guys”, he says, “Just as you don’t expect a tiny, tiny, infinitesimally small and insignificant Mustard seed to produce a plant which has branches big and strong enough in which birds can nest - so the way God’s Kingdom works in this world, in your life, is astonishing”. Its impact breathtaking!*

And as a result – a tiny seed is sown in our own minds. A question begins to arise, almost below our conscious level, slowly making its way to the forefront of our thinking and growing to be a thought which dominates!

Perhaps God doesn’t need big successful things to achieve his purpose?

Perhaps just because things are not going the way I would like them to…

God is not absent! I am not forgotten!

Perhaps you don’t have to have it all together for Him to use you?

Perhaps I don’t have to be perfect for Him to care for me?

Perhaps God is still at work, still loves me, still has great plans for me.

And sure enough. This is exactly how it is. This is exactly how God works!

People of all shapes and sizes, people like you, like me

People who live in Cambodia or South East Asia

People we work with, or who live in our street

People who are really interested in God or spiritual things…

people who are not…

People who are lost, people who are estranged,

People who are successful, people who struggle….

God is at work in the world even when we can’t see it.

He is at work in our lives even when we don’t feel it.

God is always at work… offering – refuge, shelter and shade to all who trust Iin Him.

He invites all people everywhere to find a home in Him.

And God wants to and can do in you, and use you, in ways far more than you could ever imagine!

In my first year at Uni I lived with my brother’s mate. It was not easy. It was my first year in Adelaide, I had little money, knew few people and often felt very alone. Rising early each morning, with not much else to do (no TV, no phones and needing to make no noise so as not to disturb my house mate!), I would spend a significant time with God. Reading, journaling, praying.

They were often desperate prayers. As I longed for friends, struggled with study, and wondered what God was up to. And yet… And yet – as I look back on those journals, as I reflect on the hours spent with God. There was this growing realisation… God loves me, God is with me, God is doing great things in me, and God wants to do great things through me!

Like a tree growing unexpectedly in the middle of your vegie patch! A tree big enough in which birds can find rest - significant enough, powerful enough to provide you shade. So God is at work – in you, in our church, in His World…to achieve his purpose, to bring about the fulfilment of his plan! And fulfil his good purpose for your life.

Jane as a teenager was exceptionally quiet and very reserved. She could enter a room without anyone noticing, never cause a ripple at school and come and go without being spoken to. For many, it was as if she didn’t exist! And she preferred it that way. To go through life unnoticed! I had the privilege of getting to know Jane. And of hearing something of her story. As you can imagine it was a story filled with pain. And yet – God in his mercy and grace reached out and transformed her life.

As a teenager, Jane felt like it would be better if she wasn’t! The world would be a better place if she wasn’t in it! Convinced that no one would care if she had never been born. As you can imagine this had serious consequences for Jane. Not only did she struggle to find joy in life, have any enthusiasm for anything… She found it difficult to make friends… believing no one was really interested in her… Could possibly like her… And school work was pointless…after all she was convinced her life would amount to nothing! She was destined for a life of mediocrity, being alone, making no difference.

However, God was at work. God was doing His thing. A seed was germinating. One day, Jane found herself sitting next to a new girl in class. A Christian. This girl took an interest in her, valued her, befriended her,… and over time, invited her to church. There Jane found a community who loved her, took notice of her, accepted her for who she was and believed in her. Through being invited into people’s homes, gaining a group of friends at youth group and attending a few Christian camps, Jane slowly began to believe in God, a God who cared about her, loved her and wanted the best for her. A God who was at work… even though there appeared no evidence of it…. Yet! Over time, Jane responded to this God. She trusted in Jesus, His Son, and experienced the comforting and enabling presence and power of His Spirit.

And through these experiences Jane came alive! Her beautiful personality was allowed to shine. She began to smile, and her incredible intellect was unleashed and Jane began to flourish. The seed planted in her began, produced a full kernel of wheat. The mustard seed sprouted, producing a tree in which many found shade.

This is how the Kingdom of God works. This is what it is and what it does. Imperceptibly, when the dirt is dry and the ground appears dead. The seeds are scattered – and disappear. But God is still at work. He is doing His thing.

The seed sprouts, puts down roots, grows and life comes. Its shoots poke through, and the stem develops until at last it reaches its potential and bears fruit.

And the Kingdom of God is like a tiny seed. So small it feels completely insignificant and useless…But when planted grows, develops and becomes a huge tree with incredible impact, providing nourishment, shelter and shade for many.

I wonder what the work of God’s Kingdom will do in you.

In the midst of small and imperceptible beginnings…

Will it bring life,

bring flourishing,

bring blessing

to you and to all you meet?

**QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND REFLECTION**

1. In reading these 2 parables, which do you like the most? Why?
2. If you were to look at the evidence, what is God doing in the world?

What is He doing in your life?

1. The parable of the disappearing seed suggests God is at work – even when we can’t see it or feel it. What do you think God might be doing in you at the moment? How is He wanting you to grow? What is He wanting you to learn?

What do you think God might be doing in the world?

What does the Bible say to help us answer these questions?

1. In the parable of the mustard seed, Jesus suggests that size is not significant! If you could dare to believe God would use you for something great, what would that be? What is holding you back? Why is it hard to believe it is possible? What would you need to do to partner with what God wants to do?
2. The tree is described as so big that birds of the air can perch in its shade. This is something that could never be true of a mustard plant! What do you think this is suggesting about who is welcome in God’s family? How is this reflected in your attitude and behaviour toward others who are different?
3. These are parables about who God is, how God works and what He is up to. What is our role in God’s work? What will you do this week to find out and participate?

CHILDREN’S TALK

MY FAVOURITE THING – Hidden

I have a picture here of my favourite thing - I want to tell you about today!

Whenever I have it with me life is better

Sometimes it makes me laugh, and other times cry

It is very, very expensive – worth more than everything I own.

But you probably have all got one

I wouldn’t do without it, but it’s not really mine to keep

When I first got this one – it was and has been the best thing that has ever happened to me

Do you know what it is - well I’m not going to tell you!!!

This is what Jesus was doing when he told stories. We call them parables.

He wanted you to be interested, to want to know more. To think.

Created interest. But very rarely made it clear!

How will you know what my favourite thing is - look, or come and ask.

And this is what he wants you and me to do with him… Keep looking and come and ask!

I had a dream last night

I dreamt I went to a zoo. It was a strange type of zoo, no fences, no enclosures, just all the animals wandering freely. In this zoo, the only animals I could see were Australian natives, Kangaroos, Koalas, Emus, platypus – yes I even saw the platypus.

But of course, they also had spiders, lots of spiders – even the poisonous deadly ones like redbacks. And snakes – pythons, which I don’t mind at all, but brown snakes, taipans and other deadly ones I would rather avoid. But they were all there, wandering freely around, doing their own thing

Some lazing in the sun, others sleeping in trees, some playing with their kind, others stalking their prey. All just going about their daily business, doing what animals do.

Although to be fair, it looked like every single one was on the look out for their next meal. Keen to find a feed. And find it soon!

Then, I noticed in the middle of the zoo this marvellous lake. It was gorgeous, beautifully shaded with a choice of lawn, sand or big boulders on which to recline. The perfect place for every animal present. Except – only some were there.

And then, as I watched the keeper came in, he went straight to the lake and began distributing food. Whatever was required for any of the animals, it was there.

Freely available for all to come and get. What do you think happened next? Well for some the response was immediate – they rushed to the waters edge and ate hungrily, greedily. Some who were already there – they got in first and had their fill. Others, they continued to just recline on the boulders – oblivious to the free meal so readily available.

Then there was the rest, those scattered through the zoo. Some rushed to the waters edge, others ambled slowly, and others simply ignored it all. Too busy trying to find their own to notice or be bothered getting that which was freely available.

I didn’t understand. Why were some so keen while others uninterested and unmoved.

And then to make matters worse, I saw more clearly. I noticed the redback and funnel web spiders – getting extra food. The brown snake and taipan being given special portions. While the cute koalas and harmless wallabies, even some who were lying on the grass by the lake, most of them just continued to frolic around, or sleep, oblivious to the life giving food on offer.

He who has ears to hear, let Him hear!