

MARK 4:30-34

FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS

³⁰ Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. ³² Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade."

³³ With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand.

³⁴ He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

Anyone who has hiked in the mountains or some other rocky environment has seen trees growing out from between rocks. Ever wondered how they got there? The most likely explanation is that birds dropped the seeds there. The seeds were small enough to be dropped by a bird and tiny enough to reach the bottom of a tiny crack in the rock. Yet the result was a tree large enough to break up the rock and strong enough to withstand the wind.

The Gospel is the story of one young carpenter-turned-itinerant teacher in a back-water province of the Roman Empire. Most of it is only about the last 3 years of his life, with the greatest portion of that being focused on his last week. By all accounts it is a short story. In most English translations, Mark dispatches the whole thing in less than 20 pages. All of us have probably written longer term papers. Yet in those few pages is the full revelation of God and his kingdom. From the tiny town of Nazareth, in the tiny province of Judah, one man with a tiny group of followers transformed the history of the world. His otherwise insignificant life and death is the Gospel – the tiny seed which contained everything necessary for the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. It is the Good News through which everyone may come into a life transforming relationship with God. It grows into the tree that is the kingdom and can provide eternal nourishment and protection for all the people of the world.

Lord, you have planted the seed of the kingdom through your word found in Holy Scripture and through its propagation in the church. Thank you for your Holy Spirit that draws us to your word and interprets your word to us. As you grow your kingdom may we continue to seek its boughs for our dwelling place. Amen.