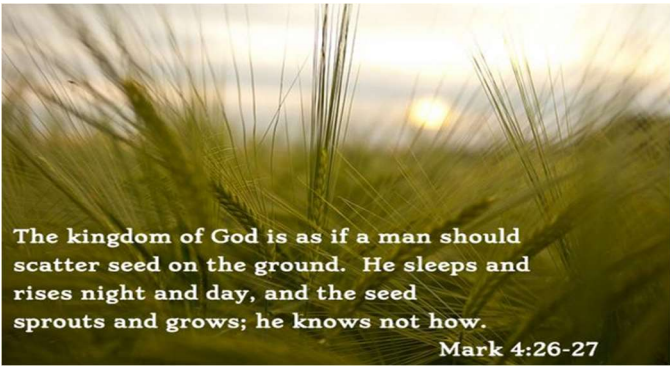


## You May be Seated

Sermon by Kendra Kappler

Dear Friends in Christ, Grace, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Amen.



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.

Mark 4:26-27

I distinctly remember being in kindergarten and planting grass for a class project. The teacher told us that we were going to be planting the grass that afternoon, and I was so

excited to watch my grass grow and show mom and dad when I got home from school that day. But, as I am sure we all know, grass doesn't usually grow from a seed in an hour. I mean some of us may feel like grass grows that fast with how many times we must mow in a summer, but it typically takes a good 2 to 3 weeks. So, I'm sure you can only imagine how disappointed five-year-old Kendra was when she realized the grass was not growing the way she had hoped. I was watching it all afternoon, and I am pretty sure the teacher had to tell me several times to sit back down in my seat. I remember constantly checking it every day to see if the green started coming up, and I can still remember the excitement I felt when it started poking out of the dirt.

Now, 5-year-old me had no clue how or why the grass came up, but I wanted to show all my friends what I learned in class. I felt like a true farmer at 5 years old, and I was ready to show them how I grew my grass. So, we went home together, and I tried to follow what I did in class. I brought some seeds home with me and I got a little container out of the cupboard for my dirt, which my mom probably wasn't too happy about looking back, and I mixed the seeds into the dirt. Now at this point I felt pretty smart because I now knew that the grass was not going to grow right away, so my friends and I played the waiting game. We waited one week, and then another week, and then another week, and still no grass came up. I later learned that apparently grass needs sunlight and water to grow, but I guess my teacher must have taken care of that part when I did it in class.

In our gospel reading this morning, we hear two different parables from Jesus. Jesus taught using parables on multiple occasions, and these are basically stories that use familiar, or every day, events to explain points. The first parable this morning is called "the parable of the growing seed" and the second parable is called "the parable of the mustard seed." When we look at these two parables, they may not seem closely connected to each other at first glance. The parables are pretty short being told in the chapter of Mark. But when we break them down and read through them a few more times, we can notice a recurring theme being brought up: the Kingdom of God and growing seeds.

The first parable, which is exclusively from the chapter of Mark, talks about a harvester who planted seeds, but simply allows them to grow. He lets nature take its course without tending to them. The farmer doesn't know or understand how the plants grow, but they do even with him putting in very little work. The farmer's job is very easy. This is similar to how the Holy Spirit works in the world. Through this parable, we don't hear Jesus saying that we need to put in hours of labor to get people to come to know the Lord. He doesn't tell us we need to make sure people grow in faith like we would with plants or flowers. On the contrary, the farmer's work is fairly easy; he simply plants the seeds, and then the plants grow. In our own lives, it's the Holy Spirit who does the hard work of tending, caring, and making sure faith grows in us and in others. Jesus tells us many times to share the Word, or in this case the seed, and then rejoice when people hear and believe it.

As we look closely at the second parable, we can see some similar ideas being taught. Jesus starts with the Kingdom of God again, but this time compares it to a mustard seed. Now, a mustard seed is one of the

smallest seeds in nature, and it is probably not what you would be expecting the Kingdom of God to be compared to. It doesn't look like much when you hold it in your hand. In fact, you might not even know you are holding a seed. I mean I don't know much about harvesting, so if you were holding a mustard seed, I would probably think you were just holding a speck of dirt. However, if we look long-term, the mustard seed is amazing after it has been planted. What once looked like dust and seemed insignificant becomes a massive tree large enough to shade an entire family reunion. Through this example, Jesus is teaching us another lesson. Just like the mustard seed seemed insignificant at first glance, we may think that something as simple as an invitation to church, a group prayer, or a kind gesture through faith may be useless. But these small acts fueled by the Holy Spirit can lead more people to faith than we could ever even imagine. Just think: Jesus started with only a few followers, or disciples and look at how it has grown. Even though we know from the first parable that the Holy Spirit is always at work in our lives, we know that we, too, can take some work of sharing God's word with others.

I had a wonderful friend when I was younger who didn't really go to church or have any sort of religious affiliation. She didn't not believe in a higher being or God or the Holy Spirit exactly, but she just didn't have an interest or any knowledge in Christianity or any kind of religion. She grew up in a household that did not have any religious beliefs, so she never really cared about it considering she wasn't brought up with it. She simply did not know Christ. As the years went on, I got to know her quite well, and we became very good friends. I spent a lot of time with her throughout the years, and naturally, my faith or religion would get brought up in some way at times. Whether it was me talking about going to church on Sunday morning, praying at meals, talking about my future, or even talking about something as simple as a necklace I was wearing (hold up necklace from neck), I would talk about it from time to time with her. And she was always very polite and respectful since that was the type of person she was, but she never showed any kind of interest in Christ herself. I invited her to come to church with me a few times, but she still has never come. I have prayed for her, but she still never seems to show an interest. Everyone here has more than likely met someone similar to my friend at some point in life, and sometimes in cases like this, it may seem like our efforts are pointless or that they're not working anyway. But, just like the farmer in the first parable, we need to believe, trust, and have faith that the Holy Spirit is working and sparking growth in the seeds we have been planting.

So, when I was watching my grass in class day after day, I would wonder when it was going to finally poke through the dirt. But my watching didn't make them grow. Those seeds would have grown whether I was checking on them or not. The growth was taking place underground, and I couldn't see what was happening. I had no idea what was happening; I just believed that it would grow. I could have stood there chanting and shouting, "Grow, grow, grow!" But it wouldn't make any difference would it. When we work to plant seeds of faith from the Holy Spirit within others, it may sometimes seem like our efforts aren't working or nothing is happening. But we cannot see what happens beneath the surface. We can trust in God to do his work. If we are planting the seeds, then we can be confident in knowing that some of them may grow. In fact, they may grow even larger than we may have ever expected like in the case of the mustard seeds. As we help plant seeds, God will make his kingdom grow.

Just as my grass could not grow without someone tending it, we cannot grow in faith without the Holy Spirit working within us. I learned that I could not grow the grass on my own, and I needed my teacher there to take care of the grass for me. We cannot do things on our own, but rather, we need the Lord to take the planted seeds and make them grow into beautiful creations. We can and should proclaim and spread the good news of the Kingdom of God to others, but we need God's work and the Holy Spirit. We are not brought into the kingdom of God by our own efforts or skills, but rather, it is God's work and efforts growing from the seeds that have been planted. Through the Holy Spirit harvesting the seeds within us, we know the good news of God's Kingdom, we know that we have been saved, and we know that it is waiting for us, and we will be all together in the growing Kingdom of God forever. Amen.