



Worship at Home—13 June 2021

Call to Worship

The Lord answer you in the day of trouble! The name of the God of Jacob protect you! May he send you help from the sanctuary, and give you support from Zion. (*Psalm 20: 1,2*)

Opening Prayer and Lord's Prayer

Living God, in our desire for meaning and purpose in life,
You remind us that You are available to us in our hour of need.
As we reach out in our times of searching,
You promise us that You will listen and answer beyond our imaginings.

When we place our trust in our human enterprises,
You call us back to Your holy place, to meet with You, and to rest in Your presence.
Forgive us for putting our trust in the things of the world.
When others look for success in their chariot and horses in times of battle,
let us put our trust in Your ways.

When the world builds success on power and control,
let us believe in Your ways of building a kingdom of righteousness and love.

When we fall short of all You expect of us,
let us hold to Your promise that You will pick us up again,
and set out feet on Your path once more.

So we turn from human enterprise to the Kingdom of God,
from human failure to the forgiveness of God,
from human weakness to the strength of God,
from human focus to the purpose of God our Lord.

We praise Your name,
and rejoice in the love and strength,
the purpose and the success, the triumphs and growth that come,
not from our hands, but from Yours alone.
And when our time of prayers is over,
let us lift up our heads and look ahead with courage.

When our time of devotion is complete,
let us rise with confidence to service and commitment.
For You are our answer in our time of need.
You are our answer in the hour of our calling.

In Jesus' name we pray. .

Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever.
Amen

Scripture Reading—Mark 4: 26-34

The Parable of the Growing Seed

He also said, 'The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.'

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

He also said, 'With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth 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 except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

THEMES

Even the smallest thing can make a difference.

The growth of the kingdom, like the growth of a seed can be imperceptible—we often want instant results tomorrow but in God's timeframe, God works his purposes out in us.

The Parable reminds us that, when think that we are in control of our destiny and how our lives will be mapped out and that the success of our church of spiritual life is entirely dependent upon our own efforts—it is good to remember, that it is God who makes the Seed to Grow

SERMON

Even small things can make a huge difference

The Kingdom of God is like a seed scattered on the ground. In the Gospels of Mark, Luke and Matthew Jesus talks a lot about seeds. But Jesus is not giving lessons on agriculture or farming techniques. Jesus always used images with which people were familiar to explain the truth about God; He told stories and gave illustrations with word images from everyday things; daily bread, sheep, seeds, and in particular the mustard seed. Jesus used these word images, these metaphors to teach in ways that people could relate to. His parables are brilliant in their simplicity and were such a contrast to the teachings of the Pharisees who were all bogged down with laws and doctrines, inflexible rules and regulations.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed is a lovely little nugget of encouragement.

“What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”

Even though we do not see many mustard plants or trees in Scotland, we understand the message. The mustard seed is the smallest, tiniest of seeds and yet from one seed can grow an enormous tree, a tree that can give shade and a place for birds to perch. Jesus is describing the nature of how the Kingdom of God works.

The New Testament Greek word for ‘kingdom’ is *Basileia* which has nothing to do with a territorial kingdom or a patronage or a welfare state. The word describes a state of human relationships where God’s will, God’s love, God’s peace and God’s grace reign supreme. Therefore, God’s kingdom is not a static reality but a dynamic force, an energy which is constantly uplifting and upbuilding human life, reconciling us to God.

There are a few thoughts and reflections which we can take from this simple parable.

Firstly, that the kingdom of God can come from humble and small beginnings. The mustard seed is a tiny seed, but it grows into a large shrub—up to ten feet in height—and Jesus says this is a picture of kingdom growth. Jesus own ministry started out small. How significant could the short ministry of Christ be in the grand scheme of the world? He was an itinerant preacher with just a handful of followers, who, themselves, had no great education, social standing, influence or wealth.

With the backdrop of the mighty Roman Empire, we imagine that the life and death of Christ could not catch the world’s attention any more than a mustard seed would lying on the ground by the road. But this was a work of God. What seemed inconsequential at first grew into a movement of worldwide significance and power. Jesus’ short three-year ministry culminating in his death and resurrection was a pure sign that God broke decisively into the history of humanity to visit us and redeem us.

And so, in the parable of the mustard seed, Jesus is teaching us that the Kingdom of God is destined to grow from the most meagre beginnings into unimaginable things. The kingdom has begun and is not yet fulfilled. With God, even the tiniest of seeds can produce an enormous harvest.

And so the parable reminds us to remember that where God is concerned the small things can make a big difference. I think it was the Dalai Lama XIV:

*“If **you** think **you** are too small to make **a** difference, try sleeping with **a** mosquito.”*

The growth of the kingdom, like the growth of a seed can be imperceptible—we often want instant results today or tomorrow but in God’s timeframe, God works his purposes out in us.

It is one of life’s amazing miracles that a seed may sprout into a plant or flower or tree. But we don’t see it happening all at once. The growth of the kingdom, like the growth of a seed can be imperceptible—we often want instant results tomorrow but in God’s timeframe, God works his purposes out in us in God’s time, eternal time. And so, a second valuable lesson we get from this parable is to remember that, as with any seed, goodness and growth might not be immediately visible or evident to us. Sometimes we cannot perceive the good that we do or the good that God is doing in us or through us.

Who could have known ahead of time that simply responding to a need, such as helping wounded soldiers would bring about so much good. We look at the wars between Israel and Palestine and all across the globe—and we are so grateful for organisations like the Red Cross, known as the Red Crescent in some countries, and others like Unicef, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Medecine Sans Frontieres. The Red Cross was the seed planted by Henri Durant. It was a seed that would germinate and grow. A seed that would help and give hope to millions of people in emergency situations all over the world.

Jesus teaches us that is the way that the kingdom works; great harvests can come from tiny seeds. Results might not be instantaneous, but never doubt what God can do from insignificant beginnings.

The Parable reminds us when you think that we are in control of our destiny; how our lives will be mapped out and that the success of our church of spiritual life is entirely dependent upon our own efforts--- it is good to remember, that it is God who makes the Seed to Grow.

Jesus offers us the mustard seed as a symbol of huge encouragement against the odds. When Jesus walked on earth his preaching and healing astounded people and the disciples were exultant to be able to follow such a man of God. But there would come times when the disciples were bewildered and discouraged. There would come times when Crowds abandoned Jesus and his followers. There would come times when the followers of Jesus themselves would be persecuted—in some places Christians are still persecuted.

The Mustard Seed becomes a symbol through which Jesus tells us again and again, “hold onto faith,” “Hold onto hope.” In this story, Jesus offers us his personal encouragement and support. Our job as Christians is not to create a hugely successful church, a corporate enterprise of faith, and certainly we need to remember that no matter how many new Presbytery Plans or Strategic Policies or marketing campaigns we think up, the Church is only the Church if it is God who makes it grow.

So often we judge the fruitfulness of a church by the number of people in its pews or by the financial wealth in its coffers. There are many church leaders who need to be reminded that the Church is not ours, it is God’s. **IF** we think that we can build it on our own human efforts, with good business models and sophisticated marketing strategies, while these things are all very well, we have to remember that the church is only here because of the faithfulness of faithful Christians listening to God’s guidance and following God’s plans.

And so Jesus has given us this parable of the seed as a message of constant hope, a message of encouragement, support. He also offers it as a word of patience, renewal and fulfilment—a reminder to trust God with everything and to be faithful. He once said that even if we have faith as much as a mustard seed we will be able to move mountains.

The mustard seed story lets us know that small things matter to God, that small things can make a big difference and that God gives us the opportunity to grow and play our part, however small in bringing in God's Kingdom, wherever we are.

Prayers of Intercession

Loving God,
faith, You tell us, as small as a grain of mustard seed is always enough.

Remind us, now, that prayers, small and feeble though we may believe them to be, will always be enough, if they are offered in a spirit of devotion and a willingness to be close to Your will and Your ways.

Remind us that Your will unscrambles our stumbling words, our wayward thoughts, our random ideas, our scattered images, and sees in them growth and purpose, and creates from them something beautiful for You.

We pray, now, for those closest to us –
those around us in the community of faith, on-line, electronically, in spirit and in fellowship, those we see face to face, those whose images appear on our screens, those you are fixed in our mind's eye.

For family and friends, for church and community,
for all who matter to us in the bonds of love, we pray today.

We pray for those who are our guides for life and faith,
who point us to the ways of the Kingdom –
for the teachers of our children and students, on-line or in class,
for their diligence and commitment;
for those who teach us our faith, but what they say and do, through what they know and are;
for all who are heroes and role models for us and those we love ...
that they might all be strengthened in the ways of righteousness.

We pray for people who serve in community and nation,
who walk in the corridors of responsibility and sit in the chambers of decision-making;
for those who stand tall for what is right;
for those who give of themselves for the benefit of others ...
that they may always place the greater good above the love of self.

We pray for all in need, broken or ill at ease in body, mind or spirit ...
And, in the silence, we name them before you ...

SILENCE

And what of us, small as a mustard seed, frail as a green shoot, fearful as an uncertain plant?
Strengthen us in our growth; take us and use us for your purposes;
let us believe in Your ways and not in our own success and failures.
For we are Yours, and Yours alone.
In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

Blessing

God is good.
God's purposes are just.
God's way is right.
God's road is ours to follow.
Christ's truth is our guide.
His message is for our salvation.
The Spirit gives us life.
Our fullness and hopefulness are secured.

So go now, in the goodness of God,
to walk God's Way,
to follow God's Truth,
to live God's Life,
and to be embraced,
now and always,
by God's blessings.

Amen

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The Church of Scotland
MODERATOR OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Dear All,

At the closing of the General Assembly, I had the opportunity to launch a joint initiative between the Church of Scotland and Christian Aid, encouraging members to give a financial gift in thanksgiving once they had received full vaccination for Covid-19. It has been much on my mind as to how fortunate I have been to have received my two vaccinations; but had I been living elsewhere in the world, the story would have been quite different. In my year as Moderator, the plan is to visit Lebanon and Malawi. Just taking these two places as examples, the percentage of population vaccinated with only one vaccination is 4% and 0.8% respectively. That is against more than 60% of our population in UK.

The World Health Organisation has said no-one is protected until all are protected, therefore we are urging the UK Government to do all that it can to ensure COVID-19 vaccines are available throughout the world. Alongside this we must also seek to limit the impact of the virus on health, livelihoods, and personal safety, for those in the poorest parts of the world. By supporting Christian Aid in their efforts to provide basics such as soap, water, and food, we can ensure that vulnerable communities stay safer as they wait for vaccination.

In this very tangible way, as we seek global justice, here is a practical opportunity to give real expression in 2021 to loving our global neighbours. I sincerely hope that you will join with me and together we will respond generously, as a mark of our gratitude for what we have received.

To give a gift, please click on the following link:

<https://giving.give-star.com/online/christian-aid/cos-just-vaccine-rollout>

I urge you to share this message with your whole congregation. I would also like to share the following prayer from Christian Aid for your use:

A Prayer of Thanksgiving

God of Hope, Sustainer of all life,

We give You thanks for the Coronavirus vaccines, for the skill and wisdom of scientists, NHS staff and Key Workers.

By the power of Your Spirit, may we overflow with hope and joy as we see our friends, families and neighbours protected.

God of Justice, Protector of the vulnerable, may we be your well-washed hands and willing feet.

Move us to give and act, to challenge the injustices that anger You.

May we seek to protect all Your children, particularly those for whom the vaccine is out of reach.

With hope and trust we pray,

Amen.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Lord Wallace of Tankerness QC
Moderator
General Assembly of the Church of Scotland

Holiday Club 2021

I am delighted that the restrictions are lightening in such a way that an in-person holiday club can take place this summer. Last year we ran holiday club online over Zoom, and while fun and enjoyable, we can't wait to be face to face with children again and be in one place together.

We are partnering with SU Scotland again this year and using material called *Jungle Adventure*, a resource that is brand new for 2021 and one that is taking us outdoors to explore the Bible, learn more about who God is and wonder at Him through creation.

The club will run for five mornings from 26th-30th July in the grounds of Heriot Watt University. I wanted to let you all know our plans and to ask for you to pray. Pray for restrictions to continue to change in our favour, pray for ongoing conversations with HWU as we finalise details on using space there, pray for the children and team who will be there (we already have 9 children signed up to come!), pray for God's protection and safety over every aspect, pray for God's creativity and guidance to be with us as we plan.

However, we also need some equipment to help us embrace the outdoors whatever the Scottish weather may be! We are on the lookout for a couple of gazebos or event shelters, some windbreaks and groundsheets or tarpaulins. If you happen to have any of those things and would be willing to lend them to us for use that week, please get in touch with me. And if you know of any children aged P4-7 who may be interested in joining in our Jungle Adventure, then let me know and I can pass on details of how they can book.

Thanks, Heather.

Familyworker_JVP@outlook.com

A vibrant green poster for the 'Jungle Adventure Holiday Club'. The background is a lush green with illustrations of two monkeys swinging on vines, a large green dinosaur, and various tropical plants like palm leaves and a pink flower. The title 'JUNGLE ADVENTURE HOLIDAY CLUB' is written in large, bold, orange letters with a black outline. Below the title, it says 'outdoor activities, songs and Bible stories!' in white. A black box contains the booking link: 'Book here: tinyurl.com/f5tw577f'. Below that, it lists the details: 'For ages P4-P7 | 10am-12.30pm | 26-30 July | Heriot-Watt Uni (next to Chaplaincy Building)'. At the bottom, it says 'More info: suscotland.org.uk/CJGholidayclub'. There are logos for Juniper Green Parish Church, Currie Kirk, and SU Scotland. A small note in the top left says 'Wear warm clothing for being outside!'. At the very bottom, there is fine print: 'Scripture Union Scotland is registered in Scotland as a charity (no.SC011222) and as a company limited by guarantee (no.SC54297). Registered office: 70 Milton Street, Glasgow, G4 0HR.'

The Parable of the seeds

These resources are designed to help you explore the Bible as a family together at home while we can't go to church. Be as creative as you want to be and enjoy spending time with each other and with God.

Prepare yourself...

Loving God,
We come here today honestly.
We bring our hopes and fears,
our joys and worries,
our happiness and sadness,
knowing that you accept us no matter what.
Thank you for being with us all the time.
Teach us more about you as we look at your Word, show us what you are like and how we can follow you.
Amen.



Question...

Have you ever grown anything from a seed? What did you have to do? How long did it take?



Challenge...

Have two teams and give each team a piece of paper and a pen. Number the paper 1-9. See if you can find an answer to each category below. Compare answers afterwards and decide who gets a point for each category.

- | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Smallest land animal | 2. Smallest air animal | 3. Smallest water animal |
| 4. Smallest pet | 5. Smallest plant | 6. Smallest word |
| 7. Smallest toy | 8. Smallest food | 9. Smallest item in the room |

Read the Bible...

Today's verses are found in **Mark 4:26-36**. You can read them in a Bible or find them [here](#).

You could watch a timelapse video of seeds growing too: [here's one](#)



Talk together...



- * Can you remember what a parable is? A parable is a simple story used to teach us something about God, his people or what God's kingdom is like. Can you think of any other parables Jesus told?
- * What do you think Jesus is trying to teach with the two parables in today's reading?
- * Why do you think Jesus left the parables unexplained?
- * What could the seeds represent?
- * The way God works inside people's hearts is mysterious and cannot be changed or affected by us. All we can do is be faithful to "sowing the seed", that is telling people about God, and pray that God will do the work of bringing those people closer to him.
- * Who might God want you to speak to about Him?
- * How do we see God's kingdom growing? How different is it now from Jesus' time?

Play together...

Seed, seed, sprout!

A version of duck, duck, goose!

Sit in a circle. Have one person walk round the outside of the circle and tap each player gently on the head and say "seed". Then, unexpectedly, they will tap someone and say "sprout" instead. When that happens, the "sprout" has to pop up (like a sprout!) and try to tap the tapper before they get all the way round the circle. If they make it round, the sprout becomes the new tapper. If they don't they go again.

Pray together...

Have a ball or something you can pass to each other. Take it in turns to pray, passing the ball to someone else to continue the prayer. You could take a sentence or even a word each until somebody finishes with a big Amen!

Praise together...



[Faith as small as a mustard seed](#)

[Blessed](#) by Hillsong Kids

[The smallest seed](#)

[Your will be done](#) by CityAlight

Do and make together ...

Think about how many different kinds of seeds there are. Collect a variety of different seeds or grains from around your home/garden/nearby park. Lay them out in different piles and compare what they look like – do you have a favourite?

Then you could use the seeds you have to create a picture, perhaps of a tree or plant, or simply a colourful design. You might want to sketch out your design first, and you can choose to either scatter the seeds onto glue or simply lay them on the paper/ground.

