

Lent
March 18, 2020
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church
Parables: The Mustard Seed

Dear Friends in Christ,

How big is your faith? When we ask ourselves that question, we will usually arrive at the wrong answer. We could answer that our faith is big and strong. We might answer that our faith is weak and tiny. These are the wrong answers because we are asking the wrong question. Jesus teaches us in the parable of the mustard seed that the size and strength of our faith is not what truly matters. Listen to the voice of your Savior in....

Matthew 13:31-32 (EHV)

He presented another parable to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. It is one of the smallest of seeds. But when it grows, it is larger than the other plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

During this time of social distancing, empty shelves and online church services, it could be easy to think one's faith is really strong or really weak. Those who think their faith is big enough to handle any situation might be looking too much to their own strength instead of looking to the Lord's strength. On the other hand, those who think their faith is tiny like a mustard seed might be looking too much at their own weaknesses and fears instead of looking to God's promises.

You see, talking about faith, thinking about faith, trying to see how much faith you have is counterproductive. Faith is simply trust. When we are again able to travel without restrictions and someone is sitting in an airplane seat, does it matter how much they trust the airplane or the pilot? No. The airplane is either designed, constructed, maintained and piloted well or it isn't. A passenger's level of trust does not affect those things at all. The level of trust will affect how comfortable they are on the flight. The passenger who is confident in the aircraft and pilot will rest and enjoy the flight. The passenger who trusts the aircraft and pilot only a little will be nervous and scared and stressed out until they arrive. But both passengers arrive.

You are in the kingdom of heaven because the Holy Spirit has given you a wonderful gift – faith in Christ! Jesus rules over you by faith. You are part of his kingdom. But sometimes this kingdom of God looks so small, like a tiny mustard seed. We look at empty shelves or job cutbacks. We see fear around us and sometimes in us. We wonder what is going to happen with school for this year. We miss our friends. It doesn't look like being part of God's kingdom is such a great thing.

And Jesus tells us to trust him. Look to him. He knows how great the kingdom of heaven is. He knows that all who believe in him will never perish but have eternal life. He knows that nothing can separate us from his love. He knows the plans he has for us to prosper us and not harm us, to give us hope and a future. He knows what he did to secure all these promises. He suffered to remove our sins and rose to give us the certainty of forgiveness and eternal salvation. Jesus knows all these things perfectly.

And you are in his kingdom by faith. It doesn't matter how big that faith is. You are still in his kingdom and it is a great kingdom. Just as a tiny mustard seed grows into a plant large enough for birds to nest in its branches so the kingdom of God may look small but his promises are big and will certainly happen.

The disciples were enjoying their time with Jesus now, but soon they would be filled with fear and uncertainty. Jesus will soon be arrested and put on trial. He will be condemned under false charges. Christ would be executed and buried. What hope do the believers have as their Savior's body lies in the tomb? The same hope we have as part of God's kingdom. God's promise, Christ's promise that he would rise from the dead. On the third day, he did. He always keeps his promises.

I don't know how long the current crisis in our nation and the world will last. But we do know this. Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again. In these days, stop looking at your problems. Stop looking to see if you have enough faith to get through. Instead, look to Jesus and his big promises. Christ is strong enough to do all that he has promised. Amen