



# Family Stories

## Beginnings & Endings

Mark 4:26-34

# The Seed Image

- A favourite topic of Jesus' parables is the that of the seed – the incredible potential of expansive life in every, tiny seed – consider towering cedars
- Children/youth are seeds and in this sense worthy of cultivation

# The Seed Parables

In Mark 4 a series of seed parables are grouped together

1. The soils & seeds parable (Mark 4:1-20)
2. A call to listen attentively (4:24)
3. Seed growing secretly parable (4:26-29)
4. The growth of the tiny mustard seed (4:30-32)



# Beginnings & Endings

- All the seed parables have to do with a contrast between beginnings and endings
- The Kingdom of God begins in smallness but ends in abundance and fecundity



# The Secretly Growing Seed

Mark 4:26-29

# The Kingdom of God is like...

- A sower scatters seed (v26) and lives his life trusting in the natural enrichment from the soil, sun and rain (v27)



# Growing 'of itself'

- 'Automaté' – automatically (v28a)
- The seed grows bit by bit until the full grain is produced


# Harvest

- At the appropriate time the harvest comes
- The sower goes out with the sickle to harvest the crop (Joel 3:13)



# The Mysterious Kingdom of God

- This parable speaks to the mysterious quality of God's kingdom
- The seed's growth is independent of our effort and design – which speaks to the miraculous work of God to change lives – the harvest is a gift of God

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- This parable highlights two responses related to not taking ourselves too seriously



# Humility

- We participate in the work but the miracle is of God



# Encouragement

- We are not called to be anxious over God's work
- Like the farmer we have to trust in God's provision and capacity to engender life

A wooden crate filled with old, faded photographs and documents, with a blurred green background.

# The Tiny Mustard Seed

Mark 4:30-32

# The Kingdom of God is like...

- A tiny mustard seed which grows into a great shrub – great tree
- Jesus' reference is based on a text from Ezekiel 17



Thus says the Lord God: I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of a cedar; I will set it out. I will break off a tender one from the topmost of its young twigs; I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. On the mountain height of Israel I will plant it, in order that it may produce boughs and bear fruit, and become a noble cedar.

Under it every kind of bird will live; in the shade of its branches will nest winged creatures of every kind.

All the trees of the field shall know that I am the Lord. I bring low the high tree, I make high the low tree; I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. I the Lord have spoken; I will accomplish it.

Ezekiel 17:22-24

# *A Parable of Hope*

- God accomplishes great things from small beginnings
- Consider Weston Park
  - a tent in 1897
  - a growing church 111 years later



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- Live life in trust and confidence in God's sustaining power – personally and collectively

# God's Kingdom is Inclusionary

- The birds of the air make nests in its shade – a clear reference to Ezekiel 17
- Inviting all people to find solace in God's saving power
- The global nature of God's Kingdom – his love reaches out to everyone



# Closing Words to our Family Stories

Mark 4:33-34



# The Surprising Work of God's Kingdom

- God shows up where he shows up – not controlled by our management
- A key word is mystery

# Invitation to Hear

- Pay attention (v24)
- 'as they were able to hear it' (v33)
- Our responsibility is to open our eyes, ears and hearts

# Discipleship & Obedience

- Hearing = obeying
- Being a learner
- Receiving and acting upon God's word
- Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4) – “Hear, O Israel, ...”



# God's gift of Grace

- All of the parables are founded upon God's gift of grace – God's overtures of love, acceptance & forgiveness
- Open up our hearts to receive God's grace

# Rooted

- The Seed parables emphasize the importance of being rooted in good soil
- We need to keep feeding upon Jesus – our soul food - go deep into Jesus and know his abundant life