

How to grow your church a little , a lot, and all the way Part 1 Mark 4v26ff
June 17, 2018

I only have three simple things to share in this sermon series, and let me start with a little. And although this first concept is very little, it certainly can turn into something tremendous. Who hasn't heard that it only takes a spark to get a fire going. A little leaven works in the whole dough. And a little salt gives plenty of flavor.

A seed, just a small seed, has a lot to say about the future. That small seed provides a large vision for the future. It grows into a large bush, a large tree. It might bear fruit, it might produce grain, it might even provide a home for birds, other animals, and even people when a tree is turned into lumber. A lot comes from a seed.

Thank you, Jesus for providing us with a simple decoder ring to what the seed represents. Jesus just told us in the beginning of Mark chapter 4 that the Seed is the word of God. It doesn't always produce depending on who receives it, but when it does produce, it produces like crazy. Exponentially as they say.

If I could get my hands on some good seed, that would be incredible. And guess what, the Word of God is super accessible to you living in this country. There is no law against it. Most of you can read too. And you have access to your pastor, commentaries, Bible studies, and electronic and printable means of transferring the Word of God.

Yet, the Word of God goes unnoticed. You don't think about it, wonder about it, ask about it, or use it. The seed of the mustard plant may not be the actual smallest seed in the world, but it may be argued that it is the least of all the seeds. It just looks like dirt. And it also gets treated like dirt. Archaic, irrelevant, and outdated. Indistinguishable

at the beginning, especially the black mustard seed. But the other seeds and varieties as well are difficult to spot blending in with different shades of soil on the surface.

But don't despair. It can happen overnight. Usually we say it can't happen overnight, but it can!

That is what Jesus says. He says we plant it and go to sleep. Then we wake up and it has grown. It's kind of like God does all the work. Does that sound familiar? Jesus dying on the cross to pay the penalty for all of our sin. And all this without any merit or worthiness in me. In us. In you.

It's not our church by the way. It's Jesus's church. I remember giving sermon on that once. I made the clear point that it was God's church, and that God is in charge and in control of the church. Then after the sermon an elder said to me, "No, your wrong, this is actually my church since I pay the bills and my family is part of the founding members." I think that was the most resistance I ever got from a sermon. Hmm, I wonder why.

Whether we like it or not, we don't ultimately have control. And that's a great blessing for us. It's a great reminder that God makes it grow. We put out some seed, humbly preach the Word of God, go share it here and there individually, and then we wake up the next day, sometimes the next month or two or year or two or three or seventy. And there you have it, the church grew.

It actually is really hard for us to grow the church. I mean technically we are not growing it at all. We are merely putting out the seed of the Word, and then God does the growing part. The Holy Spirit works on the heart of the person.

In the book of Acts there is a steady stream of people who believe, along with their households. [Acts 10:2](#) a devout man who feared God with all his **household**, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God.

[Acts 11:14](#) he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your **household**.’

[Acts 16:15](#) And after she was baptized, and her **household** as well, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.

And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. ³⁴ Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire **household** that he had believed in God. [Acts 16:32-34](#)

[Acts 18:8](#) Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire **household**. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.

These households are much like the birds who have found their branches in the bush. And not just one bird, but a flock of birds who make their home in the mustard tree bush thing. That is how the word of God works, just as the birds naturally flock to a bush with great cover.

And a church is like the bush that is created. Now the mustard plant may not be the largest bush tree like thing in the world, but it the greatest. It’s the greatest place

to make your home. And the church has been formed by the word of God, and remember the church is a people, not a building, so this bush that is the word of God is the best place to find your home.

The church, that is the people of God gathered around the Word is not perfect by any means, full of sinners, and yet can hold plenty more sinners. But the church that is surrounded by God is the best case scenario. It's the best place to find your home among all those people surrounding the Word of God.

I don't think it is a secret that men's ministry can be extremely effective, and I would contend is a vital piece that we have just started at Christ Lutheran. When you have the men, you have the whole family. In fact, when you have the men, that also keeps the children in the church more successfully in the future.

One more thing I would like to press considering the first analogy Jesus uses. He says that the tree and bush reaches ripeness. The person wakes up and tada the the fruit and grain are ready for harvest.

We may have heard the Bible verse, the harvest is plenty, but the workers are few. Why do we need so many workers? Not to plant the seeds as much as glean the harvest. Our job as Christians is to sow the seed in a sense. But our greatest job is to harvest.

I know two true stories about men in the church. One man was disregarded in a church for his ideas to put in place some new technology. He became disconnected from the leadership and felt disconnected from the churches mission. After a long period of time, He fell away from God, divorced his wife, and now rarely attends church.

The second man was divorced by his wife. His life spiraled out of control, maybe because he also wasn't connected well with a church. He then, by God's grace, attends a men's Bible study, and through that he is able to over a process of time forgive his wife of her affair, and bring her back into the family, a family based on Jesus. This seed of God's word builds a home, a home that can thrive in a church where His Word strengthens and encourages a man and a family.

God's Word is the key. It's the seed that builds the foundation of a church. And today we just started with a little way to grow a church, let's see next week what will be a lot. Amen.

Amen.