

PLANTING THE MUSTARD SEED A HARVEST SERMON

Have you ever planted a seed? Here's one; it's like the mustard seed in the sketch; we can't really see it because it is so small, but that seed has life inside it; it will grow & this one will grow into a sunflower that is tall & beautiful. Here are some sunflower facts: the tallest ever grew to 25 ft. 5 ½ in. (7.76m) in the Netherlands in 1986; all that height just came from one seed. The largest head on a sunflower was 32 ¼ in. (82 cm); the most flowers – 837 heads came from 1 plant. All of that comes from just one seed that you can hardly see!

We read Jesus' story about the mustard seed & how that small seed grows; the seed becomes the huge tree that birds can shelter in; something small grew into something very big & He says "God's kingdom is like that!" "This is what it is like when God is at work!" The kingdom started off as something small, but has grown & grown till now people all across the world follow Jesus. It started off just as 12 men with Jesus. Jesus planted a seed when He called people to follow Him & that seed has grown; still today when people say 'yes' to Jesus that seed grows just a little bit more & is still growing.

Here are 2 quotes about world we live in & what people need: 'The deepest need of men is not food and clothing and shelter, important as they are. It is God' said Thomas R Kelly. Do you agree with that?

'It is impossible to comfort men's hearts with the love of God when their feet are perishing with cold' said William Booth the founder of the Salvation Army.. Do you agree with that?

Which do you agree with? Do you agree that what people need most is to know God & so we tell them about Jesus? Or do you agree that we can't really do that when their feet are cold & so we need to give them warm socks & boots to heat their feet up? Actually we can agree with both! We can say that people need both of these & that we should be working to make sure that people both hear about Jesus & have their practical needs met.

"The local church is the hope of the world." (Bill Hybels, the founder of Willow Creek Church) What can we do? We're only small & the world is such a massive place & the needs that people have in our world are massive needs. So what can we do? Here are 4 things:

- Learn about world we live in – we need to know what other people need; there are all kinds of stories on Tearfund's website or in the magazine Tear Times which is in library area today. Read them, it is fascinating to see the ways in which God is at work. What about our town and our community – how well do we know what people need here?
- Pray for people like Andrew & Cuthbert – turn what you learn into prayer; remember the people have heard about today in your prayers.
- Support the work of Tearfund & others as they work with local churches all over the world to make a difference for people living in Malawi etc; support Tearfund as they campaign for a just world & for everyone to be treated equally.

- Live in way Jesus wants us to live – be people who are kind, generous, loving, full of compassion. Dangerous people these, because we can change world when we live like that!
In all of these simple way, the mustard seed of God's kingdom grows a little bit more to change the world. You can't always see it happen, but we can see that changes that God makes through us!

Here's a final thought: the once Bishop of Boston (Who also wrote *O Little town of Bethlehem!*), Phillips Brooks says, "Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers, but pray for power equal to your tasks. Then the accomplishing of your work shall be no miracle, but you shall be a miracle." As we pray, God goes to work to do great things; ask Him to make us strong so that we may be the kind of people He wants; so the mustard seed grows in us just a little bit more! So the world changed just a little bit more.