

Seeds, Seeds, Seeds

Preached by Cheryl Williams at Footscray Baptist Church on June 13th 2021 Mark 4:26-34)

I have never seen a mustard bush but have seen their leaves. Many years ago, I had some friends from Nagaland (North East India) staying with me and they wanted to make some special dishes for me. So off to the Victorian Market we went in search of mustard leaves. Back home they made the most beautiful but spicy fish dish I had ever had. Mustard leaves can be very hot.

Each Christmas I go in search for little yellow seeds and little brown seeds to make my grainy mustard for presents. Whilst these seeds are small, they are not the smallest seeds.

A mustard bush was not the biggest tree that grew in the area where Jesus was speaking, but it was big enough for birds to nest in, and grew vigorously and would take over vegetable gardens.

Today in our readings Jesus speaks of seeds and sowing. Using agricultural images with which the people were familiar to make a point.

Our first parable, which only appears in the Gospel of Mark is about stages of growth. First, a seed is planted. Second, despite what the farmer does, the seed is doing its thing below the soil. It appears to be inactive – however all its potential remains doing its thing beneath the soil. Finally, once the seed sprouts and begins to grow the farmer needs to get active and prepare for the harvest. So much of what happens is beyond the control of humans. Despite seeming inactivity or dramatic signs God is present and active and working hard to produce fruit.

Our second parable is about the mustard seed. Whether in reality it is the smallest seed and largest tree is a bit irrelevant. The point seems to be that from seeming insignificance, comes great potential. Once sown the seed continues to grow and grow. An unimpressive seed can have a very impressive outcome. The image of shelter provided by the bush is something to note – where the kingdom of God is, there will be provision of shelter.

Both parables seem to suggest that the seed is either doing nothing or is very insignificant, however the truth is far from that.

So, what is going on?

- 1) Seeds it seem contain much potential – most of what they need to grow is contained within. If we are God's seeds, then we too contain all the potential we need, we just need to let God nurture us, and let all that potential blossom
- 2) There is a period where it seems like nothing is happening – nothing can be further from the truth. Demands for flashy signs might just be a little bit misplaced, let's not underestimate what is going on underneath, both in someone's life or in a community's life. God is always active we just need to lean in and see what is happening.
- 3) When the growth appears much happens – there is a harvest to get on with, or there is a place emerging that can shelter the birds. There comes a time when we humans need to get involved, really involved and help the work, that God has always been doing, flourish.

This is what the kingdom of God is like

- 1) God plants the seed
- 2) Everything seems to be inactive
- 3) Eventually there is great activity

If this is what the kingdom of God is like, we need to ask what God might be doing in our midst. I wonder what seeds God has been sowing amongst us over the last year or so when we have been pretty much locked down. What is about to sprout? What harvest might we be called to reap? What hospitality or shelter might we be called to offer others?

I have been reflecting about the doors that seem to be opening for us at Footscray Baptist Church, thinking about what opportunities to engage with people in our area are starting to emerge. As I have done this reflecting, I am amazed at the number and types of opportunities before us. God, has certainly been very active, the time is now for us to get on board.

Shortly, the council artist will begin to paint a mural on our administration block wall, the wall facing the library. We will have an opportunity to liaise with the artist, maybe even some art classes can be offered to the community and many will come and look at it.

The council is also looking at our hall with a plan to operate a playgroup or two in that space, with between 20-40 families. What opportunities that will provide for us to offer hospitality, welcome and more!

Orange Sky has been in touch again requesting to use our carpark once per week for there services. Again, this presents us with an opportunity to provide hospitality to the homeless in the form of warm meals, clothing and conversation.

We continue to explore connections with the Houses of Hope in Footscray, already we donate food items, shortly a few of us will train to be volunteers and next week we will hear about the ministry they are involved with asylum seekers.

Next month, one of our spaces will be used by a local physiotherapist, this will mean many more people coming into our spaces, increased activity – all providing a sense that we are open and available to the local community.

Maybe the planting or sowing has been done. Maybe our role is to get ready for harvest time. Our role is to be observant for signs of growth around us. Maybe we just have to be ready to get our hands dirty and helping out with the growth. Maybe we just have to be ready to be hospitable, ready to provide shelter, safety, sanctuary and welcome.

God has been active in unseen ways and the time has come for us to play our part. What part in the harvest will you play? What hospitality might you be able to offer?

The kingdom of God is in our midst, let us respond joyfully! The next little while might be a very exciting and rewarding time.

The kingdom of God is in our midst, let us ready ourselves to play our part.