

June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021  
Pastor Arndt  
**Mark 4: 26 – 34**

<sup>26</sup> He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. <sup>27</sup> Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. <sup>28</sup> All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. <sup>29</sup> As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

<sup>30</sup> Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? <sup>31</sup> It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. <sup>32</sup> Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”

<sup>33</sup> With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. <sup>34</sup> He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

Brothers and Sister in Christ.

This past week I had the opportunity to take a few days of vacation. In Wisconsin that means that you head north. As you do so there is a noticeable feature that begins to take shape... things around us begin to lose their shape.

Everywhere that human beings go we leave an unmistakable fingerprint on the landscape. We clear the land of rocks and debris. We lay out our farms and fields in precise geometric patterns. Recall the last time you flew in an airplane and looked down at the world below. We’ve corralled our wild earth into squares. We plant our corn in rows so that the stalks stand like fields of soldiers all standing perfectly at attention. But the further north that you travel, the more things begin to change. Things lose their shape. And that’s when things get interesting!

Jesus, in our lesson for today, uses seeds to teach us about the power and efficacy of his Word. The field that your Savior would like you to think of bears little resemblance to any respectable farm field that you would find around Newburg. Notice what the farmer does (*in fact, here he is not even referred to as a farmer, just “a man”*). A man scatters the seed. Some falls here. Some falls there. In doing so, the man is not being careless. Rather, he understands the power of the seed. The man has done his “work”. The seed now begins to do its work.

*“Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows.”* The man does not understand how this happens or why this happens. Jesus says, *“All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head.”* The seed of the Word is planted. The harvest *“has come.”* - Amen

At this point, I can’t help but wonder how engaged the crowd was to which Jesus was speaking. The earthly subject of Jesus’ parables isn’t exactly *“edge of your seat”* material. In these parables Jesus is describing the most common and mundane activities of life. But we are not to be deceived by this. These parables are meant to shock us and amaze us!

What is this seed that is growing? What is the fruit that is being produced? What is the harvest that Jesus is speaking of? In these parables Jesus captures the whole of life in a moment of time and puts all of life into proper perspective.

When we began our worship today, we recited these words *“Father... I am by nature sinful, and I have disobeyed you in my thoughts, words, and actions. I deserve your punishment, both now and in eternity. Have mercy on me a sinner.”*

What is God’s answer to our cry for mercy? How will God *“Create in you a new heart and renew a right Spirit within you?”* How will God bring you from sin to salvation? He will do it by scattering his Word and bringing you to Christ in Word and Sacrament.

Do you need rest from your sins? Plant the seed. Do you need more patience with your children? Plant the seed. Do you need forgiveness in your marriage? Plant the seed. Do you need contentment in a greedy world? Plant the seed.

Yes, at first this seems like a common parable. How dull the soil looks, how utterly uninteresting! The teenager yawns through the service; the adult looks at his watch; grandpa is napping. Then you see them in trouble, on a sick call, in the hospital. The message of Christ—his redemption, forgiveness, faith, new life, and salvation is not met with: *“I never heard that before!”* but with *“Thank you, Pastor!”* Although we do not always see it, the word of Christ is planted. Night and Day the Holy Spirit is at work causing it to grow.

I spent time this past week on the shores of Lake Superior. As I huffed and puffed my way along cliffs and waterfalls, I couldn’t help noticing that human beings would never plant a forest the way that God does. My driver’s license says that I’m 5’10” tall and weigh 180 pounds (neither of which are true). In spite of my low center of gravity, if I venture anywhere close to a cliff my legs become wobbly and I have trouble standing straight. My fear of heights pales in comparison to my spiritual fears.

I found myself leaning on the countless white pine trees that dot the cliffs and waterfalls. The average white pine tree is 150 feet tall and weighs more than 5,000 pounds. They grow out of rock and lean at impossible angles high above the most inhospitable places. No one in their right mind would plant a tree there. God, however, delights in placing hope and strength in desolate places in our lives.

This is the glorious power and strength of the Word. This is the Word that today has been sown in your life.

-Amen

