



13 - 19 June 2021 The growing adventure

Related Bible reading(s): Mark 4.26-34

Bible study on Mark 4.26-34

This study can be used by a small family/ household group, or by an online group, or – sometimes with a little adaptation - by an individual.

See our [Guidelines for a weekly Bible study](#)

Begin with an opening prayer

Creator God,
we bring to you all that is growing within us:

for you to bless and nurture.

We bring our prayers for the spread of your kingdom:

for you to bless and nurture.

We bring the initiatives for justice multiplying among nations:

for you to bless and nurture.

We bring the hopes and dreams, tiny and big,
of all your children around the world:

for you to bless and nurture.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

Read the passage

Consider different ways to read the text. For example, hearing it in more than one version of the Bible.

In an online group, you could share parts between those present, or use/adapt this week's Share the Word suggestion: Use the Jump to this week's menu on the right to go to Share the Word and scroll down to find the Gospel reading.

Explore and respond to the text

Start by reading the Bible notes below. You may want to read them more than once, or pause after each paragraph to reflect on what you have read.

Bible notes

Jesus uses images of plants and trees in his parables. This is surely much more significant than simply borrowing from the scenery around him. He could have talked about carpentry and building, for instance, and yet he talks about plants and growth.

The abiding image for the kingdom of God is growth, not construction. Growth is silent. It continues day and night. There is still a mystery and wonder around how a seed becomes a mature plant, even now that we understand DNA and photosynthesis. It is still astonishing that new life germinates, and we are still reliant on this natural process for our staple foods. All our skill at farming and food production is predicated on this natural force.

These two parables suggest the kingdom of God also has this tremendous growing energy, similar to the emerging life of a seed. We seem to have little to contribute to the process, beyond initially sowing the seed and perhaps taking care of the plant. The earth and the seed together produce the mature plants, and this happens whether the grower is awake or asleep. The mustard seed grows to become a huge shrub, with room for the birds in its shade (reminiscent of the tree in Ezekiel 17.23). This is what the kingdom of God is like, growing mysteriously and wonderfully.

This is not the only image of the kingdom of God in the parables of Jesus: there are also family relationships, work colleagues, things that happen at wedding feasts and things that are lost, among others. But this cluster of parables reminds us of the mysterious energy secretly at work in the world – not only the Church – to produce the growth of God’s kingdom.

See also:



Life, death, resurrection and Holy Spirit

John Parr discusses the readings in this issue with young Christians, Tiffany Barber and Jason Morgans-Hurley.

Reflection

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

How do we view Christians that we disagree with? How can we affirm that ‘everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new’ if they hold values that we deeply disagree with? This is a big challenge and may strain the bonds of fellowship. Interestingly, Paul makes this assertion in the middle of a series of letters full of frank disagreements. So, he is not recommending ‘saccharin sweetness’ but more honest relationships. Maybe part of the answer lies in Jesus’ parables: if we catch a vision of the kingdom persistently growing, we can have the courage to play our part faithfully, knowing that it is not all about us

Questions for reflection

You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues of sharing.



- What do you like or dislike about this 'environment'?
- What helps you to flourish?
- Where do you see God's kingdom-values at work in your community?

A simple worship activity

A prayer of contemplation and thankfulness.

In advance, gather a basket of natural objects from outside – e.g. pebbles, feathers, twigs, leaves, grass.

Pass the basket round, asking everyone to take something from it. Invite people to spend some time examining carefully the object, as if seeing it for the first time: consider its colour, shape, texture, smell, etc. Imagine its history. Where it has come from and how? What has it contributed simply by being itself? Spend a few moments appreciating the wonder, diversity and interconnectedness of each single part of nature.

Invite everyone to say 'thank you' to and for the object for all it is and all it symbolises, and 'thank you' to God for the wonder of growth and interconnectedness of creation.

Use the Jump to this week's menu on the right to go to more activities in Explore and respond

Prayer

Adapt to your local context.

A prayer of adoration

God of mystery,
Sower, Saviour, Spirit,
we worship you;
and we ask you to give us:
eyes to notice where the seeds of your kingdom are growing,
courage to show them to others,
faith enough to help nurture them,
and a heart that delights in their harvest

Amen.

Use the Jump to this week's menu on the right to find more prayers, including up-to-date intercessions.

A prayer to end the Bible study

Go in peace to love and serve God's world.
It is beautiful and you are part of it.
It is our sacred commission to help God love it.
Amen.

Go with God 24/7

Encourage everyone to put their faith into action.

Choose one action or habit to work on this week, that will help to create an environment in which God's kingdom values can flourish in your life and in your patch of planet earth

*Encourage everyone to explore their faith this week with the **ROOTS at home** resource.*

This resource is taken from www.rootsontheweb.com and is copyright © 2002-2021 ROOTS for Churches.