

*“Planted by God”*

Text: Mark 4:26-34

A new missionary was assigned a car that would not start without a push. After thinking about the problem, he devised a plan. He went to the school near his home, received some permission to take some children out of class, and had them push his car off. As he made the rounds, he would either park on a hill or leave the engine running. Of course that is a doubtful strategy today with the price of gas! In his day, this ingenious procedure worked for two years .

There was an illness in the missionary’s family and he was forced to move elsewhere. Now a new missionary was called to that field or work. The missionary proudly explained the procedure for starting the car, and the new missionary began looking under the hood. Before the explanation was complete, the new missionary diagnosed the problem—a loose cable. He gave the cable a twist, stepped into the car, and pushed the switch. The first missionary was astonished when the engine roared to life. Needless trouble had become routine for two years. The power was there all the time. Only a loose cable limited the automobile’s working.

Our text contains two parables about seeds. They speak of the message of the gospel and how it works in our lives. The gospel produces results without any help from us and works beyond our imagination. It may seem insignificant the world, and may be forgotten by us at times. Through it God has come to live among us through his Son Jesus Christ and as a result we are-

## **PLANTED BY GOD**

**I. God has come to live among us eternally**

**II. The challenge is before us**

**III. Faith produces a response from us**

### **I.**

**A.** When we first moved to Springfield, we were very careful about several rose bushes that were planted in our yard. We would give them plant food in spring and cover them with cones over the winter. As time went on there were other priorities for us and not much was done for these plants. It was amazing—they continued to bloom year after year without any effort on our part.

These parables talk about the kingdom of God. That contrary to some TV Bible teachers has nothing to do with a physical earthly rule, but rather it is about God coming to dwell among his people and he has done that through our Savior Jesus Christ.

This parable with the one that follows it reminds us that even from the most insignificant outward means, God is able to produce great things. Jesus entry into our world was unimpressive, but what he came to bring is the greatest victory of all for us. The same is true with his word; we want to use methods which will accomplish great things. Like the prophet Elijah learned, it was the sound of a low whisper and not into the spectacular events he had witnessed. (I Kings 19:12)

**B.** The man in the parable did not know how the seed grows. Even those who do that today do not understand how it happens, they just accept it. It is a miracle of God. Jesus speaks of it in the Gospel of John: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies it bears much fruit.” (John 12:24) This is true in nature, but in a greater way in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

There are two things that we need to remember here: 1) The growth and power of God's kingdom does not come because of us. 2) We should not neglect the use of the Gospel and should always trust its power. This is the means that he has provided for us and it works beyond our greatest expectations.

## II.

**A.** As we consider all of this, there is a great challenge before us. During the last several weeks an insert has run in your bulletin regarding the financial challenges that face Trinity congregation. Remember that the man in the first parable was not aware how the seed grew. It worked whether he was awake or asleep.

Certainly there are things we can do from a management standpoint or stewardship standpoint, but ultimately it is God's work and God's plan. Someone handed me a piece of prose that I read to the voters. It took the word *stewardship* and analyzed it in parts. *Stew* was what the congregation did after a sermon on tithing; *war* was what happened when the budget was discussed in board meetings; *ship*-it will sink when it has a hole in it as the congregation does when people fail in their giving; *hip* reminds us that we are all part of the body and it is the job of all of us.

As a congregation we don't like to run behind, but we are not alone in that predicament. We would like attendance to be better, but again this is not uniquely a problem of Trinity congregation. Because these things happen, it does not mean that God isn't building his kingdom here. Like the seed in the first parable, we don't see it working.

**B.** There is also the challenge of our culture of this day which draws attention away from life in the church. If we look at various organizations and cults, we see they do

quite well. Why is that? I believe it lies in their theology and approach. Their theology is people centered rather than Christ centered. If I am the center of everything that is very inviting. They also show great care for people, which is something we do well to do ourselves. God has come to live among us and has shown the greatest care of all to us and it is one we can show to others as well.

### III.

**A.** One year on New Year's Day, in the Tournament of Roses parade, a float sputtered and stopped. The parade was held up so a can of gas could be brought. Ironically the float belonged to the Standard Oil Company. With all its resources, its float was out of gas. We need not be in the same predicament when we realize how God works among us and has means for our spiritual refreshment and continues to work among us even in the most trying of times.

Even though we may not realize it, God is still producing the growth that he desires. He says: "So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." (Isaiah 55:11)

**B.** The mustard seed is a very small seed that produces a large plant. The commentator Trench adds that the reason Jesus used this illustration was that the seed not only produced that result, but that it also had a pungent taste. That can certainly be true of us when we desire our own efforts or the success formulas of the world. In a way the gospel is too simple, people want to be in control.

God provides in a greater way than we could ever imagine. He does the planting, grants the growth and will also do the harvesting. It is his planting and we grow because of him. Amen.