

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

Do Something Small

Sermon Reflection Notes

The parable of the mustard seed is in the three synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke), an indication of how well this story is remembered by those who were early followers of Jesus. In Matthew's recollection the mustard seed parable and the other parables with it are addressed to two audiences. First, the story is told to the "crowds" and second, the story is told to the disciples. The story reminds us that it is God's action in the world that is sometimes almost imperceptible, and yet it is real and will, in God's own time, come to full fruition.

Rev. Schuermann also told the story of hearing a high school senior, Amanda, give a sermon he remembers nearly twenty years later. Amanda told the 'starfish story:'

The morning after a terrible storm, thousands of starfish were washed up on the beach. A young girl was walking along the beach, stopping and picking up one starfish at a time and throwing it back in the ocean. A man, watching her for a time, finally went up to the girl and asked her why she was doing this. He commented that there was no way the girl could possibly make a difference because there were simply too many starfish to save. What she was doing wouldn't matter, he said. After studying him for a moment, the girl reached down and threw another starfish back into the ocean. "Maybe," she said, "but it matters to this one."

Amanda's message was that we should all be 'throwers of starfish,' moving through the world making a difference one 'starfish' at a time.

Often, we look for places to make a big impact, to affect real change, to lead a revolution, and we forget that Jesus led in a different way. He and his disciples traveled around, meeting different people, and building relationships one at a time. The quality of our leaders is important, but Rev. Schuermann also pointed out that we aren't excused from action based on the quality of the current leaders. We just have to keep looking for the next right thing and then do that thing. We have to stay present and engaged; we have to stay at the table. The disciples kept telling the story of Jesus...and it reached across time and space right to us. We can partner with God to build the kingdom of heaven, one mustard seed and starfish at a time.

Scripture

Matthew 13:31-32 (NRSVUE)

³¹ He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; ³² it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

Discussion Questions

1. Jesus's parable begins with the words "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed...." How? What does this comparison mean or bring to mind?
2. What is the "plan" that Jesus and his disciples followed to build God's kingdom? What approach did they use? Why?
3. Read the following scriptures together: Luke 4: 18-19; Isaiah 61: 1-2; Psalm 146: 6-9
What is the recurring theme? How does that theme fit with this week's scripture reading from Matthew?
4. Rev. Schuermann said this week: "God formed us with some kind of moral and compassionate awareness. We know when something isn't right. God honors us by asking us to cooperate with God to alleviate suffering."
What does this make you think about? What does the idea of being asked to cooperate with God have to do with honor?
5. What qualities must we nurture in order to be "throwers of starfish"? Why?
6. How does being a "thrower of starfish" fit into the Lenten journey?

Closing Prayer

Holy God, Sower of mustard seeds, we pray for the courage to join you in feeding the hungry, in setting the burdened ones free and in proclaiming good news to the downtrodden. Forgive us when we believe that we do not have enough to make a difference and help us to trust you with the seeds you give us. Help us to be throwers of starfish. Help us to do the next right thing. We pray in the name of Jesus, who goes with us all along the way. Amen.

*The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed
that someone took and sowed in his field.*