

## EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME

# GROWTH

### EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

#### *Introducing the Gospel*

##### *Parables of growth (Mark 4: 26-34)*

Like all the parables, these two have been interpreted in a variety of ways. Read together, however, they can be seen to make the same basic contrast. One begins with seeds and ends with a field full of grain. The other begins with a tiny mustard seed and ends with a large shrub. Both are parables of growth. Both demonstrate the natural processes of growth without human intervention. The point is that the Kingdom of God is like that too. The seed has been planted and nothing can stop the growth.

Our image to stimulate reflection on this passage is *growth*.

#### *Core extract from the Gospel (Mark 4: 30-32; for reflection throughout the week)*

Jesus also said,  
With what can we compare the kingdom of God,  
or what parable will we use for it?  
It is like a mustard seed,  
which, when sown upon the ground,  
is the smallest of all the seeds on earth;  
yet when it is sown it grows up  
and becomes the greatest of all shrubs,  
and puts forth large branches,  
so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.'

#### *Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)*

Lord God,  
your kingdom grows from  
the smallest seeds.  
Nurture the seeds of your love in our hearts,  
that we may grow in the ways  
of your kingdom;  
for you reign as king for ever.  
Amen.

## **READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL**

### **Mark 4: 26-34**

#### **The Parable of the Growing Seed**

He also said, 'The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.'

#### **The Parable of the Mustard Seed**

He also said, 'With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.'

#### **The Use of Parables**

With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

## **ENGAGING WITH THE THEME**

### ***Dwelling with the text (Mark 4: 26-34)***

Begin exploring Mark's teaching concerning the two parables of growth by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

### ***Thinking and talking***

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- What do we know about how seeds germinate and grow?
- What do we know about mustard seeds?
- What other examples of growth would you add to these two parables?
- Why do you think Jesus spoke in parables?
- What does this narrative say for us today?

### ***Using your Bible***

Explore the connection between these two parables and related materials in Matthew and Luke.

- Matthew 13: 24-32
- Luke 13: 18-19

For the mustard seed, see also

- Matthew 17: 26
- Luke 17: 6

Explore related ideas in the Bible.

- Genesis 1: 12-13
- Ecclesiastes 11: 5-6
- Isaiah 28: 23-29
- 1 Corinthians 3: 6-7

### ***Exploring online***

Widen your exploration of Mark's account of the two parables of growth by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- Jesus' parables of growth
- Mustard seeds
- How seeds grow

### ***Drawing on experience***

The image to stimulate reflection on Mark's parables of the seed growing secretly and of the mustard seed is *growth*.

- Have you experience of planting a seed that has had great growth?
- When have you been puzzled about some seeds growing and not others?
- In your experience what leads to good growth?

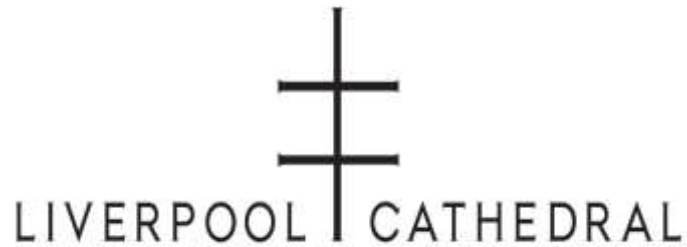
What have you learned about growth?

### ***Creating and making***

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by by Jesus' parables of growth.

- Make a display of growing plants.
- Create a collage showing the cycle of growth from a mustard seed.
- Create a mural from pictures of growth gathered from garden centres.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of growth.

Proper 6 (Year B) Sunday 13 June 2021



## **EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME**

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

Our invitation then is for you to share your reflections, prayers and photos of your creative work with the Cathedral by emailing them to [Nelson.Pike@liverpoolcathedral.org.uk](mailto:Nelson.Pike@liverpoolcathedral.org.uk)

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales and the St Christopher's College Trust.



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