

Proper 12 Gospel Reflection

By Nazanin Nourmohammadi, postulant

"He set another parable before them." '*The Parable of the Mustard Seed*' and '*The Parable of the Leaven*' contrast the smallness of the kingdom with the greatness of its effects.

What could be 'less significant' than a baby in a stable or a Jew from Nazareth--that "nothing good comes out of"--or some bunch of not-so-brave disciples or even a death on a cross?

What could be less significant than a little St. James church?

What could be less significant than just 2 1/2 people in our parish youth group?

What could be less significant than a postulant who left behind almost 7 years of her life to be a deacon?

How do we "measure" and what are God's "measurements?"

We expect to find the kingdom in cathedrals and mega-churches or maybe in huge choirs and pipe organs---but these parables suggest that the real kingdom power is to be found in the humblest of places, among the least likely people. The work of people who make the Food Bank customer happy with cereal or chips or a bit of meat. A few women crocheting hats and scarves for The Road Home to give to homeless people. These all look so insignificant...like nothing. Jesus promises that there is veiled power here.

And over the past two thousand years, we have seen the proof of it.

Today, the Roman Empire appears only in history books, but people sing praise to Jesus all over the world. The church and its people are manifestation of the kingdom of God.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field; which indeed is smaller than all seeds."

The mustard seed is tiny (it's not the smallest seed but an example since it's so small.) You might see in some bookstores a pendant with a mustard seed inside a clear holder. It's amazing how teeny tiny that seed really is.

"But when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs." This parable offers hope. It promises great outcomes from small beginnings. Jesus intended to encourage the first disciples, who faces so many challenges against them. This parable continues to encourage disciples today...you and me.

Most of the church's work gets done by its own people and sometimes is hard to get anyone involved. Our mission seems overwhelming, and our resources seem too few. But Jesus promises that God's power makes everything possible.

Indeed, the beginnings of every movement in our church were small. Even the church in Matthew's time, the disciples faced serious opposition and problems. God uses that which seems foolish to shame that which seems wise. God uses that which seems weak to shame that which seems strong (Corinthians 1:27.)
