

**THIS IS WHAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS LIKE**  
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**250 – 756 – M/M – 324**  
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*[Jesus] also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain...”* –Mark 4:26-28

Have you ever noticed that God works his greatest wonders in the quietest of ways?

- On a silent night in the in the little town of Bethlehem, a young virgin gives birth to a Son...and the world is forever changed.
- On wooden cross outside the city of Jerusalem, an innocent man breathes his final breath and dies...and the devil is disarmed and destroyed forever.
- On wind-tossed boat in the middle of a violent storm, a sleepy Savior calmly stands and speaks to the wind and waves. “*Quiet. Be still*” he says (Mark 4:39) ...and everything becomes completely calm.

God works his greatest wonders—changing water to wine, feeding the crowds, healing the sick, changing hearts, saving souls—he does it all in the quietest of ways. It’s always been that way. It always will.

I want you to think about that today on this Father’s Day. Simple words spoken in God’s name by imperfect people like us **have an impact**. Dads...and moms, grandpas...and grandmas, when you share God’s truth with the people in your life—it makes a difference. You have an influence on your children and your grandchildren...on your friends and your neighbors...that goes far beyond what you or I can imagine. God keeps on working through his Word, **even when we don’t see it**.

I know we don’t always like that. We’d like to see quick results—instant impact. But God doesn’t always let us see his work—maybe to keep us from trying to take the credit for ourselves.

Today, by means of two parables, Jesus teaches us that, despite all outward appearances, his Word really is powerful. He says:

**THIS IS WHAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS LIKE**

- 1. It works quietly in the heart**
- 2. It grows far beyond what we can see**

When you get impatient with the progress of the Word—in your family and in the church—come back to this. God works his greatest wonders in the quietest of ways.

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Jesus told a parable: “*A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how...*” “A farmer goes out and plants his seed.” That’s pretty much it. He plants the seed; **that’s all he does**. He goes to bed; he wakes up. He does his chores and doesn’t think about the seed. The farmer knows it will grow. He doesn’t understand **how**; all he knows is that when you cover a seed with dirt and give it a little water, something marvelous happens. “**All by itself** the soil produces grain.”

It seems a little obvious, doesn’t it? So if you suspect that Jesus may be teaching more than just a lesson on farming, you’re right. “*This is what the kingdom of God is like,*” he said. In the kingdom of God, **faith grows**. It grows **quietly**. It grows **in the heart**. It grows **on its own**. But **it’s up to us to do the planting**.  
**[image of seeds being planted]**

The Northern Wisconsin District Convention [**Our Great Heritage**] took place this week at Manitowoc Lutheran High School, and we heard a fascinating presentation there on planning for outreach in rural communities. Pastor Jonathan Hein talked about backdoor losses. He pointed out that, statistically, of those young people who fall away from the church, it doesn’t matter so much whether they attended a public school or a Lutheran school. The statistics show that in either case, the percentage of those who

stay active in the church is about even. What matters most, he said, is **how active their parents are in the church—whether they are faithful in worship.** [family in church] And—here’s interesting the point—what makes the greatest difference is **whether their dads are active in the church and faithful in worship.**

Dads, do you get the point? We need to do the planting from the time our kids are little on. And we do that, don’t we?

- We plant the seed when we bring them to be baptized [**baptismal font**] and so permit the Holy Spirit to work faith in their hearts...
- And we plant the seed when we bring them to church [**girl in church**] so they can hear about Jesus and know his love...
- But we also plant the seed when the faith in our hearts is mirrored in our lives [**dad/kids**] ...when we show—by the way we talk and the way we act—how important God is to us in our everyday lives.
  - So talk to your kids and tell them that you love them, yes...but let them know they have a Savior who loves them even more.
  - Talk to them about their friends, take an interest in their lives, yes...but teach them—**show** them—how they can talk to their best Friend, Jesus, in prayer.
  - Share with them your memories about the loved ones in your family who have passed on, yes...but don’t forget to tell them that their Lord has prepared a place in heaven for them, too.

This is a life-and-death struggle. The devil is on the prowl. He’s after their souls. But you can be confident of this: The Seed of the Word is powerful. It will grow. And like a baby growing inside its mother’s womb, the faith you plant will take root and grow within their hearts.

There will be times when we get discouraged. When we don’t see the result we’re hoping for...when it seems like all our efforts are to no use...we may be ready to give up. Just understand this: That seed is growing, even if it doesn’t always look that way.

- When **your middle-school kid** talks back to you, **plant the seed.** Let him know it’s not right. But let him know that you love him, too.
- When **your teen** makes a bad choice, **plant the seed.** Tell her it’s wrong. But let her know, too, that she has a God who understands her hurts and cares.
- When **the young adult in your family** starts to go down the wrong path, **plant the seed.** Warn them. But let them know that when they take up their cross and follow Jesus—no matter what the cost—he will always be at their side.

Simple words spoken in love have an impact. Paul said, *“I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow”* (1 Corinthians 3:6). You don’t have to force it. You don’t have to push. If at first you don’t see results, don’t worry. Just **plant the seed**...and let the Lord do his work.

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This is what the kingdom of heaven is like. It works quietly within the heart...and it works quietly in the church, too.

Jesus told another parable, *“[The kingdom of God] is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade”* (Mark 4:30-32). The church grows. It’s just that you might not be able to see it now.

Let me give you an example. One hundred thirty-five years ago, Trinity Lutheran Church was just a tiny outgrowth of the ministry of St. John-St. James in Reedsville. Today that ministry has expanded to point that we’re twice as large as our mother congregation. The church grows.

It’s good to see it from that point of view, because, as a congregation, at times, we may seem to be standing still. We adopt a plan for ministry, but then we hit a bump in the road.

- We receive a pastor from the seminary, and that pastor leaves.
- We call a principal, and he accepts a call to another field of labor.
- We get to know another teacher, and he accepts a call.

One step forward and one step back. Two steps forward and—it seems—**three** steps back.

And then the questions come: Why is the synod doing this to us? It's like we have a **target** on our backs! Don't they keep track of who has calls?

Well, no, we're not being "targeted" and yes, they do keep track of the calls. But it's not the synod who's doing this to us; it's just the way things happen to be right now. For a number of years, we've had a large number of retirements among pastors and teachers...and a smaller number of graduates coming out of our college and seminary. That leads to a growing number of vacancies in churches and schools...and therefore, a lot more calls. We're not the only ones to have our called workers receive them. It's happening all over.

We need to step back and learn to see things **from God's point of view**. The church grows; it expands. If one of our called workers should accept a call to another field of labor—South Carolina, Florida, or Nebraska, or wherever—it's okay. The Lord has a plan. **He needs faithful workers in other parts of the kingdom, too**. And he'll always find a way to meet our needs here.

God has a plan. **We** may not know what that plan is; but **he** does. And we know: his plan is always **good**.

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This is what the kingdom of God is like. **[mustard seed]** It grows. It grows quietly in the heart. And at times, it grows far beyond what we—with our eyes and from our point of view—can see.

We trust in the Lord to guide us. And it's our **job**—no, it's our **joy**—to keep on planting the Seed!

AMEN.