

Just what makes that little old ant
Think he'll move that rubber tree plant
Anyone knows an ant can't
Move a rubber tree plant

But he's got high hopes
He's got high hopes
He's got high apple pie in the sky hopes

So any time you're gettin' low
'Stead of lettin' go
Just remember that ant:
Oops, there goes another rubber tree plant
Oops, there goes another rubber tree plant

There is power in small. Just like the might of that little ole ant, today's theme for our stewardship series hits on another small, insignificant item. A seed. In our 2nd week of our stewardship series, Seedy Stewards Sow Something Grand, we will look at a couple of Jesus' parables in Mark chapter 4. The most well known one is the story of the mustard seed. This mustard seed is said to be the smallest of all seeds. What we learn today is that the smallest seed can grow into something mighty when we combine it with faith and hard work.

Our culture tends to measure importance by size. Noticing large gifts, the most visible ministry, crowded rooms, and those immediate results. Today, Jesus directs our attention elsewhere: to a seed. A seed is small, it's easy to overlook, even miss. But that tiny seed carries life inside of it.

The two seed parables in this chapter come from Jesus who is trying to teach us more about the kingdom of God. These parables also reveal the heart of stewardship. God places seeds in our hands—time, abilities, resources, relationships, opportunities, and most importantly the message of the gospel. Our calling is not to manufacture life. Our calling is to plant faithfully and trust God to bring the increase.

In the first seed parable, Jesus says that the kingdom is like a man who scatters seed on the ground. The farmer does not create the seed. He receives it, carries it, and places it where it can grow. This is the first truth of stewardship: everything begins with what God has already given

us. Gifts like strength, knowledge, income, possessions, influence, days, our very lives are entrusted to us by the One who owns the field. A good steward doesn't ask, "What belongs to me?" A good steward asks, "What has God placed in my care, and how can I use it best for His purposes?"

Seed kept in a bag will never become a harvest. In the same way, gifts held back through fear, comparison, or selfishness cannot bless whatever mission field is assigned to us by God.

Faithful stewardship cannot happen without a release or a letting go. A letting go of our time in service, our words of encouragement, our resources in generosity, our abilities in ministry, and our witness in love. Church family, you may consider your offering to be small, but by your obedience you place that offering into the hands of a great God. And guess what happens then?

According to Jesus, the farmer sleeps and rises, night and day, while the seeds sprout and grow. The farmer doesn't know how this happens. While the farmer is responsible for sowing, he is not the source of life. This is both humbling and freeing. We are responsible for faithfulness; God is responsible for fruitfulness. We can teach a child, share the gospel, support a ministry, serve a neighbor, or give generously, but we cannot force spiritual growth. Only God can awaken faith, transform a heart, and produce lasting fruit.

Stewardship can be exhausting if we try to take responsibility for the outcomes that belong to God. If the result is not immediate, we tend to think our service has failed. We forget that a seed grows quite a bit beneath the surface of the soil before anyone sees the sprout. So might Heaven be at work in hidden places? This is where our faith urges us to labor diligently, pray patiently, and rest trustfully. Because of our faith we can labor diligently, pray patiently, and rest trustfully! (Say that with me!) Faith motivates us to do our part without trying to sit on God's throne.

Jesus next describes the orderly process of growth: first the blade, then the head, then the full grain. Growth is real, but it is gradual. It's the same with us as stewards of God. People, ministries, acts of generosity develop in stages. We aren't going to despise a blade because it

isn't a full head of grain yet. Right? Church family, this is a call for us to recognize beginnings, nurture progress, and wait patiently for maturity. (Repeat)

This is easier said than done because we live in a culture that prizes instant results. But faithful stewardship is not about quick transactions; it is a long journey of obedience. Your prayer offered today may not strengthen the recipient until years from now. A child taught to give in Sunday School may not become generous until they grow up. We never know which quiet act of service will open a door for the gospel, so we should not abandon the field simply because the harvest hasn't happened yet.

When the grain is ripe, the farmer puts in the sickle because the harvest has come. Waiting is not passiveness. The steward who trusts God's timing also stays prepared to act when the moment arrives. There is a time to sow, a time to cultivate, and a time to gather. And wisdom recognizes each season.

God may bring an opportunity to serve, reconcile, give, mentor, speak, or lead. When He does, stewardship says, "I am ready." The harvest does not belong to us, but we are invited to participate in it. What a privilege that God allows our ordinary obedience to become part of His kingdom work.

After this encouraging explanation of the growth process, Jesus turns his attention to the mustard seed. He compares the kingdom of God to a mustard seed. At this time the mustard seed was the smallest known seed. This remarkably small seed could grow to be large enough for birds to find shelter in its shade. Have you ever noticed something? God delights in using small beginnings. Just think about the shepherd boy, turned king? A modest gift, a brief conversation, a simple invitation, a few minutes of prayer, or one faithful volunteer can become more fruitful than we ever imagined.

Measuring stewardship is not a matter of how impressive the seed appears to be in our hand. It's all about how we will entrust it to God. The mustard seed grows to become a place of refuge. And that is a perfect way to describe stewardship. All of our seeds become a vehicle that God

can use to bless others. Resources, abilities, testimonies all leading to a welcoming space, a relief of burdens, a strengthening of faith, and a testimony pointing weary souls to Jesus. Kingdom stewardship is not about personal increase; it's about extending shade to others.

So what are we to do with these two parables? What questions should we be asking right now? I have a few thoughts!

First, what seeds has God put in your hand? What time, resources, abilities, relationships, and opportunities are entrusted to you.

Next, what seeds are you keeping in the bag? Is fear, pride, comfort, or comparison preventing obedience?

Third, where must you trust God for hidden growth? Can you release yourself from the pressure to fully control results and continue faithfully.

Fourth, what stage of growth should you honor? Can you thank God for the blade, while waiting patiently for the full grain to appear.

Finally, who would find shelter through your stewardship? Use what you have so that others are strengthened, welcomed, and served.

A powerful example of small comes to us through a dime.

Martha Berry was the daughter of a plantation owner in Rome, Georgia. When her father died, he left the plantation to her. She'd started a school because she was shocked to discover how many rural children didn't attend a church or a school. As such, they didn't know the stories from the Bible. So she decided to use the land she inherited to start building a school where at no cost, poor boys could learn to read and write and do arithmetic and know basic Bible stories. The boys worked on the school grounds to earn their education. She quickly learned that she would need more money than she had.

Henry Ford gave away millions of dollars to many different causes in his lifetime, but he was notorious for the fact that he refused to give money to any and all schools. He felt that while schools were well-meaning, they were run by nonbusiness-like people who frequently mishandled his gifts.

Martha was aware of this fact about Ford, but she went to him anyway and asked for an endowment. And as expected, Ford refused.

So Miss Berry, said “Well, then, would you at least give me a dime to buy a sack of raw peanuts?”

Ford was a little taken a back and he asked why she wanted just a dime. She replied: “A dime is all I want, Mr. Ford, but I do want to show you what I can do with 10 cents” With that, he tossed her a dime. Berry returned to her school, where she and her students planted the peanuts. They sold the crop for \$600, and she took the money to Ford.

She stood face-to-face with Henry Ford, and said, “See how practical we are in the use of money at the Martha Berry School?”

Mr. Ford was shocked and pleased with what she had done. Not only did he gave Miss Berry back the \$600...he added \$2 million to it. Martha took the money and built the buildings that would become Berry College in Mt. Berry, GA. Ford would also be a consistent benefactor from that day forward.

But the difference between God and Henry Ford is – God never doubts our ability to make good use of what’s we’ve received. God believes that we will be faithful. God knows we can be trusted.

Does what you have seem too small? Are you serving without seeing results? Do you feel like someone else’s field matters more than yours? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then the promises in these parables are for you. First, the kingdom grows by God’s power. Your

task is not to possess the largest seed or to control the harvest. Your task is simply to be faithful with what has been entrusted to you.

Second, plant the seed. Serve with what you have. Give with a willing heart. Speak the truth in love. Keep praying when the soil looks quiet. Honor the process. Stay ready for the harvest. The God who gives the seed is also the God who gives the growth, and even the smallest act of faithful stewardship can become a place of blessing in His kingdom. Just ask Martha Berry.

And look at what her dime has become.

Show picture of Berry College. Keep up through the prayer.

Lord, everything we have comes from You. Open our eyes to Your seeds placed in our hands. Give us courage to plant it, patience to trust Your process, humility to leave the results with You, and wisdom to recognize the harvest. Grow Your kingdom through our time, gifts, resources, and witness. May our stewardship provide blessing and shelter for others and bring honor to Jesus Christ. Amen.