

The Parables of the Growing Seeds | Perplexing Parables #1

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Do you ever feel impatient with God? Maybe you've been praying and you don't see any results, or the results are confusing. Jesus told two parables to encourage his people not to give up on God. These parables suggest three ways that we should trust in how God does his work.

Mark 4:26-32 “The Kingdom of God is like a farmer who scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, while he's asleep or awake, the seed sprouts and grows, but he does not understand how it happens. The earth produces the crops on its own. First a leaf blade pushes through, then the heads of wheat are formed, and finally the grain ripens. And as soon as the grain is ready, the farmer comes and harvests it with a sickle, for the harvest time has come.” Jesus said, “How can I describe the Kingdom of God? What story should I use to illustrate it? It is like a mustard seed planted in the ground. It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of all garden plants; it grows long branches, and birds can make nests in its shade.”

Be Patient with God's Timing

We can't always tell how God is at work. In 4:27, the seed grows invisibly. There is a mystery to God's work! Like the farmer, we have a part to play. In v26, he plants, and in verse v29, he harvests. But whether he is asleep or awake (v27) – no matter what he does – the seed grows. Eventually, there will be a harvest, but it comes in its own time. Even if we can't see it, we can trust that God's timing is always right.

Trust in God's Methods

These parables encourage us that God's work will progress, but we can't always make sense of how it happens. Like a seed, God's work has its own intrinsic power. When you look at what God is doing, it may seem small and insignificant, but like the tiny mustard seed (v31), God's kingdom will grow (v32).

Here's a caution: God's work may not look like what you expect. The Jews thought God's kingdom would bring the military defeat of Israel's enemies. That's not how Jesus revealed his kingship. Jesus must have looked weak and unimpressive in light of their expectations. So don't miss God's work in your life and in others because you expect it to be different than it is. You can trust that God's way of working is always right.

Be Confident That God Can Work Through You

You might feel as puny and unimportant as a tiny mustard seed. But these parables show that God often starts things small. No matter how you feel about yourself, you can trust God to work through you in the lives of others – if you're available to him.

God's work in this world doesn't always look like we think it should. So don't be discouraged when you can't see what God is doing in your life or the lives of others. The seeds God plants will grow. It may not be in our timing, or in the way we expect, but you can trust God to finish what he started in and through you.

Discussion Questions:

1. *Watch the video together or invite someone to summarize the topic.*
2. *How have you seen God's timing to be right in your own life or in the lives of others?*
3. *Why is hard to wait on God's timing?*
4. *Have you been in situations where you prayed earnestly and didn't see the results you wanted? What happened?*
5. *Read Matthew 13:53-58. Jesus didn't fit people's expectations. How have you seen that God's work doesn't always look how we would expect?*
6. *Jesus's earliest disciples left everything to follow him (Matthew 4). What steps must you take to be available to God for him to work through you?*
7. *Read 1 Corinthians 3:6-8. How can you trust God more and more to finish the work he begins?*
8. *Write a personal action step based on this conversation.*