

Hello. So, the parable of the mustard seed, it's about what the Kingdom of God looks like. We are told that the Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. This is a parable about something very small and seemingly insignificant growing into something big and surprisingly impressive and fruitful.

We don't have many mustard fields in Canonbury but I'm pretty sure the Kingdom of God is found nearby, perhaps in our backyard, so close in fact that the Kingdom of God can be found somewhere present, in our community.

The Kingdom of God is not a distant far-away place or even a spiritual realm that only holy people can enter. The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. The Kingdom of God can be somewhere local.

Jesus said that the smallest of seeds is the mustard seed. Now I am by no means a botanical gardener but apparently a mustard seed isn't the smallest seed. There are other small seeds such as the orchid seed which is even smaller. It is also questionable whether a mustard seed can grow into a giant tree large enough to hold birds of the air - such a growth in Canonbury really would be miraculous!

But Jesus was not comparing the mustard seed to all the other seeds in the world; he was talking about seeds that a local farmer in Palestine might have sowed in his field. And it's absolutely true that the black mustard seed was the smallest seed sown by a first-century farmer in that part of the world. It's also true, that it would grow to heights 12 feet which is plenty large enough to hold a birds nest. Jesus was talking to people in his day about things that local people knew about.

Jesus said even though the mustard seed is the smallest of seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches.

It is wonderful that we are having a baptism today and to think that perhaps the seed of faith will grow in Juno. The Church was once a small seed, twelve disciples and two centuries later – look what happened. Plenty of nesting birds in the trees of Anglicanism!

Out of small things, a baby, or a tiny mustard seed – through a process of growth great things can come.

All things come from God, in the first book of the Bible (Genesis) it says that in the beginning God created heavens and the earth – God saw what he had made and it was good. It was very good. The trees are good, the sun is good, animals are good, food is good, and people are good. Of course it is true that we do have the capacity to take something good and turn it into something harmful. But God made it and God thinks it is very good. All things come from God.

It sounds obvious but we brought nothing with us into this world - not even a set of clothes. We all come to God empty handed and open handed and whatever we do

with our lives we can't take our gold bricks with us when we die. Perhaps you have heard the story of the man who when facing the end of his life liquidated all his assets by turning them into gold bricks. He asked his family to pack the gold bricks into two suitcases and bury them with him. When he arrived at the pearly gates St Peter met him and noticed that he had come to heaven with luggage. What's in the suitcases asked St Peter? The man proudly opened his suitcases and Peter looked in at the gold bricks – he stared at them and said: You brought pavement up here? Pavement!

We can have some pretty odd ideas about money sometimes. It is good to remember that God the creator is the maker and true owner of all things. But that we are stewards, and we want to be good stewards.

As Christians and as humans we have a responsibility to care for creation and for people. We have a calling on us that is different to that of the animals. Dogs, cats and giraffes don't have a responsibility like us to care for the Earth and what is in it. Resting upon us is the hand of God and through us God can work.

Sometimes we don't have to take much responsibility for things - we pay our taxes so that the council collects our rubbish, workmen make roads safe, police deal with disturbances and so on and so it is good to have an opportunity to do something good in our local area.

As a Church and as individuals we can't do it all. It's about doing it together, sharing for the common good and helping out the people most in need. And so even if we can only give a very small gift, that's OK because like the mustard seed - a mustard tree can grow.

I've been told a few times before: money doesn't grow on trees. And these days it doesn't seem to grow much in banks either.

And if we can't give financially that is OK. God knows what we have - whether that is loads of dough or loads of debt. Each of us has our own set of circumstances and responsibilities to consider. Sacrifices look different to different people for example a chicken who gives an offering of eggs to our breakfast table offers her time and her offering of eggs is very good. But when the farmer demands bacon, for the pig there will be a sacrifice involved! Not all of us can make huge sacrifices; some sacrifices would be harmful to us. God knows what he requires of us when it comes to giving and if we think what we give or do won't amount to much – we may be mistaken.

There are so many different ways to give generously: time through volunteering at our projects, giving our old shoes to The Manna, we can offer prayers. We can simply be loving neighbours. A chat and a cup of tea are a gift and an offering and to have a relationship with the gift that you bring means so much more than detached giving.

The good news is that we are all in it together and God loves us first. So perhaps there are new ways we can think of being generous and offering a fresh gift of thanks.

The mustard seed is very small. Our giving can be very small but God can do great things with it, he is the gardener, the miracle worker. As small as our giving is God can do things that we cannot even imagine.

God can do great things even with the people that we are, we never know the impact that we make. And giving is not just about meeting needs it is also an expression of thanks and praise to a generous and gracious God.

But remember the mustard tree doesn't grow over night. Have some patience, the seed needs time to germinate, to sprout and grow. So *that* out of the mustard seed, the birds of the air can nest in the branches of a tree

2 Corinthians says this: God loves a cheerful giver... and God is able to make all grace abound to you.

Giving as an act of faith is a sign that we can be prepared to trust God and leave the outcome in God's hands.

Today as we welcome Juno into our Christian family we give thanks for all that God has provided, the promises he has made and kept to us. We give thanks for each other, for the mustard seeds of love that provide us with a Church family, friendship and an outward looking community. Amen