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Sept 19, 2010

A Little Mustard and Yeast
Luke 13: 18-21

CLASSIFIED ADS – From daily newspapers

10. Wanted. Man to take care of cow that does not smoke or drink.
9. Try us once, you'll never go anywhere again.
8. Dog for sale: eats anything and is fond of children.
7. Illiterate? Write today for free help.
6. Stock up and save. Limit: one.
5. Man wanted to work in dynamite factory. Must be willing to travel.
4. Semi-Annual after Christmas Sale.
3. For sale: antique desk suitable for lady with thick legs and large drawers.
2. We do not tear your clothing with machinery. We do it carefully by hand.
1. Used Cars: Why go elsewhere to be cheated. Come here first

(The Seed of the Kingdom, by Jeff Strite, October 2001).

All these ads need something small changed.

A word or punctuation mark put in a different place
would make all the difference!

Sometimes it's the little things that pack the most punch.

Like *mustard* seeds. Or *red paper clips*.

Do you remember the story of the man and his red paper clip three years ago?

Stuck in a dead-end job and strapped for money,
Kyle MacDonald came up with an improbable plan:
starting with one red paperclip,
he would trade on the Internet until he exchanged it for a house.

First, he traded the red paperclip for a fish-shaped **pen**.
Next, he traded the pen for a **doorknob**.
He traded the doorknob for a Coleman **stove**.
He traded the Coleman stove for an electric **generator**.
He traded the electric generator for a Budweiser sign and a **keg** of beer,
which he then traded for a **snowmobile**.
Exactly one year and **14 trades later**,

MacDonald finally reached his goal: he exchanged a part in a Hollywood **movie** for a home in Saskatchewan, **Canada**.

The true story of Kyle MacDonald is told in his book ***One Red Paperclip***, which will become a movie. Fame, fortune, a book, a movie deal, and a home—it all began with one red paperclip. *Macdonald, Kyle (June 28, 2007). One Red Paperclip: How a Small Piece of Stationery Turned into a Great Big Adventure. Ebury Press.*

To Jesus' audience, the kingdom of God being like a mustard seed and yeast, Might have sounded like those 'off' ads, or the incredulous story of a red paper clip being traded for a house.....

Do you know about mustard plants?
I didn't until I started reading about them this week.
They are like tiny time bombs in a well planned garden.
You bring in mustard and it's there to stay, and play.....

If you don't know what you're doing,
It's kind of like deciding to plant ***bamboo, mint, or kudzu***.
And you should pray that you're on good terms with the neighbors.
Because they'll probably be enjoying some too.

One tiny seed grows, and grows, and grows,
you'd never know the shrub comes from such a speck of a seed...
it's a plant that loves to multiply, whether you want it to or not.
Mustard, mustard, everywhere.

And Jesus said
To what should I compare the ***kingdom of God?***
It's like a MUSTARD SEED someone sowed in the garden,
And it grew into a shrub for the birds to rest in..... What?

*The kingdom of God---starts small and spreads everywhere.
Once you've got it, you've got it.*

This new life known as the kingdom of God---
once we enter it, we never leave it!
It may feel like we've taken leave at different times in our lives,
but when we believe in Christ, that's it—we're in the family of faith forever.

But not everyone is too happy when you sow mustard
 In your garden.....
 Kind of like the **Scribes and Pharisees** who were watching Jesus
 take liberties with their precious laws of God.
 Hearing him claim to BE God, seeing him perform miracles,
 teaching with authority like no one ever before.
 Knowing that he was bucking the religious establishment,
 And talking about bringing in a whole new KINGDOM of God!

Then to make matters worse, Jesus spins a story about **some YEAST!**.
 The kingdom of God is like some yeast that woman mixed
 with flour til it was all leavened.

The kingdom of God makes its way into every part of life

Why does he have to talk about leavened bread,
 when he knows how holy UNLEAVENED bread is to God's people?
 Does he not remember the Passover, the Exodus?
 Now he's just making a point—that this kingdom of God
 gets into people and takes over!
 It's completely out of OUR control!

And those Scribes and Pharisees were right.
 the **new life** we have as believers in Jesus Christ—the kingdom we live in now,
 that will be completed when Christ returns and we are united in heaven...
 This **new life**, is like **mustard seed, and yeast**.
 Once it's in us, *it's there to stay.....*
 Once it takes root in our hearts, *it grows* beyond our wildest imagination,
 It starts penetrating every area of our lives.
 And--- it's completely *beyond our control*.

In fact, that's a point Jesus is trying to make isn't it?
 The Scribes and Pharisees are like us,
 trying to keep everything and everyone under control.
 But new life with Christ cannot truly be lived that way—
 It has to be **surrendered** to the power of God's Spirit
 A power that can transform the smallest seed into the largest shrub,
 That can take a tiny bit of yeast and leaven an entire batch of dough.

What balls do you **juggle** in your life?
 What do you try so hard to keep under control?
 And what would it take for you to surrender THAT to God?
 Can you imagine handing that over to Jesus? To the Holy Spirit?

What about us as a church?
 We want to attract new families.....we would like a sanctuary
 We would like to reach the youth who cross our path after school
 Are we willing to **surrender** that completely to God?

The power of God's kingdom--is **not ours to control**.
 When we let go, we don't necessarily know how everything will turn out.....
 I can tell you what usually happens though.
 Something unexpectedly wonderful.
 Maybe not the easiest thing.
 Maybe not the simplest.
 But when has God promised life to be easy or simple?
 God promises to be **with us**, to work all things together **for good**
 in the mysterious ways that only God can do.

Do you know **what else mustard** was used for during the time of Jesus? Listen to this Roman writing from the time of Christ:
Pounded it is applied with vinegar to the bites of serpents and scorpion stings. It counteracts the poisons of fungi. For phlegm it is kept in the mouth until it melts, or is used as a gargle with hydromel. For toothache it is chewed.... It is very beneficial for all stomach troubles.... It clears the senses, and by the sneezing caused by it, the head; it relaxes the bowels; it promotes health
 (Pliny, Natural History, 20.87.236-237;
 in Bernard Brandon Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 380).

Mustard was also known for its **healing** powers.
 Once again Jesus **story** has many different layers.
 Mustard is a pesky plant that upsets the status quo,
 And brings healing.

The kingdom of God brings healing.

A prolific professor and gardener from Hastings College in Nebraska offers these words about the parables:

So this parable is no simplistic allusion to the miraculous growth of any old seed; Yes, we can apply it to our personal lives, knowing that even the smallest measure of faith can move mountains. But more importantly, we need to begin acknowledging its significance for our social and political lives as well. ...we have two roles to play. First, we must in all things act as an equally disruptive presence in the midst of "the old order," "the way things are," the status quo. But perhaps our greatest calling is to be what mustard had long been in the Mediterranean Basin of the first century CE, a healing presence. Maybe this was the original reason for the gardener sowing this plant in the first place. If so, how much more so should we allow ourselves to be cast as seeds of shalom into a broken world?

(Seeds of Shalom, Mustard, Mustard and More Mustard, July 23, 2008, Daniel G. Deffenbaugh).

The kingdom of God comes to stay.

It grows like wildfire.

It's beyond our control.

And it brings healing.

Maybe this is what he meant when he reminded us that the mustard plant was a place for the **birds to rest**.

Jesus says in Matthew 11:28, *Come to me all who are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.*

That is God's kingdom.

What **burdens** are you carrying?

Today, can you bring those to Jesus?

What burdens do we carry as a **church**?

Let's bring them to the Lord today.

The kingdom of God is a place of healing.

We are **ambassadors** of God's kingdom in this world.

We are here to stay---we are growing in our faith---

we are able to do things that are beyond our imagination,

indeed beyond our control because God's Spirit is working in us!

And we are able to bring healing to a broken and hurting world.

Friends, hear the ***Good News*** of the Gospel today.
We are living in the kingdom of God—
a kingdom that is already here by the power of Jesus,
and not yet complete til he comes again.
Let's surrender, hand over our burdens, drink in His healing,
and live as ambassadors for this new life, Amen.