

**Sermon on Sunday 26 July 2020
(8.00am Holy Communion)
by Rev. Bill Church**

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

Matthew 13. 31-32

The parables of Jesus were not fables.

The only fable in the whole Bible is in the Old Testament (Judges 9. 8-15).

Most of Jesus' parables were rooted in the daily experience of his hearers. Those who heard this parable could have seen the mustard plant growing by the roadside or on waste ground. It could grow as tall as a man and had seeds just like the ones you may have sowed years ago on wet blotting paper to go in an egg sandwich.

It was quite a large plant with quite small seeds, which is evidence enough, if evidence is needed, that Jesus never went to Australia. Because if he had, he would surely have referred to eucalyptus regnans 'mountain ash', a gum tree which can grow 100metres tall but has tiny seeds.

When we lived in Suffolk, we thought it would be a good idea to grow some gum trees so we sent off for seeds. When they came, I thought the man had cheated us – I couldn't see anything in the seed packet. But then I spotted what looked like dust in a corner.

We sowed them, they germinated and they grew and they grew and they grew. We went back some 40 years later and one of these trees was so large I could not get my arms round it.

But Jesus was not giving a botany lesson.

He was pointing to the growth of the kingdom of heaven, of his church from a few unqualified followers in an obscure corner of the Roman empire to uncountable millions all around the world; and he was pointing to how we grow from tiny babies to full-grown adults; and also how tiny seeds of good, or evil, grow out far beyond their source.

Jesus knew, his hearers knew and we know that small acts of kindness and generosity, little gestures of love and respect, a smile of congratulation or encouragement, a gracious acknowledgement, each on their own not very much but taken together all add up to a happy family, a flourishing congregation, a friendly neighbourhood, a good society.

And Jesus knew and his hearers knew and we know that small acts of meanness, spiteful whispers, wounding words, scornful glances, little gestures of contempt or rejection each on their own not very much but taken together all add up to an unhappy family, a fractured congregation, a suspicious neighbourhood, an alienated society.

May God guide us in little things as well as in great.

