

The Parables of Jesus



Theme: Jesus used parables to teach about the Kingdom of God. Proper 6 (11)

Object: Six oranges and a jar of mustard seeds.

Scripture: Jesus used many similar stories and illustrations to teach the people as much as they could understand. In fact, in his public ministry he never taught without using parables; but afterward, when he was alone with his disciples, he explained everything to them. Mark 4:33-34 (NLT)

Have you ever noticed that when we come together for the children's sermon, we almost always start by showing you an object? After showing you the object and talking about it for a few minutes, we usually say something like, "That reminds me of what Jesus said in our Bible lesson today." Why do we do that? It is to help you to better understand what the Bible lesson means.

Here is an example — suppose that a kindergarten teacher was teaching a lesson about subtraction. The teacher might stand up in front of the class and say, "Six minus two equals four." Of course, that is true, but to a class of young children that have never been taught about subtraction, they might not understand what the teacher meant.

Now, suppose that the teacher showed the class six oranges and said, "I have six oranges. (Count them.) If I take away two of those oranges, how many oranges are left? That's right! There are four left." (Count them.) Now the class would understand that six minus two equals four.

That is the same way that Jesus taught his followers about the Kingdom of God. When he taught, he began by saying, "The Kingdom of God is like. . ." and then he would give an example. That method of teaching is called a parable. The Bible tells us that Jesus used parables to teach people in such a way that they would understand. In fact, the Bible says, "He never taught without using parables." (Mark 4:34)

In our Bible lesson today, we find one of the best-known parables of Jesus. It is called "The Parable of the Mustard Seed." Have you ever seen a mustard seed? I have some to show you this morning. Look how small they are!

Jesus began his mustard seed parable by asking, "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 seeds, but it becomes the largest of all the plants in the garden; it grows long branches, and birds can make nests in its shade."

Jesus was teaching his followers that the Kingdom of God had a small beginning. How many disciples did Jesus start with? You are right, Jesus began his ministry on earth with a very small group of twelve followers, but as they followed Jesus and told others about him, the Kingdom grew and grew until it covered the whole earth. You might think that you are too small to be an important part of the Kingdom of God, but when we tell others about Jesus, we help the Kingdom to grow to

spread over the whole earth. So, when you start to think that you are too small to be important in the Kingdom of God, remember the parable of the mustard seed.

Father, we sometimes think we are too small to be important in the Kingdom of God. Help us to remember the parable of the mustard seed we have learned this morning. If we will tell others about what Jesus has done for us and what he wants to do for them, we can have a part in growing the Kingdom. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

GROWING KINGDOM: Before class time, the teacher can hide some cut out shapes of people around a designated area of the classroom. When the teacher says, "Go", the children will search for the hidden cut outs (set a time limit of about 3 minutes). When a child finds a cut out, it will be brought to the front of the room and tacked to the bulletin board. When the time is up, the children can see how fast the KINGDOM grew as they gathered the people.

MUSTARD SEED HANGMAN GAME: Use a chalk board to play the hangman game using words from the parable of the mustard seed. (mustard, tree, small, large, plant, grow, etc.) Let the children take turns guessing letters.

MUSTARD SEED REFRIGERATOR MAGNET: Make a refrigerator magnet by gluing a small magnet strip to the back of cardboard. You can buy magnet strips at craft shops. Decorate the card with the words "Big things come from little things like mustard seeds" and glue a mustard seed to it.

GROWING THE KINGDOM: This game is played like hide and seek. As children are found they will connect by holding hands and growing their group of ones who have been found. When all have been found let them form a circle and have a seat to have the story today told to them.

PARABLE BOOKMARK: Give the children a piece of card stock as well as stickers and a mustard seed to make a bookmark. Children can write PARABLE on the bookmark as well as placing several mustard seeds on the bookmark with glue. After the bookmark has been decorated, the children can cover it with clear contact paper and punch a hole at the top for a red ribbon.

CHALKBOARD KINGDOM GROWING: Invite each child to come up to the chalkboard and draw a stick man or their choice of a person figure. And as each child comes to draw their stick man, make sure the hands are connected and see how many figures they can draw in 5 minutes.

PARABLE WALL BANNER: The teacher can have very large letters ready for children to cut out from card stock or colored paper. These should be large letters 10-12 inches tall. After the children cut them out, have them place them in order on a focal wall and decorate them with stickers. If the class is very large, this could be done more than one time for a different wall or a different location of the building to remind them that Jesus taught using parables.

Planting Seeds – Watching Them Grow



Theme: Growing the Kingdom of God; Proper 6 (11)

Object: An apple

Scripture: He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not

know how." Mark 4:26-27 (NIV)

Look what I have! A nice, big, juicy apple. Do you like apples? Today I am going to tell you the story of a man called Johnny Appleseed. As you might guess, Johnny Appleseed was not his real name. His real name was John Chapman. He was born in 1774 in the state of Massachusetts. When he was in his early twenties, John became a nurseryman. A nurseryman is someone who works with plants, trees, and shrubs. John Chapman especially loved apple trees and he planted them all around the town where he lived. But that wasn't enough for John, He wanted people everywhere to enjoy apples just as much as he did, so he traveled all around the country planting apple trees and giving away apple seeds.

John Chapman was a simple man. He traveled all around the country on foot, usually without shoes. He often wore a shirt which he made from a seed sack with holes cut in it for his head and arms. He had a beard and wore a tin cooking pot as a hat. In fact, he often took the tin pot off of his head and used it to cook his supper. John Chapman was a kind and gentle man who was liked by everyone he met. He became well known and people began to call him Johnny Appleseed.

Johnny Appleseed's life wasn't easy, but he loved what he was doing. He never married, but he had more friends than he could count. He lived a long and happy life enjoying the great outdoors and the beauty of God's creation until God called him home in March of 1845.

You may be asking, "What does the story of Johnny Appleseed have to do with our Bible lesson for today?" Well, the story of Johnny Appleseed is a bit like the parable that Jesus told in our Bible reading for today. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is like a man who scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he is asleep or awake, the seed sprouts and grows, but the man doesn't know how it happens."

Just as Johnny Appleseed was passionate about planting apple seeds, God wants you and me to be passionate about planting seeds of the Good News everywhere we go. If we will take the Good News of Jesus to people, it will take root in their life and begin to grow. We may not understand it, but that is the way the kingdom of God grows -- by people like you and me planting the seed and watching it grow.

Father, just as John Chapman planted apple seeds everywhere he went, let us plant seeds of faith in Jesus Christ wherever we go. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

HOPSCOTCH with SEEDS: Let the children draw the hopscotch game with chalk on a sidewalk and then throw large seeds to each box that they hop to. Tell children that seeds will be a part of our Bible story today and to listen very carefully!

APPLE HEAD RELAY: Divide the children into two teams and let each player run/walk a relay with an apple on the top of their head. If the apple rolls off, the child has to stop and pick it up and start from that place and continue the "run".

BOBBING FOR APPLES: If it is permissible for the children to get wet, the children can bob for apples. Tell children the Johnny Appleseed story.

APPLE STICK RELAY: Divide the children into teams or let each child have an apple and a painter's stirring stick and run a relay with the stick pushing the apple to the finish line! If you wish, you can collect the apples and wash them for the apple snack treat today.

SEED PLANT MARKERS: Provide each child with a paint stick to decorate using colored markers. Have the children cut out and fold construction paper to make their own SEED PACKET, to tape or glue onto the decorated paint stick. Have the children write "SEEDS OF FAITH" on the packet and decorate it with stickers. The children can stick their plant markers in a designated area around the church or in their own garden at home.

FAITH GARDEN STEPPING STONE: If time and space allows, the teacher will have some plaster mixed up and ready to pour into small tin plates. The children will place some large seeds in the

plaster along with some bright shiny stones. The children may lay the seeds in the plaster to spell out FAITH on their stone. The stones may need to stay in the classroom to dry until the next week.

WATERING CAN: If inexpensive watering cans are available, give each child a watering can and stickers or permanent dry markers to decorate their watering can and to write PLANTING SEEDS OF FAITH IN JESUS.

JESUS SEEDS: Give the children a piece of construction paper and a large number of seeds to glue on the paper to spell out JESUS! They can then decorate the paper with seeds along the border as the children desire.

SEED SCATTERING: Find an area where children could go outside after the lesson has been shared and scatter some seeds for flowers. The children can watch in following weeks to see if any seeds come up from their seed scatterings! Tell children how to scatter seeds of FAITH as well!

SEED PACKETS: Give children supplies to make their own seed packets. The "seeds" that will go inside their own seed packets, will be Bible verses written on little pieces of paper or will be words from the Bible verse for the lesson. Put the "seeds" into the packets and decorate the packet with stickers and words such as MY SEED PACKET, or SEEDS OF FAITH. Encourage the children to give their seed packet to someone else to learn today's lesson as they 'spread seeds of Faith'.

FLOWER POT SEEDS: Give each child a small flower pot or a small Styrofoam cup to decorate with stickers and write their own name and the words SEEDS OF FAITH. Give the children a couple of flower seeds or a bean to plant in the pot and to take home to watch their plan grow, just as our FAITH grows.