

Title: *The Quiet Power of the Smallest Seed*; Text: Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

In the name of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Jesus loved a good metaphor, but if we are being completely honest, his choices were often a bit peculiar.

If you or I were tasked with describing the vast, world-changing, triumphant Kingdom of God, we'd probably reach for grandeur. We'd talk about majestic mountains, vast ocean currents, or towering, ancient cedar trees. We'd choose images that signal strength, dominance, and unshakeable permanence.

Yet, in today's Gospel from Matthew, Jesus bypasses the majestic cedars. Instead, he leans in and says: "*The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed*".

Now, a mustard seed isn't a grand tree. It grows into a shrub. In first-century Palestine, mustard was actually a bit of a weed—unruly, persistent, and almost impossible to contain once it took root.

Then Jesus gives us another image: "*The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour*".

Three measures of flour! In ancient times, that was about fifty or sixty pounds of flour—enough to bake bread for a village of over a hundred people. And where is the yeast? It's completely hidden. You can't see it working. But slowly, quietly, it penetrates every single ounce of that dough until the entire batch is transformed.

Finally, he speaks of a hidden treasure in a field, and a merchant who finds one pearl of extraordinary price—someone who, filled with sheer joy, sells all they have to claim it.

If there is a common thread running through all these short pictures Jesus paints, it is this: The Kingdom of God does not arrive with a fanfare of trumpets. It begins in the quiet, hidden places. But when it takes root, its capacity to transform everything around it is total.

I want us to sit with that for a moment today.

We live in a world—and specifically in our region—that often measures value by immediate visibility, scale, and prestige. We admire big headlines, massive capital campaigns, and rapid, measurable returns on investment.

And yet, Jesus gently reminds us that God’s most profound work often operates on a completely different logic. God works through the tiny seed planted in ordinary soil. God works through the unseen yeast kneaded into the heavy flour. God works through those who recognize genuine, priceless value where others see only a dusty, neglected field.

Look around this sanctuary this morning. Look at the gifts gathered in these seats.

We are a community blessed with an extraordinary abundance of capital—not just financial capital, though that is real, but intellectual capital, social capital, and generations of practical wisdom. Sitting here today are people who know how to build businesses, lead organizations, navigate complex social services, mentor youth, and manage budgets.

It is easy—so easy—to look at the deep, systemic challenges facing the St. Louis region and feel overwhelmed by the sheer scale of the divide. We look across our regional maps at disparities in economic mobility, at schools where children lack basic resources, at neighborhoods where generational poverty seems entrenched. And we ask ourselves: *What can our church really do that makes any real difference?*

When we ask that question, Jesus whispers back to us: *Remember the mustard seed. Remember the yeast.*

The Gospel today isn’t asking us to solve every systemic crisis in St. Louis by next Tuesday. But it *is* asking us to stop underestimating what God can do when we knead our resources directly into the flour of our surrounding community.

You see, outreach in the Kingdom of God is not about charity writing a check from a safe distance. Outreach is about presence. It is about getting our hands messy in the dough.

When Jesus speaks of the merchant selling everything for the pearl of great price, he is talking about *alignment*. The merchant realized that all his other assets were secondary compared to the one thing that truly mattered.

As a parish, we are currently doing the faithful work of solidifying our outreach ministry. We are asking God, “*Where are you calling us to be?*”

And the answer often lies right where economic mobility and education intersect.

- Think of what happens when a retired business executive from this parish sits down week after week to mentor an aspiring young entrepreneur in an under-resourced neighborhood. That is yeast in the dough.**
- Think of what happens when our social workers and legal minds lend their expertise to help families navigate housing or education pathways. That is a mustard seed taking root.**
- Think of what happens when we use our financial leverage not just to give handouts, but to fund educational scholarships, early-childhood literacy programs, and vocational training pipelines that unlock generational mobility.**

None of those actions make national news on day one. They look small. They feel quiet. But inside that seed is the DNA of the Kingdom of God. And when you plant it, it doesn't just grow—it becomes a shelter where the birds of the air can come and find rest.

Jesus ends his teaching today with a strange little detail. He asks his disciples, “*Have you understood all this?*”

They say, “Yes.” (We might smile at their confidence!)

And then Jesus says: “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old”.

My friends, that is who we are.

We are the stewards of a household. We have "old treasures"—our faith tradition, our historic liturgy, our deep roots, and our established institutions. And we have "new treasures"—new partnerships, modern business acumen, fresh approaches to community development, and innovative strategies for regional equity.

God is not asking us to strip ourselves bare or feel guilty for the blessings we hold. God is asking us to open the storeroom. God is asking us to take those treasures—old and new—and put them to work for the flourishing of our neighbors.

The region of St. Louis does not need another well-meaning institution offering pity from afar.

St. Louis needs the Church to be yeast. It needs us to roll up our sleeves, to bring our best minds, our strongest networks, and our deep financial commitments, and knead them directly into the places where opportunity has been denied for too long.

When we do that, we aren't just doing "good work." We are discovering the hidden treasure in the field. We are discovering that the true joy of Christian life isn't in what we accumulate, but in what we freely invest in God's redeeming work in the world.

So as we go to the Altar this morning to receive the bread and the wine—the ultimate small gifts that carry infinite grace—let us pray for eyes to see the mustard seeds in our midst.

Let us pray for the courage to sell what holds us back, to open our storehouses, and to join God in transforming our city, one quiet, faithful, powerful act at a time.

Amen.