

Planting a kingdom: Christian ed at home

Adapted from an article by JOELLE BRUMMIT-YALE in the Presbyterian Outlook

Mustard Blossoms



Scripture: Mark 4:26-34

Materials online:

YouTube videos (wheat seed germinating

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xc9GHSRDQxo>; mustard seed growing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfDFI2o329s>

Website with mustard tree pictures: <https://mu->

[0k.blogspot.com/2017/06/mustard-tree-images.html](https://mu-0k.blogspot.com/2017/06/mustard-tree-images.html)

Other Materials: blank construction or white paper, seeds (birdseed works best), glue and crayons, markers or paint/paintbrushes

Kingdom of God is a phrase that Jesus used often in his teachings. It's an idea that he came back to time and time again because his disciples struggled to fully grasp what it was and how it was achieved. The disciples were not alone. We continue to wrestle with it today. While the *kingdom of God* may seem too complex for children to understand, we can plant seeds that will blossom into a fuller understanding as they grow up. Jesus' parables about the kingdom provide those seeds. And, not coincidentally, these parables are about seeds and plants! In this lesson, your children will connect what they know about the life cycles of plants to wonder about the kingdom Jesus promises is available to us through our faith.

Introduce

Begin the time with your children by asking them to think about stories, movies or shows they have watched that feature a king or queen.

- What is a king or queen?
- What makes someone a good king or queen?
- What does a kingdom with a good king or queen look like? What are the lives of people living in these types of kingdoms like?
- How could a kingdom grow into a wonderful, healthy community?

Prepare

Share that Jesus talks about the *kingdom of God* in some of his stories. Your children will be hearing two of these stories today. In them, Jesus talks about seeds and plants as a way to help us understand how the *kingdom of God* might grow. Encourage your children to notice what Jesus says about how seeds grow.

Read

Read aloud Mark 4:26-34. Break the reading into two chunks: verses 26-29 and verses 30-33. Pause after each to discuss the parable individually so that the two don't become muddled in your children's minds.

After reading the first parable (Mark 4:26-29), ask your children to share what they heard about seeds and plants in the parable.

- Note that Jesus talks about a person scattering several grain seeds on the ground.
- Day after day, the person watches as the seeds grow. First, small shoots emerge from the ground. Then the stalk forms and later the head of the grain appears. This is the part of the wheat that we eat. The farmer can then harvest the grain to make food.
- While all of this is happening, the grower is unaware of what exactly is happening inside the plant. All she sees is the amazing plant continuing to get bigger and stronger until it is able to feed people. To help your children visualize this process, show the video of wheat growing (listed above in online videos).

Move on to the second parable (Mark 4:30-33). Again, ask your children to share what they heard about seeds and plants in the parable.

- Note that here Jesus talks about a different kind of plant: the mustard plant. He says that a farmer could plant a tiny mustard seed in the ground and it would grow into a mustard plant.
- What is remarkable about the mustard plant is that it can grow quite large, despite coming from a very small seed. The plant provides shelter, shade and safety for birds to live, lay eggs and raise baby birds.
- To help your children visualize the growth of a mustard seed into a plant watch the mustard seed video listed above.
- You can also visit the mustard tree website listed above for pictures of mustard plants growing in the Middle East. It shows how large the trees can get, demonstrating Jesus' image of the large mustard plant providing a home for the

birds. (Note: There are some images on this page that feature businesses with mustard in the name. You can scroll past these!)

Do

After discussing both of the parables, ask your children to each choose one of the parables to focus on. Prepare for them to create a visual representation of this parable by gathering these materials: blank construction or white paper, seeds (birdseed works best), glue and crayons, markers or paint/paintbrushes.

- Give each child a sheet of blank paper.
- Ask him to glue a few seeds at the bottom of the page. The best way to do this is to squeeze a small circle of white glue on to the paper and then to place the seeds on the glue. You may want to wait 10-15 minutes for the glue to set before moving on to the next step.
- After the seeds have been glued to the page, have your child draw or paint a picture of a grain plant or a mustard plant emerging from the seeds. Your child should create the image that fits with the parable he chose to focus on. He may want to refer back to the videos to assist in his drawing.

Wonder

When your child has completed the drawing or painting, explain that Jesus was using the idea of the plant to help his disciples understand what it is like for the kingdom of God to grow. Ask your child to think about what the kingdom of God would be like.

- What would God expect God's people to do if God was king?
- What would the community look like under God's rule?
- How would people act? What would they do for and with each other?

After your children have brainstormed, ask them to draw or paint images around the plant to show what God's kingdom is like.

Once your children's artwork is completed, discuss how people can help make the world the kingdom of God.

- What do we need to do to make our world the kingdom of God? Ask your children to share their ideas.
- Remind them that God partners with us to bring about this community. We can bring about the kingdom of God together with God's help.



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June 9, 2021