



## **ST NINIAN'S UNITING CHURCH PRAYERS AND REFLECTION**

**MARCH 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025 BASED ON LUKE 13:18-21**

### **THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED**

<sup>18</sup> He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what should I compare it? <sup>19</sup> It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."

### **THE PARABLE OF THE YEAST**

<sup>20</sup> And again he said, "To what should I compare the kingdom of God? <sup>21</sup> It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."

### **OPENING PRAYER**

God of love and grace, I sit with you with a heart of gratitude to reflect on your Words through Luke. My Lord Jesus speaks of God's Kingdom as a mustard seed, tiny yet full of potential, and as yeast that transforms dough. I thank you for this reminder that even the smallest of faith can lead to incredible growth in your Kingdom. Help me Lord, to nurture my faith even in the smallest of ways. May I as part of the Body of Christ, be like the mustard seed providing a safe space, where hope and shelter may be found to glorify your might name.

I pray for a deeper understanding of your Kingdom's inclusivity, in the same way as yeast permeates through the dough, may your love seep into every corner of your people's lives and the world. Help all of us to embrace those who sit on the edges of community, welcoming them into your love and grace. May we all remember that your Kingdom is for everyone, and our actions should reflect that openness. As we attempt to enter through the narrow door, give us the fortitude to live with purpose and integrity. Remind us that the journey may be challenging, but with you by our side we will find our way. Strengthen our commitment to follow You, share your message of hope and love with others. May the seeds of your love be planted in the hearts of all people as they come to experience the joy of belonging to the Body of Christ, your church. In your holy name I pray amen.

## **PRAYER POINTS OF THANKS AND PRAISE**

- ❖ Thank you for your faithful seed planters who stayed close to my side as my faith matured
- ❖ Thank you for the voices of those who inspired me along the way
- ❖ Thank you for the opportunities for faith to rise and soften the blows and challenges of life
- ❖ Thank you for your message of not giving up knowing there is always hope to be found as your light shines bright even in the darkness.
  
- ❖ Praise to You Lord for the music which lifts the heart and spirit like the wings of an eagle soaring above the beauty below and between the majestic heavens above.
- ❖ Praise to You Lord in the moments of joy and compassion reigns over shattering news
- ❖ Praise to You Lord when peaceful and loving words follow hurtful words and actions
- ❖ Praise to You Lord for loving and caring for a world which so often turns its face away from you.

## **PRAYER OF CONFESSION POINTS**

- ❖ Forgive me Lord when I fail to see the good seeds which have been sown deep within my heart.
- ❖ Forgive me Lord for the times when I let the fully grown fruits of the tree fall to the ground unused – unwanted
- ❖ Forgive me Lord I have not been committed to your mission, only to my desires.
- ❖ Forgive me Lord I have kept your Word to myself as it was mine and mine alone.
- ❖ Forgive me for the times when my motivation for the spoken word and observed action are for my own benefit, not yours.

## **WORDS OF GRACE**

Lord, I have placed the worst of my thoughts and actions into your hands of love, mercy and grace. You have promised to cleanse me when I confess my sins. I do now so confess and rest peacefully in the cleansing palm of your hand. Thanks be to God amen.

## **REFLECTION**

The first of these parables and is very familiar to us as it teaches us what the nature of the Kingdom of God is. The parable of the mustard seed emphasises how God has us start with something small. A tiny seed, once sown, transforms into a large tree, providing shelter and sustenance for birds of the air. This imagery shows us that often God often works through seemingly insignificant beginnings, and people who would be deemed to be of little significance, inviting us to recognise that even small acts of faith

can yield great results. It's a reminder that every effort, prayer, or act of love and kindness, forgiveness, generosity, no matter how small, contributes to the unfolding of God's plan and can have a far-reaching impact on the world.

The second parable, that of the yeast hidden in the dough may not be as familiar to us as the first parable, but it still helps us to understand the nature of the Kingdom of God as it reinforces the idea of transformation. Just as yeast spreads through the lump of dough, once combined with warm water and kneading, so does God's Kingdom take root and expand in the hearts of those who choose to believe in the God of all Creation. It suggests that the work of God may be quiet and unnoticed at first, yet it is transformative and powerful. In a world which is often captivated by grand gestures, half-truths and an impatient need for immediate results, Jesus invites his followers to embrace the subtleties of God's work and presence in our lives, reminding us that changes in a person's demeanor and spirituality as their faith develops can take time to happen and to be noticed by those around them as they become witnesses for Christ's message in today's fractured communities.

Following these parables, Jesus speaks of the seriousness of entering the Kingdom, offering a warning that many will seek to enter but won't be able. This may be difficult for some to hear, but it does require each of us to assess our current relationship with God, Christ and Spirit. Familiarity with Jesus or passively engaging with a faith community without commitment to it won't be a guarantee for inclusion in God's Kingdom. Instead, Jesus calls for genuine commitment and active participation in pursuing His teachings.

Jesus doesn't leave it at that; he goes on to reference people coming from all nations in our global village, reassuring us that the Kingdom is inclusive to people from across the globe. It challenges our narrow thinking the gate into God's Kingdom is open for people who are like us in looks, thought, word and deed. The parable Jesus is sharing is a stark reminder that God's grace knows no boundaries.

At the end of the day, Luke's passage encourages us to continue to nurture our faithfulness, resilience and perseverance as we walk with Christ. He invites us to be patient with our spiritual growth and that of others. God's Kingdom seen as small as a mustard seed to begin with, holding the promise of great transformation, urging us to remain steadfast in our love, as we journey towards the promised land sharing the love of Christ with those we meet along the way.

## **POINTS FOR PRAYER OF INTERCESSION**

- ❖ For people to become fully aware of the nature of God's Kingdom
- ❖ For the church to be encouraged knowing that from something small something big can grow
- ❖ For people to hear the message of hope and allow the Spirit of Christ to work so transformation can take place

- ❖ For those who are unwell, in hospital, moving house, facing their mortality,
- ❖ For those who are feeling lost and alone and contemplating self-harm
- ❖ Those who are grieving
- ❖ For the fruit of the spirit - patience

May we all be encouraged to listen to the voice of love, grace, and hope and follow wherever it leads and wherever it goes.

Amen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UqGxlf7pAH8>

