

**Content**

In this passage that is before us this morning Jesus is once again announcing and teaching about the kingdom of God. And once again he puts a focus on our ability to hear. He says in v.24, "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." And then more pointedly in v.25 he says, "Pay attention to what you hear." Are we paying attention to the Word? Do we really hear its message, its kingdom message? For the message of the Word is the message of the kingdom. And Jesus here through these parables teaches us two things about the nature of the kingdom. He teaches (1) The Strangeness of the Kingdom. Through the use of images such as lamp and seed, one of the text's major challenges is for us not to despise small beginnings. And in the original context Jesus is teaching that the kingdom has indeed been inaugurated in and through his ministry, but certainly not in the way it might have been expected. Thus its strangeness. And (2) The Promise of the Kingdom. In the parable of the mustard seed, Jesus promises that although the kingdom can be compared to a tiny little mustard seed it will one day grow into such a large tree that even the birds will come and make their nests in that tree.

**Gospel Connections**

When Jesus went to the cross He became that seed or tree that went all the way down in order to save, rescue and bring us up. There is an incredible promise here that we must remember beyond our own personal salvation. In John 15 Jesus tells His disciples, ***"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:5).*** Jesus is the vine or tree. And when we abide in Him we are promised to bear much fruit. That is because Jesus saves us with the promise that through us He will save the nations. His salvation of us is with a view to the world. The birds of the air find their rest under the tree, that is Jesus.

**Application and Discussion Questions**

1. What did you learn from this sermon? Specifically
  - a. What insights did you learn?
  - b. What questions do you have? Are there any areas you don't understand?
  - c. What areas of your life (be specific) do you sense God wants to change as a result of this passage of Scripture?

2. What lessons about paying attention to the Word do you discover in this passage and which are most relevant to you right now? What will you specifically do to incorporate this teaching in your life?

3. What does this passage teach us about mission? What does this passage teach us about bearing witness to the gospel?