

Good Morning,

I am humbled and honored this morning to bring the message on a day honoring our older Adults, especially those older adults who have been members for 50 or more years in this congregation.

My first year at APC has been exciting and challenging in trying to get to know our older adults through Zoom, emails, personal notes, cards and letters. I am filled with joy this morning to get to know more of our members whether older or younger. Seeing you in person is very refreshing and spiritually uplifting.

Pray with me!

Father God,

We come to you this morning with praise and thanksgiving. Use these lips of clay to bring a word from the Lord. Hide me behind the cross so that you may get the glory and honor today. Amen

One thing that I have learned about older adults is that they come packaged differently. Being an older adult myself makes this a sermon not only to you but to me as well. We all come packaged differently. We are a diverse group.

Even though the data describes the exact age one becomes an older adult 65+, all 65+ and older do not fall within the same expected parameters. We look different and we act differently through the different stages of life. How many stages are on your list? Perhaps you have three: childhood, adulthood, and old age. Or maybe four: infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Developmentalists break the life span into nine stages as follows:

- Prenatal Development
- Infancy and Toddlerhood
- Early Childhood

- Middle Childhood
- Adolescence
- Early Adulthood
- Middle Adulthood
- Late Adulthood
- Death and Dying

We have different personalities, different needs, enjoy different kinds of recreation, and we have different kinds of faith practices to get us from one day to the next.

Many older adults are young at heart and still believe they are in their fifties. Hey, why not? Maybe that is your makeup. Maybe that's God's way of keeping you active. Some of us have received some serious blows to our overall well-being. Physical challenges, mental challenges psychological challenges and economic challenges have caused a quick initiation into another stage of life. Even the young at heart must come to grips with what changes are happening and how these changes are or will affect me, my family and friends.

In his book "The Three stages of Aging: John Robinson discusses this fact to older adults "It Ain't over Yet". He goes on to say that aging is an initiation into an extraordinary new stage of life. The events and processes of aging – changing bodily, fading identities and lose of all shapes and sizes – represent and initiation into an entirely new dimension of life, a time of personal and spiritual growth. While aging may represent the end of our old life, it is also the beginning of a new one.

Mark 4 begins with Jesus telling the disciples to cross to the other side of the sea of Galilee, because the crowd following him is too great for him to teach with him standing or sitting among them. If he could get into a boat near the sea - shore he

would be able to teach without being smothered or maybe with him being able to see who the people within the crowd.

So the disciples got a ship and Jesus sat on the ship and taught the crowd as they stood on the seashore. He taught them using parables.

Many Christians when asked what a parable is, say that it is as an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Some say that a parable is a short story using familiar scenes to explain spiritual truth. Others say that a parable compels listeners to think and a parable conceals the truth from those too stubborn or prejudiced to hear what is being taught.

Usually there is one main point in a parable. As we hear Jesus speaking we strive to hear what lesson he is teaching his followers.

Jesus wanted his followers to understand how the Kingdom of heaven worked. He gave many examples starting with the words: "the Kingdom of heaven is like".

This caused one to use their imagination when hearing the parable. One must use their imagination as Jesus describes his picturesque story and then one must rely on the Holy Spirit to give a meaning or life application that Jesus is conveying to his people.

In this parable Jesus is speaking to those whose occupation is farming. When you know how to farmer you have a better understanding. Or if you like to plant in your garden you can relate to what Jesus is saying. Some of us grew up in the city and don't understand a lot about planting and farming. Story about planting in the back yard.

Jesus is the "farmer" in this parable. During His time on earth, Jesus shared God's word and planted seeds of faith in as many hearts as He could reach. Believers are not unlike Jesus in the sense they are expected to sow the seeds of God's love

everywhere they go, continuing to grow His kingdom on earth and in heaven. From the one seed that was planted, the result was a tree that produced the seeds that make mustard for years to come. The tree develops a strong root structure that resists the elements.

Let's look at vs 30 to 33. "It is like a mustard seed, which is one of the smallest of all seeds on earth. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade." The mustard seed tree can grow nine feet tall but never the size of a cedar or the sequoia tree which is one of the tallest in the world. The Mustard seed grows as a large garden bush and produces fruit that continues to multiply.

The small mustard seed, the size of a bit of pepper, represents the word of God and the beginning of our faith. By sharing God's word, new believers are born and celebrate eternal life in heaven.

The mustard seed is much like God's kingdom on earth. Through the work of every believer, the kingdom continues to grow. Jesus shows the contrast of the smallest of all the seeds on earth and the greatest of all shrubs.

Most Older adults have or are continually weathering the storms of life with a new attitude. Daily our faith grows because of our strong root system. Our root system is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Rather than pushing against the changes that are happening we are learning how to rest in the all-wise, all-knowing, all supernaturally equipped God of peace. The more we spiritually mature the more our wants, desires, self-satisfaction and ego dissipates. The more we realize that God is in control and His way is the best way, the more we depend, and trust in God and in the process, we become more and more like him.

Imagine looking in a mirror and noticing differences in what we see physically. Eventually we do not recognize who that person is in the mirror. Age is making its full-blown appearance. But one day we look and the image is blurry we don't see ourselves we see a blurred vision of cloud and light. Eventually we see a bright light. Who is that reflection? Could it be our Lord and Savior who has changed us into his image so that we are ready to be received in his heavenly kingdom?

Faith in Christ is important with people of God. The more faith grows the stronger we become and more assured we become about our salvation, love and promises of God. The stronger our faith the stronger our desire to talk about God's word to other people that we come in contact. The believers' faith in Christ is much like the mustard tree. The more God's people continue to learn about God the more their once small and fragile faith grows.

The mustard that is harvested symbolizes God's providence in the lives of those in his earthly kingdom. The tree can grow to a height of over nine feet, towering over the other plants just as God towers over those who live on earth. Jesus' Kingdom will grow and become a shelter for all who come to him. The word tells us that some plant, some water but God gives the increase.

While the tree represents our faith, the birds perching in the tree are the followers. During times of trouble, they can find shelter from their problems in the tree of faith. When they are experiencing times of great happiness, it can be equated to the tree being a comfortable sanctuary for them to rest.

Throughout the Bible we learn how God used the small things or people of little reputation to show God's supernatural power in the Kingdom.

In all of these biblical stories where these instruments are mentioned the people of God had great faith, and their faith was a testimony to others, who increased in faith as God's Kingdom continued to grow.

You may say to yourself, I am not that important to God in building his Kingdom. The good news is that God used weak and small instruments to accomplish great results.

He used the following A staff -Exodus 4:2 What is that in your hand? A staff. Throw it on the ground. He threw it and it became a snake. Moses jumped back-fast. God told Moses to reach out and grab it- and he reached out grabbed it and he was holding stick again. That so they will trust that God appeared to you, The God of Abraham, The God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.

A jawbone- Judges15:15 Samson's wife was given away by the father to a Philistine -used a jawbone to kill thousands of the enemy

Five small stones 1 Sam 17:40 David, boy 5 small stones to kill the giant Goliath

A handful of flour and a little oil 1 Kings 17:12

A cloud the size of a man's hand 1Ki 18:44 Elijah draught

Five barley loaves Joan 6:9

1Cor. 1:27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.1 Cor. 1:28 He chose the lowly things of the world and the despised things and the things that are not to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.

God supernaturally causes a small seed to grow into a large tree. He supernaturally causes our faith to grow so that others catch what we believe. The kingdom continues to expand globally. This parable is a reminder that God's

Kingdom will grow as our faith in his son grows and we spread the Good news of Jesus Christ.

As older adults we have the gift of experience, insight, wisdom and faith. We have experienced so much in life and can help others who want to listen to our stories.

As we listen to the younger people and exchange our faith experiences, we may plant small seeds of faith that produce fruit. As our faith and love grows; our desire to express our love to God increases. When our relationship with Jesus grows, our church grows, and the God's Kingdom on earth grows supernaturally on earth as it is in heaven.

Thanks be to God. Amen