



Our Gospel for today features one of Jesus' most beloved parables: that of the mustard seed which reveals how our great God tends to work and how God builds up his kingdom. Today's parable actually tells us that God tends to act usually by a slow, gradual process. God, it seems, tends to operate under the radar, on the edges of things, quietly, clandestinely. But am I right in thinking that is not how we want God to act. We don't want God to act gradually, quietly. I suspect we would rather see the

mighty power of God at work in the world, and I suspect that it is easy for us to lose patience with God, to become frustrated with what seems like ineffectual leadership in the Church. It's really easy to be impatient with others as well. We want it all to happen now. But listen to our Lord's parables of the Kingdom. God is doing the building, not us.

Even in the natural world, he takes the tiny, insignificant mustard seed and he turns it into a plant that becomes a large home for all sorts of birds where they can find refuge and shelter. Our Lord dies, his battered body is planted in the grave, and his body, and with it our frail humanity, is raised to new and eternal life.

And He takes twelve insignificant, often fearful, often doubting men in an insignificant backwater outpost of the Roman empire and builds a Church that fills the whole world, and so many of us have found rest in its shade. A place of possibility, of hope, and it all begins from something so small you might easily dismiss it, or overlook it.

So, patience. We must never look at the world, or at the Church, or at our neighbour, or in the mirror, and lose hope. And no cup of water given in Jesus' Name, no word of encouragement spoken in God's name, no act of love no matter how small, is ever given in vain. These are seeds scattered in the Lord's garden, and he will give the increase. He who began this good work, this Kingdom of righteousness, will bring it to completion in the day of Jesus Christ.

And God, as he always has, will use the most unlikely-seeming, the most insignificant-appearing, means to do it: a splash of water, hands laid upon a head and smudge of oil, a bit of bread and a sip of wine; a kind word rather than a scowl; a whispered prayer. He will use even you and me.