

Kids' Chronicle

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BY JOE SANNICOLA

The mustard seed

Jesus traveled with his disciples from one town to another, preaching, healing the sick, and teaching about the Kingdom of God.

Large crowds would gather around him wherever Jesus stopped. At times this made it difficult for him to find a private place to pray, but he never turned away a needy person.

On one such day, Jesus had stopped in a fishing village on the shore of Lake Galilee. The crowd that formed was so large that Jesus sat in one of the boats out in the water so that everyone could see and hear him.

Jesus asked, "What do you want me to do for you today?"

"Tell us about the kingdom of God," someone asked.

Jesus stood up and began talking. "Consider the mustard seed, the smallest of seeds. Yet, if you plant it, in time it grows tall and strong. The greens are delicious, the new seeds yield oil and spice, and the branches are so sturdy, birds make their nests in them.

"A farmer plants seeds in a field that he had plowed. After that he goes about his daily business, he eats, he sleeps at night, but nothing he does will make the seeds grow. Only the soil, if it is fertile, can do this. First the seeds sprout, then a tiny shoot appears. Eventually it becomes a full grown plant that can bear fruit and yield seed for new plants. When the crop is ripe, the farmer knows that harvest time has come. This is what the kingdom of God is like."

After the people had returned to



Illustration by Kathy Welsh

their homes, one of Jesus' disciples asked, "Master, why do you speak in riddles to the people?"

Jesus replied, "It is true that when we are together privately, I explain everything fully to you, but in public I often use parables. This is so the prophecy of Isaiah will be fulfilled. He said, 'Those who look will not see, and those who listen will not hear.' This is because my lessons can only be understood by those to whom my father reveals their meaning.

"Let me explain what I mean by telling you a story. People are like seeds. Some fall on the dirt road and do not sprout, some land on rocky ground but cannot take root, and some grow among thorns and are choked out by them. But a few are sown in fertile soil and grow. Some of these will

bear much fruit, others only a little."

John asked, "My Lord, who are the people in your story? Do you mean us?"

"The seeds on the dirt road are the people who hear my message, but the devil tempts them easily and they do not understand what I have said. Those on rocky ground hear my words and are happy, but as soon as their faith is tempted, they go back to their sinful ways. They are weak and do not try very hard to obey me. The ones who grow among thorns hear the message, but quickly stop listening because they are too concerned with being wealthy or popular. They value the things of the world more than the things of the spirit."

After supper, Jesus said, "Let us go now to the other side of the lake. There are many more people who need to hear the good news." While they were sailing, a storm appeared. Jesus slept even as waves threatened to fill the boat. The disciples were so afraid, that they woke him up.

"What are you afraid of?" asked Jesus. Then he stood up and said, "Wind, be silent, waves, be still." Immediately the storm stopped and the weather became calm again. They sailed across the lake without any further trouble.

Read more about it: Mark 4

Q&A

1. Why did Jesus preach from a boat?
2. What was Jesus doing when the storm came up?

Bible Accent

The Mustard Plant

Mustard, which can be either black or white, is an annual plant with large, thick leaves which is used primarily as a seasoning, but its oil and greenery are also edible. The greens are rich in fiber and contain vitamins A, B, and C. The seeds, when ground into a paste, can be used to flavor foods and also serve as a laxative.

Although the legend that the mustard plant is "the smallest of seeds and the tallest of trees" is not quite true, the seeds can sprout into bushes ranging from six to fifteen feet high. It is this dramatic growth from seed to plant that Jesus used in his parable.

Jesus often used examples of seeds and plants for his lessons, because the people could relate to them and were more able to understand what he was trying to tell them.



Barnabas

Barnabas, a Jewish priest from a wealthy family, is believed to be one of the first converts to Christianity after the Holy Spirit appeared on the day of Pentecost.

A generous man, Barnabas encouraged the early Christians to share what they had with each other for the benefit of everyone.

Barnabas was also instrumental in helping the apostle Paul to be accepted by the Christian community. Paul had been a persecutor of Christians, but Barnabas convinced the believers that Paul's conversion was genuine.

Paul and Barnabas became close friends and traveled together extensively as missionaries. They later had a disagreement between themselves that caused them to travel with different partners. Paul with Silas, and Barnabas with Mark. Their service to the Lord remained true and they were effective in preaching Jesus' message throughout the world of their day.

Barnabas is honored on June 11.

PUZZLE

Unscramble the following words, then unscramble the circled letters to discover the lesson of the mustard tree. Answers on page 14.

1. To go without food
A F T S ○ _ _ _
2. _ _ _ _ of the Apostles
S C A T ○ _ _ _
3. First book of the Bible
S S E E I N G ○ _ _ _
4. Doubting apostle (John 20)
M O H T A S ○ _ _ _
5. Birthplace of Jesus (Matthew 2)
M B E E H T E H L ○ _ _ _
6. Eternal _ _ _ _ (John 3)
F L I E ○ _ _ _
7. Son of God (Matthew 16)
E S S U J ○ _ _ _
8. One of the Gospels
K U L E ○ _ _ _

Circled word: faithful

Kids' Club

You can win a \$50 savings bond by writing an essay (100 or fewer words) that answers this question:

Jesus told parables using objects of the everyday life of the people to get his message across. If Jesus were here today, what examples from our everyday life would he use, and what might the lesson be?

Send your essay - including your name, home address, telephone number, school and grade - to Catholic Courier, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. Deadline for entries is June 30, 1994. The winner will be notified by phone and receive the savings bond by mail. In addition, the winner's essay will be published in an upcoming issue of Kids' Chronicle.

Last month's winner was Rachael Lentini, a fourth-grade student at Rochester's St. Andrew's School. In response to the question "What are some ways we can obey (Jesus) and show his love?" She wrote:

I can do these things to show God's love to people. I can help people if they fall or I can call for help for them. I should not fight but I could be kind to people and care about them. I can treat people like as would want to be treated. I can like all people.

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