

A Mustard Seed

Luke 13:18-19

This passage appears in all three synoptic gospels (i.e., Matthew, Mark, and Luke); this is strong evidence that it is an authentic saying of Jesus, written down or remembered by his earliest followers.

Element number one: the mustard seed. Jesus, interestingly, used the mustard seed image when he spoke of faith: if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you can move mountains. Thus when he says the Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed, he is saying first something about the relationship of faith and the Kingdom. In a worldly sense, faith is a very small thing, minute, compared to money, wealth, power, influence, knowledge, expertise. Yet the Kingdom of God is based on none of those more powerful worldly commodities, but the smallest: faith. (Expand on the apparent punity of faith, yet the great things that have happened through faith, in the Bible, or in your own life.)

Element number two: the tree, its branches, and the birds. Though the mustard seed in one sense means faith, it also has a material side. A tree is a very concrete thing; Jesus was an earthy man; he ate and drank, he used images of fishing and farming, of everyday life. The Kingdom is to be a real thing, like a tree. Then, what does the image of the seed and tree tell us? A seed is an idea. It is something creative; it is a blueprint. The seed contains the plan for the whole tree: its size, structure, shape of its leaves. The seed tells the tree how to absorb nutrients and water, and which nutrients to absorb and which to reject, and how to assimilate them. It tells the tree when to shed its leaves, and when to sprout new ones. A good seed, planted in good soil, will burst forth life into the environment.

The NCCSA is a seed of the Kingdom. It is an idea, planted with faith, in one place first, which is spreading branches all across the nation. It is an abundant creation. Birds: the people of the nation, of the cities, of the neighborhoods, come to light in its branches. They find sustenance, shelter, counsel.

Element number three: the fruit. Jesus tells that you know a tree by its fruit. The fruit of the NCCSA is good. So we know that the seed, the idea, and the people with the faith in it, are good. That they are of God. A bad tree cannot bear good fruit (Matthew 7:15-20). Also, fruit is that which multiplies the tree. A good strong tree, planted in good soil, will multiply itself

abundantly. The tree is NCCSA. The soil is America, and her Christian churches in particular. Let this seed of faith, seed of an idea of social progress and Christian community nationwide, fruit of abundance, multiply until the Kingdom is built.