

## 23.3.25 pm

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Date: 23 March 2025

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

- [ 0 : 00 ]     Good evening, a warm welcome to the service this evening. Any who are visiting are especially welcome. It's good to see some visiting with us this evening. We're going to begin this time of worship.
- We'll sing to God's praise in Psalm 40. Psalm 40, the first two verses of the Psalm. I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear.
- At length to me he did incline my voice and cry to hear. He took me from a fearful pit and from the mighty clay. And on a rock he set my feet, establishing my way.
- These two verses of Psalm 40 will remain seated to sing in Gaelic. And on a rock he set my feet, and on a rock he set my feet, and on a rock he set my feet, and on a rock he set my feet, and on a rock he set my feet,
- And on a rock he set my feet, and on a rock he set my feet, and on a rock he set my feet, Thank you.
- [ 2 : 29 ]     Thank you.
- Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you.
- [ 6 : 01 ]     Oh Thank you.
- Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you.
- [ 10 : 31 ]    Thank you. Thank you.
- Thank you. Thank you.



though I may not see what the future brings I will watch and wait for the Savior King where my joy completes standing face still face in the presence of the nations of day and above him and before him all the time in his hands all extraordinary shall remain and ever start all the power and all the glory and I will trust in his faith for my God is the ancient of days for my God is the ancient of days of days and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever if you could turn with me please now to Matthew chapter 13

[ 17 : 35 ] Matthew chapter 13 and we'll read from verse 24 down to verse 43 Jesus put another parable before them saying the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field but while his men were sleeping his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away so when the plants came up and bore!

the grain then the weeds appeared also and the servants of the master of the house came and said to him master did you not sow good seed in your field how then does it have weeds he said to them an enemy has done this so the servants said to him then do you want us to go and gather them but he said no less than gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them let both grow together until the harvest and at harvest time I will tell the reapers gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned but gather the wheat into my barn he put another parable before them saying the kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field it is the smallest of all the seeds but when it is grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches he told them another parable the kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour till it was all leavened all these things

Jesus said to the crowds in parables indeed he said nothing to them without a parable this was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet I will open my mouth in parables I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world then he left the crowds and went into the house and his disciples came to him saying explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field he answered the one who sows the good seed is the son of man the field is the world and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom the weeds are the sons of the evil one and the enemy who sowed them is the devil the harvest is the end of the age and the reapers are angels just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire so lawbreakers and throw them into the fiery furnace in that place they will be weeping and gnashing of teeth then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father he who has ears let him hear amen and may

God bless that reading of his word to us we'll sing again now to God's praise from Psalm 130 Psalm 130 Lord from the depths to thee I cried my voice Lord do I hear and to my supplication's voice give an attentive ear we'll sing the whole of this Psalm to God's praise Lord from the depths to thee I guide my voice Lord who stand if I!

Lord who shall stand Lord shall stand!

[ 21 : 28 ] if I stand not enter! Lord who shall stand if thou!

O Lord should spark in in gritty! But yet with thee are illnesses!

Thou fear thou mayest be!! I wait for God my soul doth wait my hope is in his word more than they land for morning watch my soul whips for the Lord I say more than they die to watch the morning night to see let

Israel open the Lord for with him mercy be ungrant he us redemption redemption is ever found within and from all his iniquities he is that shall redeem just as we turn back to

Matthew 13 let's pray again heavenly father we thank you for your word and we thank you that we're able to come together in this way this evening we thank you that you've given us the desire and the opportunity to be in your house and to be under the word of God and we pray that you would help us as we preach as we read as we listen as we as we respond we ask that we would know the help of the Holy Spirit and we pray that you would be working in each one of our lives we thank you that you know us and you are able to meet us at the point of our need and for any who may be outside of Christ even tonight we thank you that as the Holy Spirit brings us under conviction of sin we thank you that we are called to come to Jesus and we are promised plenteous redemption as we come to him we thank you that there is forgiveness that there is salvation for all who will ask and for those who are your people those who are walking with you

[ 25 : 21 ] Lord we thank you that as we come under your word you've promised to sanctify us to make us less like the old man within us and more like Jesus and so Lord we pray that you would continue that work in our lives that you would mold us and shape us and to make us more like Christ so bless your word to us we pray as we wait upon you and we pray not only for ourselves we pray for other congregations that meet as we do this evening we ask Lord that you would be working in them as we pray that you would be working in us we think of the denominations around us the Church of Scotland the Free Presbyterian the continuing over in Scalpy and we ask Lord that as the word goes forth that you would be working in each place that the kingdom of God would grow and as we often hear prayed here that the kingdom of Satan would be destroyed and we ask Lord that you would be with those who have gone out from this congregation to preach in different places we think of Stuart in Graver this evening we think of Gordon over in

Shobost and we pray that they would know the help of God as they open the word of God and that you would speak through them we pray for the youth fellowship afterwards and we thank you for the opportunity to come around your word we thank you for Mary able to share her testimony and we pray that you would bring many young folks to the meeting tonight and that you would speak there that these young hearts would be changed and that they would be brought to trust in Jesus and we remember also tonight those who have no opportunity to meet as we do we think of those who have great desire to want to come together as your people but are forbidden those who live in countries where to speak the name of Jesus will result in prosecution even execution and we remember those who are persecuted for Jesus sake we remember those who are under attack we remember families who are grieving loved ones who have been lost from the scene of time because they have held the name of Jesus high we thank you that we have the promise that there is heaven there is bliss eternally for all who are in Christ but we think of families that are broken in parts of the world where the name of Jesus is attacked constantly so help us to remember them and help us to appreciate the freedom that we have and to use the time that you've given us and the opportunity that you've given us not just for this hour but every hour and every conversation that we are led in to help us to be a good seed and to tell people about Jesus hear our prayers help us as we study your word now we pray this in

Jesus name Amen if you could turn please then to Matthew chapter 13 I'd like to think tonight about how God's kingdom grows it's a passage that is teaching us about how God's kingdom grows and the thing about the kingdom of God is it's not always in fact it's not often easy to see and to measure how and when the kingdom of God is growing I can think of I can think of one house that I visited over the last ten years and on the wall I won't tell you who this is but on the wall in this house in fact on a door frame there are little marks and there are dates and these marks and these dates indicate growth they indicate growth in terms of height there's a little boy who became over the years a bigger boy who became a young man and who now is almost as tall as the door frame and that kind of growth year on year as a young person gets taller that's quite easy to measure that kind of growth is easy to measure we can think about economic growth which I'm no expert whatsoever in but that's a fairly easy thing to measure I'm told we can think about population growth we can track that and measure that we could think even about congregational growth and that in one sense is fairly easy to measure we can count the heads present we can count how many chairs had to go out in the morning and the evening we can count the number of communicant members on a sheet and it indicates to some degree growth but when it comes to kingdom growth it's not always easy to see how the kingdom of

God is advancing it's not always easy to see how the reign of King Jesus is increasing and that can be hard if we are Christians if the Lord Jesus is our King and we can't see how his kingdom is advancing and growing that can be discouraging and for the disciples that Jesus is called to be with them for the disciples that Jesus is called to be with them specifically in the work of the kingdom they needed to learn at this point some lessons in how the kingdom of God grows and for us today if we are with

Jesus if we are engaged in the work of the kingdom if you and I are taking seriously our commission to tell people about Jesus we too need to be we need to be informed we need to learn these lessons about the nature of growth in the kingdom of heaven so Jesus in these three parables that we read he teaches his disciples back then he teaches us here and now some lessons about growth in his kingdom four points in the time that we have the first point I'll just give you the titles first of all the first point as we think about the parable of the weeds is we have to acknowledge that weeds can't be avoided in the growth of God's kingdom weeds cannot be avoided the second thing to note is that in the growth of God's kingdom weakness is good the third thing we'll see is that in the growth of

[ 32 : 58 ] God's kingdom waiting is necessary and the final thing to note and be encouraged by is that in the growth of God's kingdom widespread growth is guaranteed so that gives us the structure for our thoughts so first of all we see here in the passage that weeds can't be avoided and we looked a couple of weeks ago at the parable of the wheat and the tares as they're sometimes called and if you scan down the verses in chapter 13 we can see again that the parable the earthly story is found in verse 24 to 30 and remember a parable is an earthly story without heavenly or a spiritual meaning so the earthly story is found in verse 24 to 30 the heavenly or the spiritual meaning is found in verse 36 to 43 so just to recap to remind ourselves what do we see in that parable well very simply we see the sower that's

Jesus the son of man and he uses his people he uses the sons of the kingdom is the phrase he uses to be good seed and to be spread widely the good seed they take the gospel message they take the news about Jesus into the field of his world so the seed is sown that's the first thing we see in the parable but the sower's men when their backs are turned and when they go to sleep we see that the enemy the devil he comes in with menace and the devil uses his people the sons of the evil one to be bad seed and to oppose the gospel and to go out into the world and to be an anti-gospel and anti-Jesus influence and then they wait and soon enough after the seed has gone out plants begin to grow from the good seed but to the dismay of the sower and the sower's men weeds also start to sprout up and they threaten to ruin the crop so that's the picture that's the earthly story that Jesus tells and as we think about the spiritual meaning and as we try to apply this to the whole area of kingdom growth one of the things that we see one of the things that

Jesus is teaching is that there will always be spiritual opposition to kingdom growth Jesus is saying through this parable wherever the good seed of the gospel is scattered whether it's a case of preaching at a lectern whether it's a case of witnessing to your friends and telling your friends about Jesus in school whether it's a case of conversations that you're having with the people that you love your family your friends wherever the gospel seed is scattered the devil will always be there looking for the chance to spoil and corrupt that gospel work and so if we are Christians that's something that we need to be realistic about but it's not something that should discourage us and it's not something that should distract us from the work of continuing to tell people about Jesus one of the things I noticed when I was going through this parable last time but I didn't see it two weeks ago is if we look at the sower's men they start to see the weeds sprouting up and what do they say well immediately they say shall we go out into the field and pull up all these nasty weeds we can be expert separators we can go out and we can do all the separation we can pull it all up and we can separate we can do that and the sower says no you can't you leave the separation you leave that separation work to me and it struck me as I was reading it it's so like us isn't it we are so quick to want to judge we are so quick to want to form our own opinions about who is in the kingdom and who is not we're so ready to be judges but the thing is we're not very good at judging because we don't have very good vision when it comes to judging and that's why we're told not to judge but to leave it to God our job says the sower is to keep on sowing even when there's opposition and I'm conscious even in the last couple of weeks various of you have spoken to me about the difficulties about the work of the enemy when there is blessing the encouragement of that and yet the almost immediate attack that's difficult but we have to expect it we have to be realistic about it weeds can't be avoided attack spiritual attack cannot be escaped but it shouldn't cause us to be distracted from the work that

God has called us to do and your job and my job whatever it is we are is to keep on sowing to keep on spreading the gospel in the part of the field that God has placed us believing as we do so that the good seed will grow we are not separators we are not judges we are co-soars we are told we are commissioned to keep on telling people about Jesus weeds cannot be avoided we have to expect that spiritual resistance the spiritual attack the second point is weakness is good when it comes to the kingdom perspective and the work of growth in the kingdom weakness is good and that's completely counter to our experience in this world in our world when a new government comes into power there's big noise and big publicity big coverage or when a new product like the latest iPhone is launched or even when a new film is premiered there's noise there's drama the advertisers they big it up but when the kingdom of heaven is at hand when Jesus who is the king of kings comes to minister in this world there's no noise like that in verse 31 Jesus tells them this parable of the mustard seed and it says in verse 31 Jesus put another parable before them saying the kingdom of heaven is like and if we just hit pause for a moment there mid-sentence and trying to think ourselves back into the congregation on that first day as Jesus was preaching I wonder what the congregation on that first day expected to hear the kingdom of heaven is like what did they expect to hear and Jesus is using seed and plant illustrations so maybe they expected to say maybe they expected Jesus to say the kingdom of heaven is like the mighty cedar trees of Lebanon and if they'd heard that I think they would have given a mighty amen to that statement but that's not what Jesus says Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field it's the smallest of all the seeds and Jesus is saying as he picks out that illustration he's saying the kingdom of heaven looks small it looks minute it looks weak it looks insignificant in the eyes of this world and when we think about Jesus and his kingdom how true that was think for a moment just about the life and the ministry of Jesus think about Jesus arrival into this world the girls are looking forward to a wee baby coming

into this world as we're just past Fiona's Jude think about when Jesus came into this world that there was no private suite in a specialist maternity unit he was born in a stable and he was laid in a manger and he was surrounded by animals not paparazzi and his birth was not announced to kings and presidents Jesus birth was announced to lowly shepherds there's no noise there's no drama there's nothing big about this it's mustard seed scale and think about Jesus physical appearance we don't have a description of what he looked like but we can assume that Jesus wasn't scouted by modeling agencies he didn't have film star looks we're told in Isaiah 53 he had no form or majesty that we should look at him and no beauty that we should desire him in terms of physical looks and attraction we have this the sense that there's a weakness there nothing striking about him and when we think about Jesus approach to ministry he doesn't look like a pastor of a megachurch he doesn't have a staff of theology professors and PhDs his disciples are an odd bunch of ordinary men if Peter and and and James and John who were fishermen Matthews a tax collector they have no big budget they have no social media following the approach to ministry just seems so weak and poor everything about King Jesus everything about the kingdom work looked small and weak and unimpressive like a mustard seed and still today in the eyes of the world that's what the Christian church looks like and that's what Christians look like in Scotland today in particular Christians look weak Christianity the cause looks unimpressive the church looks weak very ordinary at best but when it comes to kingdom work weakness is good the apostle the apostle Paul learned that lesson from Jesus in 2 Corinthians 12 verses 9 and 10 Paul said but he Jesus said to me my grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest upon me for the sake of Christ then I am content with weaknesses insults hardships persecutions and calamities for when I am weak then I am strong and the mustard seed it

[ 47 : 22 ] just looks so small and weak but Jesus reminds us that that mustard seed that smallest of all the seeds it grows verse 32 Jesus says but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches like in Duncan the commentator says so from the tiniest seed comes the largest of all garden bushes this story is made to point out that the kingdom's outward manifestation is like that mustard seed it may appear to be insignificant but it grows and it grows in amazing ways so let's let's take the encouragement from this you and

I if we are Christians we are small we're often sidelined we feel insignificant we feel weak we are perceived to be weak but in the kingdom work weakness is good so we can take encouragement from that be content to be the mustard seed because that mustard seed the kingdom work as God works in us and through us it grows weakness is good weeds are unavoidable there will always be resistance third point is waiting is necessary verse 33 Jesus told them another parable the kingdom of heaven is like manna is like leaven sorry that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour till it was all leavened so that's the next picture that's the next parable and again this is a really straightforward picture the picture of leaven that is taken and it's put into this large batch of flour and it's all it's all leavened as a consequence it's changed it grows as a consequence

Mary sometimes make naan breads in our house she'll take the dough and she'll put it in her bowl and when I see the dough going into the bowl and I see this sort of tennis ball sized lump of dough that's going in the bowl and I think about how hungry I feel it looks not big enough to feed me never mind anyone else in the family but then that dough gets put in the bowl the tea towel goes over the top it's put beside the radiator and then you wait 10 minutes pass 15 20 minutes pass an hour pass it's two hours pass and after that time it's doubled something's trebled in size but the thing is if you sit looking at that dough in the bowl for that hour for that two hours it doesn't look like it's growing it just looks like it's absolutely still but it is growing and if you sit looking at that bowl with the dough and you listen there's no noise there's no drama it's just silence it looks like nothing's happening but something is happening and that's the picture that Jesus uses to teach us about the nature of growth in the kingdom of God sometimes we can't see or hear the kingdom of God growing but it's growing says

Jesus and we can apply this first of all just to the nature of growth in a church fellowship some of you have been in Harris for decades and when I speak to some of the people who have been in Harris over many decades I'll be told stories about times when 20 people were coming forward at communion seasons to profess faith in the Lord Jesus amazing stories of rapid significant growth now we're not living in these times it's an amazing memory to be able to go back to we're not living in these times just now when we see two come forward there is huge encouragement there's huge thankfulness in seeing the ones and twos coming forward to profess faith in

Christ but there are some communion seasons when no one comes forward and there are some weeks when I stand and preach and you share a message in the shop and you speak to your family and you speak to your friends about Jesus and it feels like nothing is happening and during these times we can't see growth and we don't hear anything that would indicate growth it feels like nothing is happening but like the dough with the leaven added Jesus teaches us that there are things happening that we cannot see we cannot hear

[ 53 : 58 ] God is often working in lives the lives that we least expect God is often working in lives even though we can't see it even though we can't hear it so what are we to do when we are seeking to sow the message of the gospel and we see nothing and we hear nothing well we're to wait and we're to pray and we're to believe and we're to persevere one commentator says Jesus' disciples understandably longed for a great outpouring of the spirit that would bring hundreds and hundreds to Christ and thousands and thousands to him and Christ's message to them is to be patient to keep on believing keep on praying keep on working



God's kingdom will grow but don't judge a book by its cover sometimes waiting is necessary and even if we take that picture and we can apply that picture to our own lives our own growth at the personal level see the thing about leaven and dough is that it goes through the whole batch you don't add the leaven to the dough and just see it working in one small section it goes through the whole batch and that's how God works in you and I his work isn't just Sunday work his work isn't just Sunday work it's every day like the leaven God wants access to every part of our lives all our relationships none are to be compartmentalized and hidden from him our work lives are not to be separate from our lives with him he wants our bank accounts access to them he wants to have the preeminence in terms of the appointments in our diaries he works through our whole lives and as he works through our whole lives we grow as

Christians we grow more and more into the image of Jesus and that isn't an instant change that we can just see like that it's a life long process waiting is necessary but as we wait upon the Lord he will work he will work in us he will work through us we will grow that's his promise Philippians chapter 1 verse 6 Paul says and I am sure of this that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus waiting is necessary finally just very briefly for our encouragement we need to end with this widespread growth is guaranteed and that's the huge encouragement so if you're drifting to this now if I'm conscious my time is gone but if we're drifting to this now give me five more minutes and just listen to this because this is the encouragement that you and I need widespread growth it's not just probable it's guaranteed kingdom growth is guaranteed that's what we see in all these pictures the good seed even though there is resistance from the menaces that come with the bad seed the good seed will grow into wheat there will be a harvest widespread growth is guaranteed the mustard seed we are told it will grow into this large plant it's guaranteed all the dough will be leavened it's guaranteed in each example that Jesus uses widespread growth is guaranteed now you and I we can pour our lives we can invest our lives in many things that never grow we can pour our lives we can invest our time and our talents and our money in things that grow for a season and then they crash

I picked up my pension statement just have a wee look to see if I could find any illustrations in it and immediately when I opened it up and I never opened it up two sentences just jumped off the page at me sentence number one was the value of investments can go down as well as up be encouraged the second sentence that jumped off the page was these figures were calculated at 31st December 2024 using general assumptions!

See if we are investing in the kingdom of this world even something as perceived to be secure as pensions nothing is guaranteed and that's why Jesus tells us to seek first the kingdom of God Christians that's what we are called to do not seek last but as a priority seek first the kingdom of God because that kingdom is growing and that kingdom will continue to grow like the mustard seed that kingdom when we think about when Jesus spoke on that first day that kingdom that Jesus is speaking of it's grown from a handful of misfit disciples to what I'm told is an estimated 2.4 billion

[ 61 : 37 ] Christians in the world today think about that growth and like the yeast the gospel is working today all the way through the world it's come from Palestine to Placropo and it's still advancing the commentator Ross says no part of the world's peoples will be left untouched by its redeeming work as leaven is hidden in the flour and then permeates all the bread so will the kingdom permeate the whole world not might but will and I want to finish just with a glimpse that

John the apostle is given into the kingdom of God in Revelation 7 so you don't need to go there let me just read to you as he's given this vision of this growing kingdom this is what he sees he says in Revelation 7 after this I looked and behold a great multitude that no one could number from every nation from all the tribes and peoples and languages standing before the throne and before the Lamb clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands and crying out with a loud voice salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb and all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped

God saying Amen blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God forever and ever Amen widespread growth of this kingdom is guaranteed because Jesus is king and he has won the victory and he will share that victory with all those who trust him who bow the knee to him and ask him to be their lord and their king so have you done that yet boys and girls young and old there is an amazing kingdom that is guaranteed there is an amazing eternal kingdom that we are headed to if

Jesus is our lord and our king let's make sure that we ask him to be we pray heavenly father we thank you for your word we pray that you would take the word and that you would apply it to our lives that you would remove anything that has been a distraction or a distortion and that you would press the truth the challenge the encouragement into our souls that we may bow before you lord Jesus as our king and that we may be able to look forward to the day when that kingdom comes and the final eternal sense and all those who are your children are brought into that place of perfect peace and blessing we ask that we would have a place in that heavenly home that we would be washed in the blood of the lamb that we would be those who are children of the king we ask it in Jesus name amen we'll sing to conclude mission praise 673 there is a redeemer Jesus God's own son!

Jesus God's son precious man of God Messiah oh holy God thank you oh my father for giving us your son and leaving your spirit the work on earth is done Jesus my redeemer name above all names precious lamb of God Messiah oh for sinners save thank you oh my father!

[ 67 : 49 ] oh! us your son and leaving your spirit till the work on earth is done when I stand in glory I will see his grace!

let us serve my king forever in that holy place thank you oh my father for giving us your son and leaving your spirit till the work on earth is done now may the grace of our lord Jesus Christ the love of God the father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all now and forever more amen