

**St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA**

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: Mark 4:26-32

***“Unlimited Potential”***

Today we celebrate the fact that without these individuals – whether they have been active in our lives or not – that they are partly responsible for our very lives, our very existence. You know, when my son and daughter were much younger, on Father's Day – they gave me a plaque which to this day is on the wall above my night table, with a picture of the three of us, along their hand prints and these words – “anyone can be a father – but it takes someone special to be a Daddy!” Twenty-nine years ago, I was transformed from just a guy into a father – and my two great kids transformed me into a Daddy -and then into a grandpa. Thank you, Jesus, for making us a family! Congratulations to all Daddy's today on this Father's Day! There is a distinct difference between a father and a daddy.

I have a special gift for each of you here today. I ask our ushers to please distribute this special gift. Life begins with a seed and I want to give each of you the seed that Jesus talks about in today's Holy Gospel. Be careful – it is very fragile and very small. Everyone can take one. These are mustard seeds, and everyone can get one. Don't lose it – be careful - we don't want these things sprouting up just anywhere! The ushers will come back after the sermon and you can give them your seeds if you don't want them.

As I was talking with Grant and Reshoketjoe Lilford before the service, they said that they use mustard seeds all of the time. As a matter of fact, it adds a spice that is hot to their foods. We will talk more about that as well.

We live in a world of ‘the bigger the better,’ whether it is cars, or dinners, or steak – as this is Father's Day – you are going to go for the 18oz, right? People are led to believe that a small church is insignificant and what kind of a role could they play in bringing forth God's Kingdom? Just ask the people who are meeting at GAFCON, a group of leaders of churches of every size from all over the world. Many of them began as store-fronts, like the mustard seed, some in living rooms. It is amazing. The religious movement that Jesus initiated seemed insignificant to those on the outside. There was nothing magnificent or grand about the kingdom that Jesus and his small band of 12 disciples and what it represented. Christianity could be described as having had a small, obscure beginning. Even Jesus' teachings raised some eyebrows. I mean --

- Love your enemies?
- Turn the other cheek? How many times? Seven times? Seventy times Seven times.
- Walk an extra mile?
- Receive by giving?

Jesus' teachings were as revolutionary today as they were then - in our increasingly secular society. Jesus is saying here that we should be comparing the smallness of the seed that you are holding - to the greatness of the results that it produced. Shocking results came from small beginnings. Shocking results came from such a small seed which you might expect to yield

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nothing. But Jesus said the mustard seed produced a plant, actually a tree that became greater than all herbs in all the gardens. So why a mustard seed? That is the seed that you are holding. It is so tiny – but like you – it has unlimited potential.

The society that we live in not only a ‘bigger is better’ but it is an ‘instant one’. We turn on the TV and we don’t have to wait for it to warm up! Remember that? Radios were like that too. We have canned, bottled, freeze dried and packaged food. In Jesus’ day almost everyone had their own garden. A very important part of the garden was the mustard plant. The mustard plant was well known for its:

- Corrective power in disease
- potency against venoms
- It was quite hot – a spice that poor people used as a condiment to really give the food some zing
- Yes, for such a small beginning, there comes a greater potential than what is expected.

One man and His disciples have become “greater than all herbs.” Jesus plus 12 plus 70 plus 500 plus 3,000 on the Day of Pentecost – that number is pretty impressive. From simple beginnings we see the gospel spread all over the world – even in the face of persecution. Don’t think for a moment that there is not persecution against Christians in the world today. In some countries it is illegal to have a Bible. In some countries it is illegal to say the Name Jesus. Thank God we live in a country that is free – where we can say what we think – even if it is not popular. God used the original 12 men to start global evangelism. And you know what - He can use us too if we are willing to become the seed – with unlimited potential. I just used a word that many, many people become very uncomfortable with – it is the E word – evangelism. Because when we use that word we get the image of someone standing on the street corner with a ‘rollie Bible’ saying “the end is near” “God is coming to get you!” It scares the daylight out of you. Jesus doesn’t want to scare anybody.

YOU know the image of someone standing on a street corner and handing out tracts, and asking the age-old question: “If you were to die tonight – do you know where you would end up?” I believe that not every Christian is a gifted evangelist. Why try to make someone who is not a gifted evangelist to go out against their comfort level – to go out and pound the pavement – and tell people about something they are not sure of. It all starts with living a life that is “questionable” – meaning: are you living a life that would have others ask you questions about the faith that you are demonstrating in your life? What do you have that makes you so happy? What do you have that makes you so sure that when you die you are going to go to heaven? One Name – the Name above all names. How are you demonstrating that faith in your life? You don’t have to stand on the street corner or try to pump the “E” word into people’s lives – doing something that is probably uncomfortable. If I were to tell you that ST. Andrew’s was going out tomorrow to stand on street corners handing out Bible tracts, and we are going to try and get people – that is not how you fill heaven. It is not about filling the church – it is about filling heaven. You fill by living a life that people look at and say, “I want what they have.” Jesus said,

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*“let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”* The key word here is “*shine*.” Let His light shine in you so that others are going to see and say ‘wow’.

How often we think of ourselves as being too small or too insignificant to make a difference. On the outside we may give off a good appearance that others say ‘wow, he or she really has it together’ but on the inside, in your own space, how comfortable are you? How comfortable are you with you? There are probably some people here today who might not be 100% comfortable with who they are. God can take care of that – all you have to do is ask Him. It may seem at first that we have no effect, but if we continue to live a life; a godly life, to continue to sow the smallest of seeds and repeat the process faithfully in our lives, soon we see the effects of our small beginnings being repeated as the results become larger.

As I talked about earlier with fathers, life comes from life. The vitality and growth of the Body of Christ comes from sharing our faith and relationship with others and submitting to His Lordship and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. When you talk to Jesus – you are talking to all three; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. You see, one of the first things to stir in us when we come to Christ should be the desire to see others come to Christ. Each member is its own mustard seed – a symbol of which you are holding in your hand. All every believer has to do is to sow and then pray for the harvest. Let me make something clear about this E word – there is not one person in this world who can save anyone! You can introduce them to Christ, but you cannot save them. That is the Holy Spirit’s job. I hate it when I hear people say, “I saved four people today.” What did you do – get them to pray a prayer – and then put a notch on your gun belt? That doesn’t save people. Being a questionable Christian helps to save people. It touches people’s hearts – and they want what you’ve got. You are doing that through the work and the power of the Holy Spirit. You can’t heal yourself, but God can heal you of anything you have; any addiction that you have. Life comes from life. There is one true mission of the church – the Great Commission –Matthew 28:19-20 These are some of the last recorded word of Jesus, before He returned from the Galilee to the Mount of Olives, where He ascended to the Father and gave us Acts 1:8. He said, *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”* We are not in it alone – He is telling us to live a good life, let people ask, be questionable. If you want to know more about being a questionable Christian come to Vacation Bible School, Monday through Friday, July 9<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> called SHINE – for all ages. It starts with dinner at 6PM – and then from 6:30 to 8PM we will have lessons, games for the kids, songs, and how to “Surprise the World” and SHINE for Christ. There is no test and no quiz, but if you do what Christ tells you – there doesn’t have to be a quiz. Just be a questionable Christian.

The Church that began as Jesus and 12 disciples, from very small beginnings, has room in it for everyone – who want to:

- know Jesus,

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- have a relationship with Him,
- and most of all willing to be transformed by Him.

How many times have you heard me say “God loves you just the way you are – but He loves you too much to leave you that way?” The size of a mustard seed can grow into a large tree. God can take the faith of a tiny seed of faith and watch the church grow. We need to be honoring the small beginnings of the faith the size of a mustard seed that grows to a large tree – the church. The small beginning of a personal relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and to have the faith to let Him grow that relationship – for His grace is sufficient and His potential is unlimited. The Church of Jesus Christ is not a building but is made up of believers – who have sprouted – nourished by the Holy Spirit – and letting Christ’s light shine in them – while demonstrating Christ in their life – as ‘questionable Christians’ with unlimited potential.