

"Imitating God's Kingdom on Earth"

8th Sunday after Pentecost

July 26, 2020

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Romans 8:26-39

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Poem: "*A Mustard Seed*" from prayerforanxiety.com

It's impossible your head tells you.

There's just too much to do.

Everything's a mess.

Hope is lost.

But still...

Don't you have at least a little bit of faith?

A tiny seed.

Inside there's a plan

A hope, a dream of great possibilities.

Within a small seed of faith

Resides all the power of God.

Plant that seed. Water it carefully, lovingly,

Then let the Lord take control.

In even just a shred of faith in God

You'll find promises –

Of Christ's victory in your life,

Of faith moving mountains,

Of the resurrection,

And a heavenly destination.

Life eternal begins today.

Start living it now.

Then join with others living in the Spirit,

Each one giving all through a grain of faith

Countless mountains, moving across nations

Building up the glorious Kingdom of God.

We all grew up having our likes and dislikes in life. Some of us like snow or rain weather that makes us want to cuddle under a blanket reading a good book. Others prefer the sunny weather of Maui with that nice trade wind to keep the humidity level tolerable. We even have our likes and dislikes in foods – like who wants to eat fish or seafood – for sure NOT this Pastor! Some of us like to cook, I prefer doing dishes really, or bake while others enjoy the outdoor gardening or working else where with our own hands. The point here is that each one of us have our likes and dislikes and bring our own skills and talents and mustard seed ideas. This is what makes a Church function and how it accomplishes its call and mission. We all contribute in many ways that makes us – Iao United Church of Christ. Each talent brought to bear, each idea as small as a mustard seed is how we make our mission and ministry come alive. But how do we get to know our own talents and each other's talents? What happens in our church that invokes us to use each of our talents? There is no shortage of opinions, of skills sets, of which direction we think the church should go – the key is to make sure we create a safe space where ALL voices are heard and valued.

I was thinking this week about where we have been and where we want to go – and that can be exhausting – and yet exciting! If we recall from last week – whenever Jesus begins a parable with – “the kingdom of heaven is like...” – can be code for “the very essence of God is like...” “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree.” An idea that comes to each of us begins with a thought – let us call this the mustard seed idea. Maybe a “what if” idea. Maybe we share it with someone else or others for feed back and they input their thoughts and ideas and eventually, that mustard seed idea becomes a shrub and

eventually into a tree. When I first arrived here in 2017 – yes Iao Church, it has been 3 years and 4 months since you have called me to be your Pastor and what a journey it has been – Praise be to God! When I first got here in 2017, one of the stories that stands out – and a story that sparks this sense of “joy” and “excitement” in many of your eyes was Iaos famous Frosty P.O.G and Frosty Lemonade. How a few of you were sitting out in the lanai and like a small mustard seed of an idea – with a lot of trials and errors – mistakes – to a point where Iao Church became famous for the delicious Frost P.O.G. and Frosty Lemonade at the County Fair. This mustard seed idea eventually grew into a shrub and then a tree that has become the signature drink of Iao Church. With no fair happening this year – people in the community are bummed that they will not have their Frosty P.O.G. or Frosty Lemonade fill. How did this mustard seed of an idea happen church? Did it just happen on its own – NO Church! Some of you gathered and had an idea but what is so remarkable about this story – this history of our church is that at some point in the process, leap of faith had to take hold. The “we can do” attitude had to take hold. With God we can move mountains. In all things, trust in God – and trust in each other’s skills and ideas. Amen & Praise God! Iao Church, we can and have moved mountains when mustard seed ideas were presented – invoking our mustard seed faith to make things happen. We do not always get our own way in the decisions – but we should always be ready as you always have been, when we are ready to jump into the mountain moving process for the sake of the church.

“The kindom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.” What is our mixture like Iao Church that makes us rise? A mixture of hope, of faith – with three measures of love? A mixture of this skill set, of that skill set until ALL skills are brought forth to produce

leavened results. I am doing some cooking here today Iao Church – and no fish required - <grin>

“The kindom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” Iao Church, virtual community, you ARE God's hidden treasure! There are times when we try and hid our talents and skills from God and each other. We are God's hidden treasure that God seeks to use for the sake of the church. Your gifts and skills are what is needed to produce leavened results. God brought forth Christ who intern paid the ultimate price for his church. So that each one of us can be saved. God looks to each one of us as hidden treasures of the church to bring forth our mustard seed ideas and watch those ideas grow into shrubs and trees. The question is this then – what hidden skills and talents do we have that our beloved Iao Church needs? Even in this time of pandemic, what skills can we bring forth for the sake of the church and community. I'm thinking many of you have made masks, have brought of your excess to our new Food Distribution ministry. Bring forth your hidden skills, your mustard seed ideas – God knows them – God needs them to be used, especially at a time such as this.

“The kindom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.” Christ paid the ultimate price for us beloved community – each one of us is of great value that pearl that was bought with his life. Your voice and ideas are of great value – your volunteerism in the church and in our community Iao Church is of great value as that of fine pearls. Do not sell ourselves short, do not sell each other short – God's very essence values each of us and finds us worthy.

Ok – so here come the fish. “The kindom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full they drew it

ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad.” As this church learned how to run a fair booth – it experienced the good and the bad. But here is the key – you all endured these good and bad struggles together. How do we pass that experience to our youth? By including them in all we do as we have been, by including them in each of our community meetings. How do we cast our nets out to learn new experiences? 16+ years ago, this church took a chance on a mustard seed idea and took that leap of faith on a drink that evolved over time. There was maybe weeping and gnashing of teeth along the process, times of frustration – and this is why, and I have said this as well – if a church is to survive – it must be – it has to be and “ALL” in approach. When only a few get the job done – when only the few are measuring and mixing the flour for the leavened bread – it is a recipe for burn-out and disaster for the church.

Let us close with this – “the kindom of heaven” is made and given to each one of us to imitate here on our earthly journey. To grow in faith, to see the worth in ourselves and in each other, to value the voices of ALL of God’s people, to lift up our hidden treasures of skills and talents for the sake of our beloved Iao Church and community. How do we inspire each other to use these skills and talents? Where does our church place in our lives? How important is Iao Church in our lives and in the lives of those whom God calls us to serve? Is our church that hidden pearl amongst our community? I truly believe our House Churches are of great value if we see the greatness in ourselves and see how God is always present, especially in times of our frustration and doubt. Let us bring forth our treasure of God’s kindom in what we do in our community through our House churches – Be Iao United Church of Christ – the Church that grows mustard seed ideas into great shrubs and trees.

Amen, Amene, Ashe, A-ho, and Alleluia.