

FIRST things FIRST Daily Devotionals

Devotional Guide for July 22-28, 2024

These devotions are prepared for you each week by Pastor Kevin to use for your own personal devotions with the Lord, and are designed to prepare you for the message next weekend.

Monday, July 22ND “Your Majesty, you are that tree”

Scripture: Daniel 4:19-27 NIV

During the period in history when the children of God were exiled to Babylon, one of them—a man named Daniel—rose to great power, even though he was a Jew among the pagan Babylonians. Daniel had the ability to interpret dreams. At one time, Nebuchadnezzar—king of Babylon—had an unusual dream and sent for Daniel to tell him the meaning of the dream. Daniel showed compassion toward the king, even though the king was responsible for Daniel’s exile from Judah. The tree in the dream represented the king’s empire which had exceeded all previous world empires. Yet this tree—that had grown from one man’s pride into a world empire—would transform and bring about the downfall of this pagan king. In this week’s parable, the mustard seed produces a great tree... yet often, a tree can be a symbol of the haven of evil and pride.

Question: How would you feel as Daniel having to interpret this dream?

Tuesday, July 23RD “Contend for the faith of God’s holy people”

Scripture: Jude 1-4 NIV

The author of this one chapter letter is Jude, brother of James—the leader of the church in Jerusalem and also the brother of Jesus, which makes Jude another brother of Jesus. Jude addresses false teaching in the church that condones immorality, even within the church. Jude indicated that this false and sinful attitude had permeated the church, and it must be called out. This, in a way, is symbolized by birds that occupy a tree for their home... birds that devour the life around it.

Question: How have you seen the church corrupted over the years?

Wednesday, July 24TH “It is like a mustard seed”

Scripture: Luke 13:18-19 NIV

In this gospel passage, Luke shares his version of the parable of the mustard seed. Despite the opposition to Jesus (back in verses 10-17), God’s Kingdom will continue to grow, until it is fulfilled in glory. We all know the symbolism of the smallest of all seeds (the mustard seed) that grows into the largest of all garden plants.

Question: Ever see the size of a mustard seed? (an image is on the back)

Thursday, July 25TH “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed”

Scripture: Luke 17:5-6 NIV

In this passage, Jesus warns the disciples against causing anyone to stumble (vs.1-4) and illustrates the power of faith with the parable of the mustard seed (vs.5-6). The disciples, whom Jesus previously had addressed as “you of little faith” (Luke 12:28), ask about this, so that they can follow what Jesus was teaching. The mustard seed describes the Kingdom of God, but here, it describes personal faith. In Matthew 17:20, the “faith as small as a mustard seed” applies to the power of prayer, but here, the disciples need faith to forgive others (vs. 3-4). They... and we... do not need more faith to comply with the Lord’s instructions, but we need genuine faith. It’s not the amount that matters—even a mustard seed of faith will do. However, it must be based completely on the Lord’s ability, not our own. The almighty power of God can work in an amazing way through a willing vessel (see II Corinthians 4:7).

Question: Have you ever asked God to increase or deepen your faith?

Friday, July 26TH “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed”

Scripture: Matthew 13:31-32 NIV

While scientists today know of seeds smaller than the mustard seed, it was “the smallest of all seeds” (v. 32) that anyone had cultivated in first-century fields or gardens in Israel. Normally, the plant grows into a medium-size bush, but eight-foot high small “trees” have been discovered, even if rarely. The Kingdom of Heaven also will begin as insignificant in size and impact, but become surprisingly large and powerful. The “birds [that] . . . perch in its branches” (v. 32) may be the Gentiles, especially if Jesus is alluding to Ezekiel 17:23. Original readers understood quickly the analogy in this parable. They knew that a mustard seed is small: the seed is the size of a freckle. Yet, a tiny mustard seed can erupt and reach for the clouds, growing to three times the average height of the ancient Jew, boasting bushy branches large enough to house a homeless flock of birds. Don’t we need a reminder like this today? We, at times, fear the smallness of Jesus’ story. Our fear might keep us from seed sowing. Can the account of Jesus hold its own in the non-believing academic world? Do such terms like sin, salvation, and redemption stand a chance in this sophisticated day of humanism and relativism? Yes, they do, for our faith can expand and grow into the largeness of God’s hope!

Question: Ever planted the mustard seed of your faith for more growth?

Sunday, July 28, 2024

8:30 and 10:45 am (Livestream @10:45 am)

Luke 17:5-6 and Matthew 13:31-32 NIV

Pastor’s message: “Small and Mighty, Part I—
the Parable of the Mustard Seed”

Worship theme: “Powerful Parables!”

