

So, it is Children's Sunday today, and we are talking about the Parable of the Mustard Seed. Now, we know that this was a very important parable to Jesus, because it can be found in all 4 Gospels. The gospel of Matthew reads :

"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

Now, as a faith formation director, I try to do a lot of seed planting. I also do my best to show the children of this Church that they may be the smallest of Pilgrims, but they too have the potential to be great leaders of faith. You see, these children love to learn. They like to play games, and do crafts, and even get a little silly downstairs in Sunday School.

But do you know when I see an extra glimmer in their eyes? When a grown-up asks them to help set up the coffee hour tables. Of course, for the sneak-peek of all the treats, but also for the joy of serving. I watch them arrange the cookies and crackers on trays in their own special patterns, place them carefully and thoughtfully on the table, knowing that these snacks will brighten other peoples' days, bringing sustenance and conversation, and love. They have made a difference.

I see their eyes when you ask them to be acolytes. They are kids, yes. But they are *trusted* to do their job. They are trustworthy enough even to handle *fire*. And through this job, they've shared the light of God with the congregation. They have made a difference.

I've seen the youth who come every week to help out in the nursery. Not because they are asked to, but truly because they love to take care of the babies. They love to spend time playing with our little Lu, and keeping her happy. They take her outside, and put flowers in her hair, and show her that even though she is small, there is so much love for her here. They have made a difference.

We have youth that are always up in the balcony, helping operate the Zoom, making our services more accessible to anyone, anywhere. They have made a difference.

We have children who share the gifts that the Holy Spirit has given to them by playing beautiful music for us. They have made a difference.

We have children who ask Pastor Reebee and I to be liturgists– yes, ask us, because they know that they are capable of the task, and they are proud to show their faith through the readings of prayer and scripture. They have made a difference.

While our kids have busy lives outside of church, the days that we see the most children are on the days that we make sandwiches for our homeless neighbors through Outdoor Church. They've made nearly 500 lunches this year, all for those who would otherwise be without a meal. They have made a difference.

You see, these are children, yes, although definitely not as small as when I first met them. They grow more and more each season we spend together. By now, they ask the tough questions. They want to talk about real-world topics, just like they hear the adults do. You'll soon notice through their prayer that's coming later in the service– yes, they pray for cookies, video games, and snow days, but they also pray for Gaza and Ukraine. They pray for the LGBTQ community. They see the beauty of the world, and they see the injustices. These kids aren't just little mustard seeds anymore. They are the sprouts that turn into the strong and nurturing trees. They are here, in the same world as us adults, and they absorb everything. They want to make a difference. And so they do.

Here at Pilgrim, we try to give our kids and youth the chance to not just be children, but to be fellow people of faith. To give them space to grow, to be playful and joyful, but also to share the things that may be weighing them down. We let them take on responsibilities that adults usually save for themselves. We want to make sure that they know that they are valued here, so that their own seeds of faith turn into strong and hearty mustard trees; and so they too may scatter those seeds out into the world around them.

This Children's Sunday, I celebrate the Pilgrim Kids; for truly, they have made a difference.