

The Kingdom of God is Like Stone Soup

Will you please pray with me: Holy God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be faithful and pleasing unto you, for you are our rock and our salvation. Amen.

The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed sown in a garden. The seed is incredibly tiny, so small that you can barely see it. But when it grows, it spreads out all over the place and becomes a nurturing place for birds.

The Kingdom of God is like yeast, which is also so small that it's difficult to pick up a single grain of it. Yet, when added to warm milk, sugar, and flour, it expands and turns into a fluffy, wonderful bread that nurtures our bodies.

The Kingdom of God is like stone soup. It takes all the gifts of all the people for it to become a wonderful, tasty soup. And once all the gifts are given, that soup can nurture an entire village.

In all three stories, we start with something small, miniscule even. We might feel that way about whatever gift we have to give on stewardship Sunday—that the small amount of money we can give is too little, or that our prayers can't possibly make a difference in the grand scheme of things, or that the one hour of time we can offer up to a committee once a month is hardly helpful. But look what God does with the mustard seed, with the yeast, with the salt in the soup. These parables all show us that even the smallest gift grows miraculously into something that has a huge impact on others.

Part of the reason for this is precisely because of the way that the little gifts interact with each other. Carrots, by themselves, are very good. But carrots, onions, celery and salt—you put them together and they change one another ever so slightly. They provide more nutritional value and they just taste different together. This holds true for the gifts we give the church. Our individual dollars may be able to do a little, but when we combine them together, we can provide salary for staff, pay all of our church's bills, and support the church's missions in the world. There is a cumulative

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effect to the gifts we give where the total result of our giving ends up being more than the sum of its parts.

This is a type of miracle. In the stone soup story, the traveler claims that the miracle comes from the stones he uses. But we listeners know that the real miracle lies in the fact that generosity and sharing leads to mutual benefit. When we share what we have, everyone has enough and everyone can thrive.

But I will say that those stones represent something else for me. At the center of that soup, is God, the Trinity—three in one: The Creator, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And it is that God who excites us into generosity and that God who magically can make the individual flavors of our gifts combine into a flavorful soup for all. For “The earth is God’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.”

So on this Stewardship Sunday, let us remember that everything we have, all of the gifts we have been given, came from God. In thanksgiving and joy, let us share what we have with one another, trusting that God will turn it into a flavorful, nutritious soup for all. Amen.