



Lake Wales
Church of Christ
463 N. Buck Moore Rd.
Lake Wales, FL 33898
www.lakewalescoc.com
(863) 676-4114

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Tower of Strength

**“The name of the Lord is a strong tower
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”**

—Proverbs 18:10

The Potential of a Seed

God has created a natural world full of wonders to behold. One of the most amazing lives all around us, and lines several of the streets in town.

Gaze upward at a full-grown live oak tree swaying several stories above the surrounding houses. Then, search around on the ground and find an acorn. Hold it up and compare. Realize that this huge living thing, complete with roots, trunk, limbs, leaves, and bark, and supporting a huge cast of other forms of life, bacteria, fungi, moss, lichen, ferns, vines, birds, squirrels, and their predators, all grew from a tiny acorn no bigger than a thumbnail.

A live oak died on Central Avenue a few years ago. A City of Lake Wales crew, with chainsaws, ropes, axes, a mulcher, and a large stump grinder towed in on a trailer, rerouted traffic and worked for days to chop down the tree, cut it into manageable pieces, and haul it away. Yet, one could easily pocket the seed that produced those countless tons of hardwood.

According to the Guinness Book of World Records, the most massive tree in the world (in fact,

the most massive living organism in the world) is “General Sherman,” a giant Sequoia reaching 275 feet tall, and measuring 103 feet in girth. It would take over twenty adults holding hands to circle the tree.

Guinness also reports that the tallest tree is the “Mendocino Tree,” a redwood in California measuring a dizzying 367 feet tall. The crown of this tree would top a 36 story skyscraper! For comparison, the abandoned Lake Wales hotel is only a third that height. Both of these gigantic living things came from seeds smaller than a thimble.

God uses the amazing transformation of a tiny seed into a massive living tree to teach us spiritual truths.

The Gospel is a Seed, Full of Potential

First, God uses the seed metaphor to describe the faith of individual Christians. God says that the gospel message, when received, is like a seed buried in the heart, which sprouts and produces faith. God says, “you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God” (1 Peter 1:23). A kernel of corn produces a corn plant, an apple seed an apple tree. When the imperishable seed of Christ’s word germinates, it produces Christian faith. The eternal fruit that results is the fruit of the Spirit, “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22).

But whether or not the seed produces fruit when it is planted depends on the soil upon which it falls. Jesus spoke a parable, saying,

The sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. And others fell upon the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. And others fell on the good soil, and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty (Matt. 13:3–8).

Jesus later explained the parable

When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. And the one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit, and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty (Matt. 13:19–23).

Perhaps the most important comparison between our faith and a seed is found in the gospel of John. Jesus says,

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal (John 12:24–25).

In other words, unless a man counts his life as worthless and gives it wholly over to the service of Jesus Christ, he cannot produce fruit for the Lord. Until he is buried in Christ, he remains a hard little nut in a dusty jar on some forgotten shelf. We must all strive to die to self, so that we may live eternally to the Lord. “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny Himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it” (Matt 16:24–25).

The Gospel Propagates Throughout the Earth

Second, God uses the seed metaphor to describe the spread of the gospel in the world. Jesus spoke another parable, saying:

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all other seeds; but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches (Matt. 13:31–32).

God's word may seem an insignificant force, but it has the power to save people and add them to the church (Rom. 1:16). God's word started within a rag tag band of about 120 apostles and disciples almost 2,000 years ago (Acts 1:15), and blossomed into the millions of Christians throughout history.

The church is more important and enduring than all the other institutions, armies, social movements, and nations that have ever existed, for God is its supporter, and its influence stretches into eternity (Dan 2:44, Matt. 16:18). Truly, the church is the most significant of all the other plants in the garden, where people of every race and nation can come and find a home, like birds nesting.

Let your faith grow from the seed of God's word into a thing more majestic than any puny redwood. "If you have faith as a mustard seed ... nothing shall be impossible to you" (Matt. 17:20). Strengthen your faith, and share it with others!

—*John Guzzetta*

Quotes of the Week:

"No life is useless and no day is vain

For God has a purpose for sunshine and rain."

—*Clay Harrison*

"A man would do nothing if he waited until he could do it so well that no one could find fault."

—*John Henry Newman*