

Good morning. I've spent so much time the last couple weeks talking to you about parables, about seeds and sowing and soil and wheat and weeds, I thought maybe I would step outside this morning and give you a little bit of an agrarian background to listen to the sermon this morning, so please pray with me. May the words that are spoken and the words that are heard be yours alone Oh Lord our Strength and Our Redeemer. So if you had told me a year ago I would be doing most of my job by telephone and zoom and I would be working from my home in solitary confinement, I would have told you you were crazy. The whole essence of being a priest just is to be around people and with people and it be close to people and here we are in the middle of a worldwide pandemic and in which we cannot be physically close to other human beings unless they're in our little tiny bubble. That's very unusual. That has upended everything. Never before have social creatures like us been told that they couldn't shake hands, that they couldn't hug, that they couldn't be physically close to another human being. That doesn't seem possible and it doesn't seem right. But, that's the place that we're in right now and we're worried about our economy, we're worried about our schools, we are worried about people that we know getting sick, we're worried about people we know dying. We're worried about survival at this point. And it's all because of this little tiny virus that nobody can see. The truth is stranger than fiction. If somebody had told us a year ago that something that we couldn't even see what upend our lives, all of our lives and countries all over the world, communities all over the country we would have told you you were crazy, I would have told you you were crazy. But it is inevitable, that's how small it is and look how powerful it is. Now if something like the Coronavirus can be that powerful and we know that God is far more powerful than anything we know about here on Earth. Just image what God can do with the Kingdom of Heaven which is also, started with something very very small. That's what our parable is

about this morning. We have a parable about the woman putting leaven or yeast into the flour and we have the parable about the mustard seed mixed in with the other seeds so that the sower doesn't really realize that he's throwing out mustard seeds and mustard seeds grow up to be huge bushes, bigger than the one behind me and they can provide nesting places for birds and shade for small animals all from a little tiny seed that isn't barely visible. God produces all kinds of positive, healthy, nourishing existence in this world. And then we have the two parables about the man who found treasure in a field and gave up everything he can to buy that field and the man who found the pearl that has been looking for and he sold all that he had so that he could buy the pearl. Now large things from small beginnings is what we want to think about first because certainly my idea of small things starting from something really tiny that I can barely see is almost stranger than fiction and yet that's what Jesus tells us the kingdom of God is like, the kingdom of God is like the mustard seed that grew into the huge shrub. So, what's he telling us about the kingdom of God? He's telling us that with a little bit of beginning something huge will grow. Think about the fact that Jesus was confined to the area in and around Galilee on planet Earth during his lifetime that he healed and taught for only three years, which is a very short amount of time and today Christianity is present in every nation on the globe. It started very small in one tiny little geographic spot and it has grown in this world and this life. And the leaven the same way. The leaven makes the flour grow into something huge, it infuses it, spreads out and infuses it. And that's what the kingdom of God can do. So, what do we need to do? What small little thing do we need to do to promote the kingdom of heaven right here and right now? We are followers of Jesus Christ and Jesus has taught us exactly what we need to do and it is not earth shattering. It can be very small and it will grow into something very big. Think for a minute about how you feel when somebody notices you, affirmed you, smiles that you, offer you a kind word, offers you praise, offers you comfort if something has distressed. You think about how that feel.

It feel good. It makes us feel grounded. It makes us feel connected. And those are very small acts of kindness that we do to each other and they spread. They spread. The person who feels good because of your words and your smile and your kindness is much more apt to do that for somebody else. The person you forgive is much more apt to forgive somebody else because they know how wonderful it feels, how restorative it is to be forgiven. These are small things and Jesus has told us take care of the people around you. You don't have to do anything that is newsworthy, you're not going to end up on CNN if you spread the kingdom. But you will influence and you will transform the people with whom you come into contact with. That's what Jesus wants us to rumor about the kingdom of heaven. It's like a little tiny mustard seed and we are the one who can plant that little tiny mustard seed in other people. So, think about you might give up if you knew that giving something up what actually promote your access to the kingdom of heaven. Anytime we make changes and if we do what Jesus asked us to do we're going to be making changes all the time. Anytime that we make changes will have to give something up so what are you willing to give up in order to participate in this unbelievable Kingdom of Heaven that begins in this life. Would you give up everything you have? May be that's what Jesus wants you to do. Would you build on what you have to promote social justice, to take care of people who are hungry, to take care of people who are sick in body or in spirit? What would you do? You're going to have to give up something to do those things. What would you give up to be part of building and spreading the kingdom? How are you going to be the mustard seed? How are you going to be the leaven in the portions of flour? And, what will you need to give up to do that? This is truth is strange than fiction. We hear these stories and parables all our lives. There's a part of us that just plain doesn't believe it, doesn't believe, it because if we did that life as we know it would be upended, the social structure we live in would be changed if there was social justice for example, if the poor

were taken care of and the hungry were fed. Things would change, but isn't that what Jesus talks about, upending the social structure of his day and he's asking us to do the same thing upend the social structure in your day. That's Jesus's message to us and that's how we participate in the kingdom of heaven right here on Earth. There's also a parable at the end of this series and it's about net that's put into the water and brings up fishes of all kind and they are sorted out the good fish and the bad, the good fish and the bad fish, so, this is Jesus' way of saying to us, look, in the final analysis there is going to be an accounting, you will have to stand before God you do your maker your Creator and account for what you've done and for what you haven't done and that should give all of us pause we have more agency in our relationship with God than we realize. God is very patient and God is very forgiving and God will supply us with whatever we need but we have to have the will to want to do it and that's up to us. If we don't have the will God's not going to impose it on us but Jesus says this is what the Kingdom of Heaven is about. The last shall be first and the first shall be last. We hear in the Gospel of Luke all the time about the reversals in the life we live right now, in this world, in this time space and if we think for one minute that all of this that Jesus is telling us about what the kingdom of God is like is not more powerful than the invisible coronavirus we just don't know and understand the power of God. God is much more powerful than covid-19 and God is much more powerful even than our resistance to doing what he wants us to do. God's in charge, all we need to do is ask for him to fill us with the spirit to move out into the world with his good news, his love his, forgiveness, his energy, his healing and with God's help we can do just that. Thanks be to God. Amen.

