



Links Players

Steady Growth

He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of seeds, but when it has grown, it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." (Matthew 13:31-32, ESV)

"Four golf fundamentals are grip, stance, posture, and alignment," I told my small audience. They followed my demonstration and then jumped into slots to hit balls. I wanted to help but trying to tweak someone's golf swing in ten minutes for lasting change is futile.

I played my first rounds of the year before and after this clinic, working on my fundamentals too. After not playing for three months, what I feel is rarely what is happening. My college coach friend helped me get my posture right, especially on my chipping. However, I did notice some feel from the three months of doing drills in my basement—repetitive, slow-motion movements to help my body learn the body positions I want.

A quick fix to hit the ball straight would be amazing. Sometimes we latch on to something that works for a few holes or rounds, but then it disintegrates. Often, we attend to our spiritual lives in the same way. We pick one thing from a sermon or scripture verse and feel spiritually energized. Maybe a particular song moves you emotionally for a day or week. These moments have substance, but they don't lead to lasting change.

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." At a surface level, we recognize repentance as confessing our sin(s). Looking into the Greek word *metanoeo*, we find it involves regret or sorrow, accompanied by a genuine change of heart toward God (CWSB Dictionary). Confessing a sin is good but does not always equal long-term change. *Metanoeo*, repentance, leads to a consistent [re]turning to God daily.

The second part of Jesus' statement leads to the understanding that the kingdom of heaven is not something we die to enter when our earthly body fails. Rather, the kingdom of heaven is in every moment of every day - the present and eternity.

Jesus used parables frequently to challenge the religious status quo and help the listener internally process a concept that would lead to action. In the parable of the mustard seed, Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to the smallest of seeds that grow in rough places over long periods and become large trees. Like the mustard seed, our faith might feel small and insignificant, but it can grow in substance and size over time.

The kingdom of heaven is a gradual, steady, uninterrupted movement of growth. Living in the kingdom of heaven requires the practice of repentance – returning our hearts to God over and over and over again. Spiritual maturity requires persistence.

In what ways do you need to [re]turn back to God today?

Prayer: Lord, open our eyes and hearts to the kingdom of heaven today.

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