

The Mustard Seed

by Anne Amaro



Whenever I've heard the phrase "faith as a grain of mustard seed", it's always referring to a tiny bit of belief. But my curiosity was aroused, so I dug a little deeper and found something very different.

Of course, the mustard seed is very small. Once the seed is sown, it produces a shrub that grows anywhere from 3 feet up to 10 feet or more. The stem of the shrub dries and becomes wood-like, thus it is sometimes referred to as a tree. The birds love it, because it is a safe place for them to nest and hide. The plant produces a distasteful oil to some predators, and the oil also covers the ground underneath and kills other plants. Nothing stands in its way; therefore, it represents a very strong faith. The taste is very pungent and strong. The plant produces a distinctive four-petaled flower of a dazzling yellow with the petals arranged opposite each other in the form of a cross. WOW! Six stamens are arranged in pairs with the filaments of the outer pair being short. The two inner pairs are longer.

Mustard is one of the world's most important spices. No one knows where it originated. The Romans most likely prepared the first mustard as we know it today using grape juice mixed with ground seeds to make "burning must". Mustard powder alone has no bite to it, but mixed with liquid the pungency is resurrected. Interesting. The fruit is in a capsule with two chambers that at maturity splits in two from the bottom! Reminds me of the heavy curtain in the Temple being torn in two from the bottom when Jesus died. Jesus compared the Kingdom of Heaven to a mustard seed.

Surprisingly, the mustard family includes cabbage, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, turnips, broccoli, and kohlrabi. This reminds me of

the variety of people that make up the Body of Christ. One important species has large cleft leaves used as a vegetable. Turnip, radish, cress, and watercress are other vegetable members of the mustard family. This diverse family also produces vegetable oil, ranking fifth in importance behind soybeans, cotton seed, peanuts, and sunflower. Five is the number of grace, isn't it? And oil represents the Holy Spirit in the Bible.

Now when this seed is sown, it germinates faster than you can say "mustard seed". When the seed is planted, it sprouts by the next day. It spreads quickly and nothing gets in its way. In fact, it won't let anything else grow. No weed is going to come up and strangle it. It's not grown by the hand of man; it mostly grows wild. It needs no cultivation. It will grow anywhere it wants to grow, and once it gets started, it is impossible to control. The more you try to stomp it out, the more it grows. The birds that take refuge in its branches spread the seeds. Sounds like a good, strong faith to me. All it takes is a "little bit" that won't let anything stand in its way, huh? It needs but one thing—lots of sun (SON?)

Compare this to our need of the SON.

This is not the mighty cedar of Lebanon, nor is it a common weed. True faith will spread quickly, and man cannot control it no matter what. Just as man cannot stop the Kingdom from growing anywhere someone has the faith of the small but strong and determined seed. Its diversity is amazing! It's not just a little insignificant seed. It's one little magnificent seed!

In one instance, Jesus told His disciples, "oh ye of little faith" and in His next breath He is saying if you have the faith of a mustard seed..." Matthew 10. This seems to be contradictory, but we have to know what He means. Our faith can be a little, but it has to be strong and immovable.

I don't know if anyone else is as curious as I am, but this is why I like to do word studies of the Bible. The Word of God is like the ocean. You can swim on the surface, but if you want to see more, you can snorkel. However, if you really want the greatest experience, you can dive.