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The Potential in One Seed – an illustration from apples

- It's easy to count the number of seeds in an apple, but it's harder to count the number of apples in a seed.
- One apple Seed can grow into an apple tree
- An apple tree will have an average of 300 apples in each growing season
- An apple contains an average of 5 seeds.
- 1 seed that grows into an apple tree will produce 1500 seeds in an average growing season.
- If each of those 1500 seeds grew into apple trees, then in the 2nd generation, those apple trees would produce 450,000 apples each growing season, for a total of 2,250,000 seeds
- If each of those 2,250,000 seeds were to grow into apple trees, then in the 3rd generation, in each growing season each tree would yield 300 apples for a total of 675,000,000 apples, and each of those apples would average 5 seeds, for a total of 3,375,000,000 (3 billion, 375 million) seeds, which are potential trees.
- Obviously, each apple seed does not grow into a fruit bearing tree, or the entire world would quickly become nothing but a giant apple orchard! Nevertheless, this illustrates the potential of one seed!

The Parable of the Growing Seed

Context: Jesus has just told the parable about the 4 soils, and explained that the seed represents the Word of God (in Matthew, "the message of the Kingdom").

Mark 4:26-29
26 He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. 27 Night and day, ***whether he sleeps or gets up****, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. 28 All by itself the soil produces grain — first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. 29 As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."*

The Lesson: we don't understand how it grows, and we cannot control how it grows; our part is to plant seeds and God takes care of the rest. God makes seeds grow and produce a harvest. This can give us patience and inspire hope and faith.

1 Corinthians 3:5-8
5 What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe — as the Lord has assigned to each his task. 6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, ***but God made it grow.*** *7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but* ***only God, who makes things grow.*** *8 The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. 9 For we are God's fellow workers...*

- If we look to our own understanding and ability to produce a harvest, we can become discouraged if we don't see the results we hope for, or proud if we do see good results.

- Instead, look to the Generosity and Faithfulness of God. Be patient and put your hope in God to bring a harvest.

Galatians 6:9-10
9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Psalms 126:5-6 *(New Living Translation)*
5 Those who plant in tears will harvest with shouts of joy.
6 They weep as they go to plant their seed, but they sing as they return with the harvest.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

Mark 4:30-34
30 Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? 31 It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. 32 Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade."

33 With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. 34 He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

The Lesson: The size of the seed is disproportionate to the size of the plant that comes from the seed. Our seed planting may seem insignificant, but the results are up to God, and He can grow very large plants from very small seeds!

- The Kingdom of God (the good and dynamic reign of God in people's lives) is like this: it began in an insignificant place with insignificant people, but God is seeing to it that it will fill the entire earth.

Zechariah 4:10 *(New Living Translation)*
10 Do not despise these small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin

Our actions, whether righteous or sinful, are likened to planting seeds and reaping harvests

- Note: Jesus' seed parables used seeds as a metaphor for the Word of God. The seed and harvest metaphor is also used in other parts of the Bible to illustrate important truths

Hosea 10:12-13
12 Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, until he comes and showers righteousness on you.
13 But you have planted wickedness, you have reaped evil, you have eaten the fruit of deception.

- Hosea was a prophet calling the nation of Israel to repentance for their many sinful ways. Though the judgment of exile by the Assyrian nation has been prophesied, God in His love and mercy gives them another opportunity to turn around and begin living righteously. Choosing righteousness or choosing to continue sinning will be like planting seeds that produce a harvest, whether good or bad.

Galatians 6:7-8 *(English Standard Version)*
7 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

- Galatians describes living according to "the flesh" as depending on merely human resources (including religious practices) and appetites, without the resources of God's Kingdom.

- Conversely, living according to the Spirit means living with all the resources of God's Kingdom, the salvation of Jesus, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the love of the Father

- The "harvest" of sowing to the flesh is devastatingly dark, while the harvest of sowing to the Spirit is full of life and light

Galatians 5:16-25

16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. 17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

Giving to the poor is likened to planting seeds and reaping a harvest

Context: Paul is asking the Corinthian Christians to give a generous financial gift for Christians in Judea who are facing a severe drought and famine

2 Corinthians 9:6-11
6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 9 As it is written:
"He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."
10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

- Note, this is very different from the modern "prosperity gospel" false teaching that teaches we can give money to various "ministries" with a guarantee that we will get rich as a result of working the principle of sowing and reaping.

The Lesson: our generous God invites us, as stewards of His resources, to generously give to the poor. This is an act of righteousness, and we can anticipate a harvest of even more seeds of generosity