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Christ Church, Mexia
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A cop pulled over a car and approached the driver, a nun. "Why were you only driving 35 miles per hour on the Freeway?" He asked. "The sign said 35 miles per hour," she replied. "No, that sign said Interstate 35. That's not the speed limit," he said. Then, looking at the other nuns in the car, he asked, "Why do your passengers look so shaken up?" "Well, I'm guessing," she answered, "that we just exited Highway 190,"

It has been said that parables are like jokes; you either get them or you don't. So since Jesus always had to explain them to the disciples, do you supposed that says anything about their sense of humor? Or ours, for that matter?

So let's look at the parable of the mustard seed. The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed - "it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

Critics are quick to point out that mustard bushes are hardly huge trees. According to Dominic Crossan, this bush is about 3-4 feet high at most, but the size of the individual bush misses the point entirely. Mustard is a plant that once sown, tends to take over, crowding other plants out. And in cultivated areas, it attracts all kinds of unwanted birds, which will threaten whatever crop has been carefully planted there.

Oh great. The Kingdom of God is like kudzu. You know kudzu? You do it you've spent much time in the southeast US. From a bit east of here all the way to the Atlantic coast, kudzu covers the roadsides, fences and in places, most everything else. That "miracle vine" imported from Japan in the 1870's will grow up to a foot a day, covering an additional 2500 acres annually. Some estimates say that it covers over 7 million acres in the southeast.

The Kingdom of God is going to grow everywhere, whether you want it or not, and faster than you can say don't. And if you try to stop it, it'll just grow over the top of you and you'll be topiary.

Jesus drew the parable of the mustard seed from Ezekiel's imagery of the great cedars of Lebanon. Ezekiel said that "all the birds of the air made their nests in its branches." That sounds like there will be some mighty strange birds gathered together in God's Kingdom. I wonder who they'll be. You know some of us are pretty strange birds. I looked in my bird book to see if there were any that I could particularly identify with. I only got as far as the "barking owl", and knew there was no need to go further.

Is it any wonder that many Christians are bit concerned about the coming

Kingdom? Out of control growth that attracts strange birds of all kinds? Do you suppose there is a connection with some congregations being concerned about growth?

Here are a few of the apprehensions I've heard over the years:

- 1. What if I came in one Sunday morning and saw lots of people I didn't even know?**
- 2. What if the lay reader got up to read and it was somebody I've never seen before?**
- 3. What if someone was sitting where I always sit?**
- 4. What if I had to hunt for a place to sit and the only place left was on the front row?**
- 5. What if I had to sit right next to someone that looked a little scary, or odd, or smelled bad?**
- 6. What if they started speaking in tongues and then so did I?**

Many congregations grow up to a certain point of discomfort and then collectively change their minds about it being a good idea. Apparently that is not the way of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom, when it comes in its fullness, will be wildly proliferative and beyond our control. The Kingdom will be inclusive beyond our imaginings, bringing together strange birds of all kinds. So buckle up buttercup, I feel change coming on the wind. It may be that we need some strange birds to move in among us. The native birds are getting tired of carrying the load by themselves. It's time for some strange birds with fresh thoughts and baffling ways,

So take heart. If one day you walk into Christ Church on Sunday morning and find yourself in the midst of a mob of strange birds of brilliant plumage raising a squawking cacophony of praise to God, perhaps you will discover that the Kingdom has come at last.