

A NOTE TO PARENTS

And he said, "The Kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how. The earth produces of itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear ..."

Mark 4:26-28

Jesus speaks often of seeds and crops as images for God's Kingdom. Here, the focus is on growth, from the insignificant little seed to the ripe plant, bearing fruit, ready for harvest. This growth is the work of the seed and the earth, not the farmer, who simply goes about his business as the seed sprouts and grows, "he knows not how." In creating us, Jesus seems to say, God has built right into us the ability to grow into finished creatures.

The language of *growth* gets frequent use in the Church and the helping professions today. Not only children, but adults, are urged to "grow and change," to develop and progress. This kind of organic, dynamic image comes naturally in our society. But what we may fail to notice is that Jesus hardly ever speaks of "growth" in isolation: "growth," for him, is not open-ended, but is always associated with "bearing fruit." God wants us to grow, but not for our own self-realization or so that we can look back with pleasure on how much progress we have made. God wants us to grow so that we can yield to him the "fruit" of our growth: the harvest of a life given over to his love and service according to whatever gifts he has given us. And as each crop bears a different kind of fruit, so each of us will offer a different harvest to the Lord.

You can talk about "bearing fruit" with your child as you think of your own life and work in the light of God's Kingdom. What does your child want to be when he or she grows up? How do the different things that people do "bear fruit" for God's Kingdom? And if you are lucky enough to have a vegetable garden, give thanks to God for the wondrous variety of crops that "sprout and grow, you know not how," and bear fruit for your family's table.

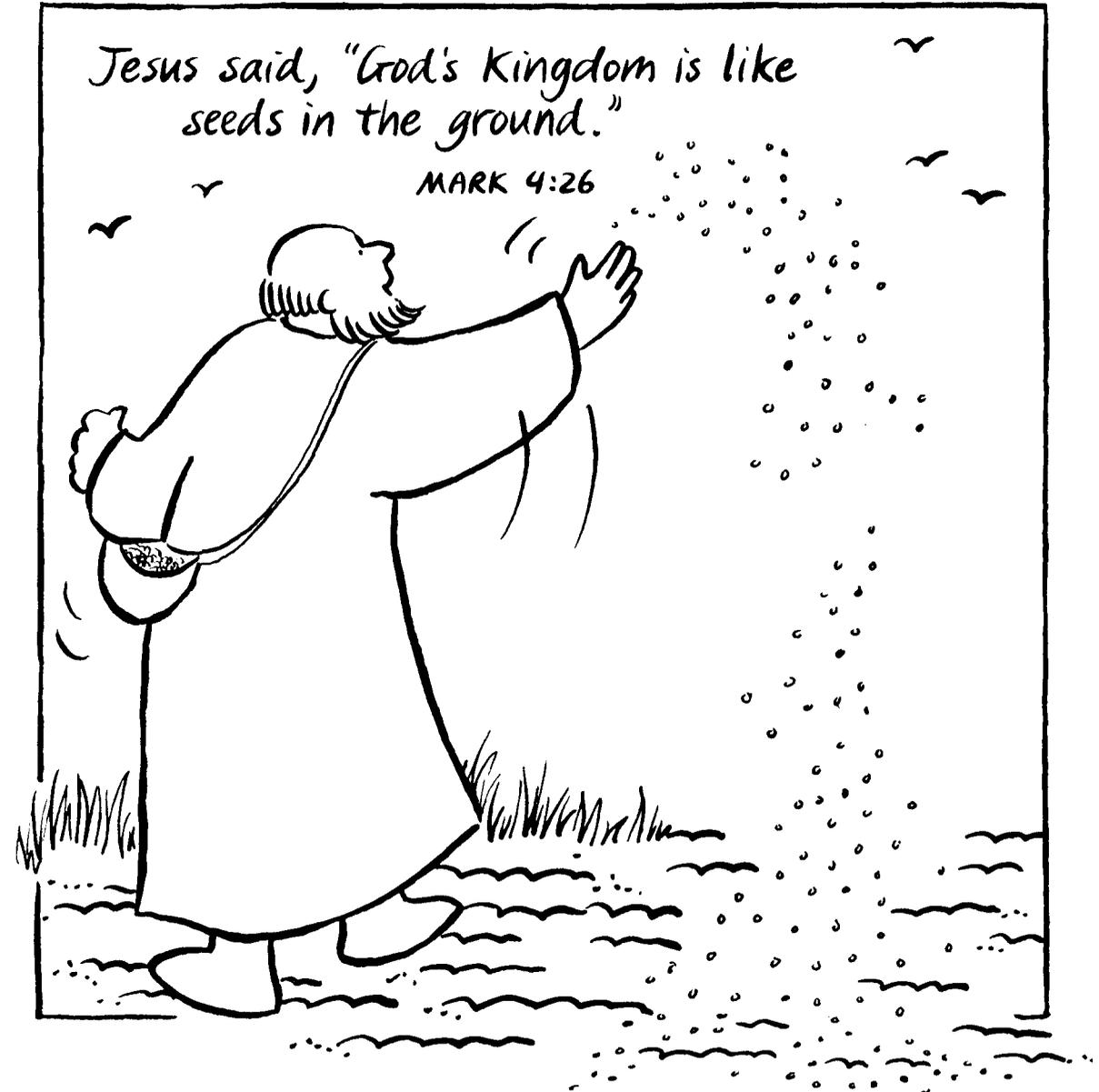
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THE SUNDAY PAPER, 19 Colony Road, New Haven, CT 06511, USA
203 - 624-2520 • www.the-sunday-paper.com



THE SUNDAY PAPER JUNIOR

Year B
PROPER 6
TRACKS 1 and 2



JESUS TOLD THIS STORY:

God's Kingdom is like tiny seeds. The farmer watches them grow...



... and when the crop is full grown, there is a harvest.



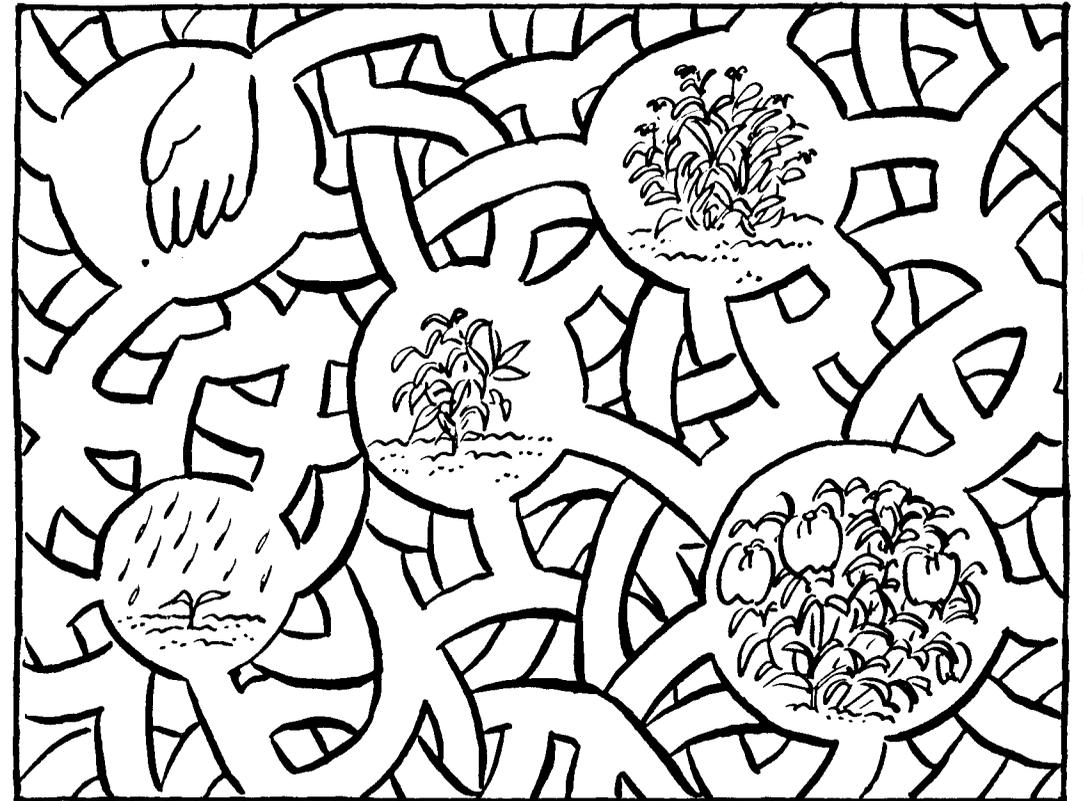
God's Kingdom is like the tiniest seed of all, the mustard seed...



...which grows into a very big plant!



Jesus often said that God's Kingdom was like seeds. Seeds are very small. They do not look as if they are alive. But if someone plants them and takes care of them, they will grow into something big and wonderful. Jesus said that God's Kingdom grows like a seed.



Find a path through the design, to show how the seed grows bigger and bigger, and produces a crop!