

Full Potential

HARVEST IS THE LAST OPPORTUNITY of the year to marvel, once again, at the stark contrast between planted seed and mature plant. For the last week or so we have been harvesting the last of the apples, tomatoes, beans, onions and squash before a killing frost comes upon them. (The root crops, such as potatoes and carrots can wait a while longer, as they are protected below the surface.)

A tomato seed is pretty small, but the plant it produces can become as tall as a man, and the bush can be as big around as a mature oak tree. Its main stem becomes tough and fibrous (rather ugly, frankly), and can require no small amount of work to extract it from the ground. A few small cucumber seeds result in massive vines that may snake across the full length of the garden, laden with heavy fruit that must be picked to the count of ten or twelve per day.

...and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own.

1 Corinthians 15:37-38

Size is relative, of course. From a human perspective, a mustard seed is about as small as things can get. Every spring Linda sows seeds as small as that—some as tiny as dust particles—and from them spring all manner of flowers or plants or fruit thousands of times larger.

From God's perspective, we are seeds just as small. In comparison to Him, miniscule. Yet He packs each of us full of our unique combination of gifts and desires, abilities and passions, then plants us where He plans for us to do the most good. He plants each of us expecting a full, mature person to develop—someone He can put to work in His Kingdom.

I have a lot more to say about this, but it is hard to get it across to you since you've picked up this bad habit of not listening. By this time you ought to be teachers yourselves, yet here I find you need someone to sit down with you and go over the basics on God again, starting from square one—baby's milk, when you should have been on solid food long ago! Milk is for beginners, inexperienced in God's ways; solid food is for the mature, who have some practice in telling right from wrong.

Hebrews 5:11-14 The Message (paraphrase)

The difference between us and plant seeds is that included in our gifts is that inconvenient little thing called "human will." When a seed fails to grow, it can generally be traced to external influences: too much or too little rain, too hot or too cold. But when a believer fails to grow, it is generally because of *internal* influences—stubborn desires that run counter to the Lord's will.

We each carry within us our full potential, placed there by a wise and expectant Father. He patiently waters and fertilizes our lives, gives us every benefit, every advantage to end up strong and healthy. But, in the end, He has permitted us the right of refusal: we can refuse to mature.

The great Gardener is hoping for a bountiful harvest this year. He has entrusted to each of us the germ of greatness—greatness in *Him*.

As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 4:10-11

