

PRAYERS

Two prayerful reflections based on the stories in this edition.

By Jonathan Vaughan-Davies

The Tree that we see is not one giant seed...

A mustard tree is not one giant mustard seed
Its beginning barely resembles all it becomes
Hidden deep in the ground - without sight,
without sound
Life bursting out of where it all began

At first, barely discernible to the naked eye
From the least likely start - it longs for the light
Reaching down its new roots; stretching out its green
shoots
Breaking up to the surface - its story to write

See, to grow it must change, and to change it must
grow
Stay the same and it's dead in the ground
But planted in promise, and nurtured and nourished
It will reach a potential lying unseen right now

From seeded to sprouting, from seedling to sapling
Once so small soon soaring up to sky
The process so organic, the progress so dramatic
It could not have imagined its future new heights

To what shall I compare the Kingdom of God?
What picture can paint its provision and power?
It's like a small mustard seed – like a germ of a dream
Growing beneath and around us, and over all other
towers

It's here *and it's coming*, it's now *and it's not yet*
It's near to us now but not nearly complete
Hardwired to grow, long limbs fashioning a home
The tree that you see is not one giant seed

And yet when I pray to the Lord of the Harvest
This hunger within me cries out for that day
I pray: Revive and Restore, Pour out more and more
But the 'more' that I mean is often '*more of the same*'

More of what I know, God; more of what I like, Lord
More that affirms what I already believe
But though it feels strange, to grow is to change
For the tree that we see is not one giant seed

Life-giving God, unsettle my stagnation
And teach me what it is to love others like you
Till I stretch out my arms, to embrace and embark
On this dangerous lifestyle of grace and of truth

When I'm tempted to shrink back; and retreat to the
known
Remind me, O Jesus, of the journey you made
Like a small grain of wheat, you were cast under our
feet
And buried in darkness, taking shame to the grave

But what no-one had granted – you weren't buried,
you were planted
And there in that tomb your heartbeat starts again!
This infectious new rhythm, and now we're dancing
with him
To the Anthem of Resurrection Power unrestrained

Holy Spirit, you're inviting yet more to the party
It's time to get ready – it won't be more of the same
Bringing life to the full, far from business as usual
God, break up the hard soil in my life and my faith

For we are *your* people, made for *your* glory
And we are *your* church; it is *your* hope we preach
And your love builds a home where grace overflows
For the tree that we see is not one giant seed

A video of Jon reading this poem is available at
<https://youtu.be/PSu-0d6XWxM>

At First...

At first it was strange
At first it was small
At first sight it just seemed like nothing at all

At first it was tight
At first it was tough
At first glance I just knew that it wasn't enough

But God who is first and God who is last
And God who is right here with us now
At your very first word life unfolds and unfurls
You breathe into being your purpose and power

At first it was hard
At first it was heavy
The first time we tried it felt like one time too many

At first it was fragile
At first it felt futile
At first light so fearful of running out of our fuel

But God who is first and God who is last
And God who is right here with us now
Whose first instinct is love, whose grace is enough
You fill us to abundance when we let go and allow

In the end it's your plan
In the end it's your purpose
At the end of our rope you're there waiting to lift us

In the end it's all yours God
In the end it's your glory
To the ends of the earth you're completing your story

You're the God who is first and the God who is last
You're the God who came down to us at our very
worst
As we shine out your light, the dark has to take flight
For no darkness can dim the Word you spoke at first



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