

JUNE 17, 2018



ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

EZEKIEL 17:22-24

PSALM 92:2-3, 13-14, 15-16

2 CORINTHIANS 5:6-10

MARK 4:26-34

REFLECTION

On July 12, 2013, Pakistani activist Malala Yousafzai gave a speech at the United Nations Youth Assembly. It was her sixteenth birthday. "One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world," she said. Just nine months earlier, Malala had been shot in the head by a Taliban gunman because of her tireless advocacy on behalf of young girls seeking education in Pakistan. After her recovery, Malala continued to speak out for the rights of women and children. At age seventeen, she became the youngest person in history to win the Nobel Peace Prize. Her passion continued to grow and has since turned into a worldwide movement.

God has a track record of taking small things and elevating them to greatness. God spoke the universe into being out of nothing at all. The great I AM spoke to Moses as a bush. God came into our world as a vulnerable baby born to an unmarried teenage girl—in a stable, no less! In today's Scriptures, we see this pattern once again at work. God promises to take a "tender shoot" from a cedar tree (the Messiah) and place it on the mountain heights of Israel where it will flourish and become "majestic" (Ezekiel 17:22d-23). Jesus compares the Kingdom of God to a mustard seed, which grows from something tiny into "the largest of plants" (Mark 4:32).

ACTION

God is an incredible gardener. God uses us to accomplish great things, and to bring about his Kingdom on earth. Certainly God waters us and nourishes our roots with faith, hope, and love. But we are called to nurture those things within ourselves, too. And for that, there's one more secret ingredient: courage. "Courage" comes from the Latin word *cor*, which means "heart." Courage is a gift from God, which gives direction to our passions and backbone to our convictions. We might not confront hatred and fear in the same way that Malala did; nonetheless, each of us is empowered to act with courage in our day-to-day lives. This courage manifests itself in many ways: in defending our faith, in advocating for those with no voice, and sometimes even in standing up for ourselves. May we always be courageous!

JOURNALING QUESTIONS

- What does courage mean to you? How might God be calling you to act with courage in your own life?