In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Have any of you noticed that parables go in and out of fashion? I’ve been thinking this as I’ve gone through the year – preaching fairly regularly on the lectionary.

And what about today’s bible story? The parable of the Mustard Seed used to be everywhere – but rarely have I heard it preached on.

I first heard it when a youth evangelist, Pail Caine, spoke about it in the hall of my Dad’s then church, St Michael and All Angel’s, St Helens. He was a great guy – and I remember him describing the way that God spoke to him as being like a mustard seed.

God’s kingdom, or God’s inspiration, said Paul, was like the smallest seed. It was a seed, not of his own devising, that just popped into his head. I can still remember the hand gesture of the pop. It wouldn’t happen all the time, but sometimes. And, Paul went on to say, that after a prayer chat with God about the ‘God thought’ – he would mention it to others, and it would seem that other people had been thinking the same thought – which they would then pursue after prayer. Hence, Paul described how he had formed the ‘Good News Club’ that drew up to 60 kids once a fortnight of an evening, that he was telling the story too.

And so it is with our gospel reading this morning. We are given a rare treat from scripture – what to look for – how to identify the kingdom of God. If that wasn’t enough, it describes the organic growth of the kingdom of God.

We are fortunate, as a parish, to have a recent example of building the Kingdom of God. Out parish trip to Uganda started with one small mustard seed (what I am sure seemed like a big step at the time) of kindness. Rev. Sheilagh Williamsom invited Elizabeth, a political asylum seeker from Uganda, to stay with her.

One morning, Elizabeth was deported, and Sheilagh promised to come and find her. After boarding a plane, Sheilagh and Elizabeth managed to find each other and rekindle their friendship.

And the small seed began to grow. After being re-united with Elizabeth and her children, Sheilagh found herself moved to help the women of Kalule raise school fees for their children. 9 years, and 21 trips to Uganda later, she found herself (as she told us) that she had reached the limit of what she could do on her own – no inconsiderable achievement. By that time the women had raised the money to build a hut, buy sewing machines to make items for sale, and formed a savings scheme. After prayer, her spiritual director pointed her towards St Peter’s Formby – a church looking for an international link with which to partner in building the kingdom of God.

Our trip was a great success. Working with the local curch, school and women’s project, we began to build relationships – and add even more growth to the mustard tree.

We will be having a feedback evening to fully explain our work – managed by your support – so please keep an eye out for it and come along. I will leave the slideshow of photos playing through the service for your reflection and edification – and to reinforce the message of this morning’s gospel, that from small things – a thought, or act of kindness – great things can grow and further build the kingdom of God.

Amen.