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## Psalm 8: 1-9 **Stewards of Creation**

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David invites us to pause – pause in all our anxieties, busyness , discontent & uncertainties - to consider the amazing beauty & wonder of creation & the way that it speaks to us of God: the generosity & variety of God’s provision, here on earth & the vastness of the universe, the gift of all humanity needs for its enjoyment & the miracle of life. But alongside the privilege of living in this world He has given us, there is also responsibility. The Lord has given us a unique place in creation but that does not mean, as we sometimes seem to imagine, that God has given us *carte blanche*. God expects us to act as stewards of creation, to live in such a way that we safeguard His gift for future generations. In our own day-by-day choice & priorities as individuals and as nations and communities. To fail in that is to betray the responsibility He has placed into our hands.

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*2 Corinthians 9: 6-15; Mark 4: 26-32 Sowing and Sharing*

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***Whoever sows generously will reap generously*** (2 Cor. 9:6) Paul tells us that it is all about how you & me may respond, ***overflowing in expressions of our thanks to God***  
-. Not about repaying God for His love in Jesus, because we can never do that,  
.... but about letting God’s grace, God’s unfailing loving kindness, bear fruit in our lives  
... through the power & presence of the Spirit.

**But sowing seeds of faith & God’s grace is also something that Jesus wants from His followers, wherever, whenever** – followers embedded in local churches, in local communities & ordinary responsibilities – in family & in work.

But so often we as church leaders & members can feel totally inadequate for the task & & we wonder what we can possibly do to advance Christ’s kingdom or further His will. .

Ministers & church leaders can sometimes feel that the advancement of Christ’s kingdom depends on ***my*** individual efforts, ***my*** faithfulness, ***my*** contribution to the cause. No wonder there seems only little signs of growth & progress! If it were all dependent on you or on me, then we’d be bound to fail. But thank God, I or any one of us is only an *under-shepherd*.

It’s not that I don’t have a role to play – we all have - & something valuable to contribute but thank God, His purpose is bigger than any one of us, His kingdom grows as often as not despite rather than because of us!

That does not excuse any one of us, never think that.

We all have a responsibility to help it happen, through word & deed to bring the kingdom closer but that doesn’t mean that we must try to do everything ,  
... bear the whole burden on our shoulders, for we’re in this together, partners in faith, ..  
.....dependent ultimately on God to take what we offer & use it to His glory.

Take heart from that when progress is slow & our efforts seem in vain,  
....when then fulfilment of Christ's promises seem further away than ever.  
Never give up, never lose faith for the kingdom has dawned & its growth is assured –  
.....the final victory down not down to us but to Him.

Whether we see it or whether we don't, it's there slowly growing – seeds starting to sprout,  
shoots bursting into flower, field ripening for harvest, God at work (Mark 4: 26-29)

*A mustard seed!* (v.31) That's pretty tiny –one breath, the faintest of breezes & it's gone.  
It's hard to believe that it grows as it does, tall enough for birds to build their nests in.

.. Yet isn't that the way life so often turns out, small beginnings but surprising results.

From a spring comes a mighty river, from a spark a raging forest fire.

....From a preacher in an obscure part of the Roman empire,

hustled before the Roman Governor, condemned to death, nailed to a cross

....– seemed that would be the final nail in his coffin but only it wasn't!

Like a seed entombed in the earth, our Lord Jesus rose up,

reaching out not just to the small number of His Galilean followers

but to all the world, the breadth of His love & purposes breath-taking;

.....from one man's death, life offered to us all.

**Lord, thank You that our strength lies not in ourselves but in You:**

**Your word, Your love, Your transforming power;**

**....that so often You have worked through those whom the world thinks insignificant**

**.... & from unpromising beginnings.**

**Help us then to trust You now,**

**...& to offer our service & our gifts, poor & meagre though they may seem,**

**.....confident that You will take & use them to Your glory. AMEN**