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“He put before them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.’” — Matthew 13:31-32

I met Clayton King during his senior year at Gardner-Webb University. My wife and I had moved back to Boiling Springs from Birmingham after I completed my Master of Divinity degree. Clayton heard me preach at a local church and invited me to speak at a meeting of Gardner-Webb's Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

One didn't have to spend much time around Clayton to learn that he loved his family (especially his parents who adopted him), Gardner-Webb University, wrestling (rasslin'), and sports. But it was amazingly apparent that his greatest love was for his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Sensing a call to be an evangelist, Clayton began preaching at the age of 14. He started Clayton King Ministries in 1995. Since then, he has traveled to 45 states and 38 countries preaching the Gospel.

For nineteen years, Crossroads Summer Camp has been held on the campus of Gardner-Webb University.

Starting with only one week and approximately 600 youth campers in 1996, Crossroads has grown to five weeks and over 4,000 youth campers in 2014. Through the years, nearly 50,000 teenagers have experienced the grace, love, and truth of Jesus Christ, and they have given over one million dollars to missions. It is only fitting that the theme for this year's summer camp was “The Gospel.” In Clayton's own words, “the same gospel that saves us is the gospel that forms us spiritually and teaches us to be disciples of Jesus.” That's exactly what has happened this summer and throughout the 19 years that Gardner-Webb University has hosted Crossroads Summer Camp.

In today's passage, Jesus likens the kingdom of God to a mustard seed. Scholars dispute what is meant by the mustard seed, but regardless of its meaning, this observation holds true. The mustard seed appears very small and insignificant, but it grows and spreads to a remarkable size. Likewise, the kingdom of God begins in relative obscurity, but it grows and spreads throughout the world, culminating in glory.

After 19 years, Crossroads Worldwide is relocating their ministry headquarters to Anderson, S.C. It has been our honor and privilege to be a ministry partner with them. After all, we have much in common. Both started small, experienced tremendous growth, and produced great results. Crossroads Worldwide remains committed to the Gospel. And Gardner-Webb University remains committed to advancing the kingdom of God through Christian higher education.

Prayer: “Lord, thank you for alumni and friends like Clayton King whose vision and faithfulness give us glimpses of your kingdom here on earth.”

Dr. Tracy Jessup is the vice president for the office of Christian life and service and senior minister to the University.