

Connect timeless truths with today's news.

COMING OF AGE IN JAPAN

For nearly seventy years, young people in Japan were considered adults when they turned twenty. For centuries before, the shift into adulthood was marked at age twelve or sixteen. But after World War II, the culture decided to honor young adults, and the second Monday of January became “Seijin-shiki” (coming of age ceremony), the national holiday for doing so. Young women wear formal long-sleeved kimonos, brightly colored and elaborately patterned. Young men wear either the traditional *hakama* with a kimono or dark Western-style suits. However, this year the law was changed to make eighteen the age of adulthood, and individual municipalities are authorized to honor young people of either age, making for some confusion. But the holiday is a celebration, and officials deliver speeches encouraging the new adults to take on responsibilities and to actively participate in society.

GROWING TO MATURITY IN THE LORD

Today's reading comes from the Gospel of Mark and the letter to the Ephesians. Mark brings together several of Jesus' stories that have to do with the kingdom of God. The parable of the growing seed means that we don't directly control the kingdom of God, and the parable of the mustard seed means that God uses small beginnings to do big things. Paul tells the Ephesians that despite there being people from different backgrounds in the church, there is no difference in access to God. Gentiles can receive the same Spirit as Jews. Jesus instituted a leadership structure for the church, a leadership that is built on unity, rather than power.

1. At what age do you consider someone to be an adult?
2. How have you seen spiritual growth or maturity in yourself?
3. What are the ramifications of our having equal standing before the Lord, regardless of race or ethnic background?

Additional Resources

Any videos or web materials are for your personal use. If you play any media files in class, be sure to have the necessary rights to do so.

Playlists

[Contemporary Worship Weekly](#)
[Echoes Worship Weekly](#) (featuring African-American music artists)
[Traditional Worship Weekly](#)

Study Resources

[Dr. Thomas Constable's Notes on Mark 4:26–32](#)
[Devotional: Theology of Work on Parables at Work \(Mark 4:26–29 and 13:32–37\)](#)
[Podcast: BibleProject on “Jesus and the Parables of the Prophets”](#)