

Trailer for *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* (Netflix)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPkr9HmglG0>

**“NGATI MPHEPO YOFIKA KONSE
God is as the wind which touches everything”
May 16, 2021**

"God is as the wind that touches everything." Sit with that thought a moment. Is this how you experience God-Alive? Is that Holy Spirit energy present with you wherever you are and whatever you do? Does the Spirit remind you of her love for you like a breeze--gentle and comforting--or like a gale--insistent and loud--or somewhere in between--steady, palpable, and reliable? Maybe none of these is your experience of God's Spirit. Maybe you feel God is far away from you--uninvolved, uncaring, and undeniably not a part of your everyday consciousness. No worries--God does what God Is whether God's presence is appreciated or not.

Jesus told a number of short stories--parables--to illustrate how God works in concert with the creation to produce a bountiful harvest that all may enjoy. Hear what the Spirit IS saying to the church:

KUFESA (Sowing)

Mark 4:1-8 Parable of the Sower

He went back to teaching by the sea. A crowd built up to such a great size that he had to get into an offshore boat, using the boat as a pulpit as the people pushed to the water's edge. He taught by using stories, many stories.

“Listen. What do you make of this? A farmer planted seed. As he scattered the seed, some of it fell on the road and birds ate it. Some fell in the gravel; it sprouted quickly but didn't put down roots, so when the sun came up it withered just as quickly. Some fell in the weeds; as it came up, it was strangled among the weeds and nothing came of it. Some fell on good earth and came up with a flourish, producing a harvest exceeding his wildest dreams.

William Kamkwamba was born in 1987 in Malawi, a country where magic rules and modern science is mystery. It was also a land withered by drought and hunger, and a place where hope and opportunity are hard to find. But William has read about windmills in a book called *Using Energy*, and he dreams of building one that would bring electricity and water to his village and change his life and the lives of those around him. His neighbors

mock him and called him misala—crazy—but William is determined to show them what a little grit and ingenuity could do.

-Jo Perry, BookBrowse.com, adapted

Malawi is a small, landlocked country in the southeast of the continent of Africa. One of the poorest countries in the world, 80% of its employed population works in agriculture, making weather variances determinative of relative prosperity in good months and mass starvation in bad ones.

Into this setting is born an extraordinarily gifted boy. William has an innate sense of science, and he sees the way forward in an extended drought through applied science and ingenuity. Unfortunately, no one believes him when he says he can power the water well by making a windmill out of wood, a bicycle frame, and a tire to power a simple generator--a "dynamo."

The villagers rely on magic. Magic is the seed that falls on the path and is eaten by the birds. Fear and doubt are the seeds that land in the weeds and cannot take root. The seeds spoil in William's father's insistence on plowing, plowing, plowing the dead, sandy soil and his steadfast denial that his teenage son could *possibly* have any independent insight into the problem and solution. But William's determination and optimism are the good seeds that "fall on good earth and come up with a flourish, producing a harvest that exceeds everyone's wildest dreams." William is the good seed that Jesus talks about, who proves everyone wrong about him and about the uses of science to improve the lives of his family and fellow villagers.

"God is as the wind that touches everything."

KAKULA (Growing)

Mark 4:26-29. Parable of the Seed that Grows Overnight

| Then Jesus said, “God’s kingdom is like seed thrown on a field by a man who then goes to bed and forgets about it. The seed sprouts and grows—he has no idea how it happens. The earth does it all without his help: first a green stem of grass, then a bud, then the ripened grain. When the grain is fully formed, he reaps—harvest time!

Enchanted by the workings of electricity as a boy, William had a goal to study science in Malawi's top boarding schools. But in 2002, his country is stricken with a famine that leaves his family's farm devastated and his parents destitute. Unable to pay the eighty-dollar-a-year tuition for his education, William is forced to drop out and help his family forage for food as thousands across the country starve and die. -Jo Perry, adapted

William, at age 14, is undaunted by his age and the lack of respect he is afforded. He is unstoppable in his thirst for knowledge and energy engineering. He is dispirited when expelled from school when his family cannot pay the tuition, but he finds a way to get access to the school library and the textbooks he needs to bring his plans for a windmill into being.

Who knows where William’s own “magic” comes from? There is nothing in his family life or history to suggest that its progeny would have such a gift for science and innovation. His parents work the fields and theirs is a hard life. They put their children to bed at night not knowing that William’s brain is forming in a way that few brains can. But their sense of family, of values, and their love also grows in the boy as he sleeps, imbuing him with the willpower and innate know-how to use his talents for the good of the entire village.

William is the seed thrown on the field by a man who then goes to bed and forgets about it. Every child is this seed; we need to listen to the wisdom of the children, for they are the kingdom of heaven and their gifts are God-inspired. Even when they are wrong, they are teaching us, urging us on to be better people. Even as they get lost in the crowd that towers above them, our children are pushing their way through to their own light, to their own space, to their own destinies.

“God is as the wind that touches everything.”

KUKULOLA (Harvest)

Matthew 13:24-30. Parable of the Weeds

He told another story. “God’s kingdom is like a farmer who planted good seed in his field. That night, while his hired men were asleep, his enemy sowed thistles all through the wheat and slipped away before dawn. When the first green shoots appeared and the grain began to form, the thistles showed up, too.

“The farmhands came to the farmer and said, ‘Master, that was clean seed you planted, wasn’t it? Where did these thistles come from?’

“He answered, ‘Some enemy did this.’

“The farmhands asked, ‘Should we weed out the thistles?’

“He said, ‘No, if you weed the thistles, you’ll pull up the wheat, too. Let them grow together until harvest time. Then I’ll instruct the harvesters to pull up the thistles and tie them in bundles for the fire, then gather the wheat and put it in the barn.’”

Though he is turned away at school and at his father's door, William refuses to let go of his dreams. With nothing more than a fistful of cornmeal in his stomach, a small pile of once-forgotten science textbooks, and an armory of curiosity and determination, he embarks on a daring plan to bring his family a set of luxuries that only two percent of Malawians can afford and what the West considers a necessity—electricity and running water. Using scrap metal, tractor parts, and bicycle halves, William forges a crude yet operable windmill, an unlikely contraption and small miracle that eventually powers four lights, complete with homemade switches and a circuit breaker made from nails and wire. A second machine turns a water pump that could battle the drought and famine that loomed with every season.

William's enemy is doubt. It is not the drought nor the famine. Yes, these are the byproducts of a fickle weather system that cruelly taunts the starving people of Malawi, but for William, these are the very patterns of nature that spur him on to be the good seed planted in the midst of the thistles. Jesus says in the parable, *No, don't pull up the thistles, for in doing so, you might also pull up the good wheat. Let the thistles and the wheat—that which threatens you and that which is your potential as a good seed—grow together. Soon enough, it will be harvesting time and the wheat, and the thistles can be separated then, each used to their own purpose.*

Doubt is William's thistle that grows up alongside his wheat. His father doubts him, his school headmaster, too. His friends know he is ingenious, but can he do this thing he talks about? Surely not, for he is a simple, uneducated boy. The other villagers call him crazy and for a time, he believes him. But the strong seed inside his brain and fueling his heart will not let his vision die and eventually, his vision becomes the village vision, and not only do people stop calling him crazy, but they join in his effort to build the windmill.

“God is as the wind that touches everything.”

NJALA (Hunger)

Matthew 13:33 Parable of the Leaven

Another story. “God’s kingdom is like yeast that a woman works into the dough for dozens of loaves of barley bread—and waits while the dough rises.”

William’s mother Agnes, usually silent and submissive to her husband, is empowered by William’s energy. She is the one in the family that spends her days quietly working yeast into dough, making the meager harvest feed adults and children alike. When her corn is stolen by marauders who trick her, she is inconsolable. Yet by the next morning, she is again quietly foraging for food, determined that her children and husband should not starve. Her quiet strength is what gives her husband the strength to pass his share of the daily meal off to the children. She does not complain, for to do so is tantamount to giving in to her suffering.

It is her quiet strength that empowers Agnes when it counts to stand up her husband and question his denial to William of that which is needed to build the windmill-his precious and only possession, his bicycle. Doubt and vision grow up together, making William’s eventual success all the stronger. Hunger propels the family forward, each in their own way, each with their own definition.

“God is as the wind that touches everything.”

MPHEPO (Wind)

Matthew 13:31-32. Parable of the Mustard Seed

He put before them yet 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.”

Soon, news of William's *magetsi a mphepo*—his "electric wind"—spreads beyond the borders of his home, and the boy who was once called crazy becomes an inspiration to those around the world.

His is a remarkable story about human inventiveness and its power to overcome crippling adversity. *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* will inspire anyone who doubts the power of one individual's ability to change his community and better the lives of those around him.

William is the mustard seed. Small, inconsequential, a small nobody that might hardly be missed should he succumb to the famine sweeping his homeland. Yet, Jesus says the smallest mustard seed—teeny, tiny, singular mustard seed is the entire key to the kingdom of heaven. This means that the smallest of elements has the potential for the largest of stories. It also means God forgets no one; nothing in God's creation goes unnoticed or unloved. Even William. Even Trywell, who has a hard time seeing the beautiful tree his son will grow into, the living resource that others will come to and build their nests in his branches. God does not forget Agnes, but instead inspires in her courage to use her voice and her quiet influence to help her husband and her son connect in a life-giving way.

Though it may be tempting to ask how a loving God can let the people of Malawi suffer so, the question Jesus asks is rather, *How are the suffering people of Malawi like the kingdom of heaven?* It can take us an entire lifetime

to answer such a puzzling question. But for William, the answer lies in an old bicycle frame, a tire, some wood, and an outdated textbook on wind energy—these and a dream—a seed—that falls on fertile ground, that lies dormant in the field until the time is ripe for it to grow first as a green stem of grass, then a bud, then the ripened grain that signals an abundant harvest. The thistles will not choke him out and the marauders will not steal his vision nor his resolve. Those who love him will quietly work the yeast into dough, standing behind him with quiet confidence and overflowing hearts at his passion. And this little mustard seed, William, at the ripe old age of 14 years, will save a people with his science and determination.

This, Jesus assures us, is how we uncover the kingdom of heaven:

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May It Be So.

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