

Sermon – Like a Mustard Seed

Matthew 13:31-32

³¹ Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: ³² Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

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What is meant by the term, “The Kingdom of Heaven”?

Opinions include:

- **A process:** a course of events where God begins to govern as King.
- Some relate it to the growth and state of the church.
- Similar to the term the Kingdom of God where He begins to have control of your life.
- You can Google and research this yourself but in line with God’s plan as revealed through the Feasts, I like the idea of the Kingdom as a process with an expected end of greatness. This fits very well into my understanding of scriptures.

What is a mustard seed?

- 1-2 millimeters in size.....very small.
- The brush can grow upwards to 20-30 feet.
- The tiny mustard seed holds the potential....Christianity.com
 - What starts out small (our faith), can grow significantly and be used greatly.
 - Faith that starts small but reaches out to many.
- Can spread quickly into a large bushy plant.
- Seed is used as one of the most popular herbs and ingredients even today.

Mustard Trees

- Have an irregular shape, being just as wide as they are tall.
- Shrub’s branches are very low to the ground.

- It blooms.
- Can grow tall without much water; produces a sweet fruit.
- Note: typically, mustard seeds don't grow into a tree as we know it.

Application of the parable.

The Kingdom of Heaven in operation today or in current state can be compared to a single mustard seed. Very small and insignificant in the natural. Nothing special about it and can be easily overlooked and blown away.

However, the Kingdom will not stay like this but instead is designed to grow and expand into something great and very significant. From humble beginnings, it will grow to be great.

Refer to other scriptures on how God takes the least and insignificant to produce greatness.

- Deuteronomy 7:7-9 – He chose Israel the least and fewest of all nations.
- Chose David out of all his other brothers.
 - 1 Samuel 17:40 – and 5 smooth stones.
- Exodus 4:2 – uses a staff.
- Judges 15:15 – uses the jawbone of a donkey.
- John 6:9 – uses a child's small lunch.

The Kingdom of Heaven, the church, will grow into something tremendous and be great. It will become so great, that the birds/others will come and find a resting place in the branches shooting out from this tree.

Now comes the question because mustard seeds typically don't grow into trees as we would imagine....so what do you think the birds represent in this parable?

“Some, or even most, regard this as a description of the growth and eventual dominance of the church, the kingdom community. Yet in light of both the parable itself and the context of the parables both before and after, this should be regarded as another description of *corruption* in the kingdom community, just as the previous parable of the wheat and the tares...” (David Guzik)

Adam Clarke is a good example of the majority opinion on the meaning of this parable and the one following: “Both these parables are *prophetic*, and were intended to show, principally, how, from very small beginnings, the Gospel of Christ should pervade all the nations of the world, and fill them with righteousness and true holiness.”

While the majority of commentators see this from a strictly positive view, Guzik continues to caution us by pointing out, “the mustard seed plant grew unnaturally large and it harbored birds, which in the previous parables were emissaries of Satan.”

“Birds lodging in the branches most probably refers to elements of corruption which take refuge in the very shadow of Christianity.” (Morgan)



Matthew Henry -- parable is to show, that the beginnings of the gospel *would be small, but that its latter end would greatly increase*. In this way the gospel church, *the kingdom of God among us*, would be *set up in the world*; in this way the work of grace in the heart, *the kingdom of God within us*, would be carried on in particular persons.

So, since there are different interpretations around this parable, let's approach this from what we currently know since these parables have a prophetic application.

1. The church, the kingdom has humble beginnings. Mustard seed start. Israel has a humble start. Jesus Christ has a very humble start born to a poor family. The disciples have a humble start.
2. The Man (Christ) sows this humble seed into his field. The disciples are planted into this field.
3. The church has grown and the Gospel preached through these humble beginnings. It took some time, just as the growth of mustard seeds...but it has grown.
 - a. Christianity was made the official religion of the Roman Empire in 380.
 - b. Christianity is the largest religious group in the world in 2021 (31.2%).
4. Three of the world's major religions are linked to each other.

So, it appears almost all of the major items of this parable have been and/or are being fulfilled. When comparing this parable to the others in Matthew Chapter 13, I'm of the following opinion:

- I think (like most) that this is a prophetic success story of the growth of the Kingdom,
- However, I also concur with Guzik's view that it also shows the corruption and false teachings that can also rest on top of the foundation of Christianity. I believe this due to the evidence of church corruption we see today.
- But as the other parables explain, in the future, God will indeed purge out the leaven and sin in His Kingdom. Judgement is on the way.

Personnel Application:

I believe believers can apply this parable to their personal lives.

- Humbly submit to God and recognize your need for Him. Know we are insignificant in our own ways and effort.
- Plant ourselves in His field. Bury the past sins and failures and plant the seed of the Gospel in our hearts/minds.
- Place our faith and hope that God can take our simple offering of our small and insignificant self and turn it into something great and marvelous for the Kingdom.
- If He did it for the Children of Israel, if He did it for David, if He did for the disciples, His plan is to also do this for us. The true application for us today is that God wants to do something great in our lives. Don't discount your value because it seems insignificant today.
- Other will rest on the branches of your testimony and success and glorify God.
- However, be careful not to lose the faith or grow wild through pride and sin. Just as the Children of Israel fell away, we must be watchful as the enemy seeks to compromise our faith.

Your ministry may start out small but grow significantly bringing salvation to many.