

## Parables Of Mustard Seed And Leaven

### Parable of The Mustard Seed

<p>LUK 13:18 Therefore He was saying, "What is the kingdom of God like, and to what shall I compare it?" LUK 13:19 "It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and threw into his own garden; and it grew and became a tree; and the birds of the air nested in its branches."  Gr. "kepos" [kay pahs] - "garden."</p>	<p>MAT 13:31 He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; MAT 13:32 and this is smaller than all other seeds; but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches. "</p>	<p>MAR 4:31 "It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil, MAR 4:32 yet when it is sown, grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that the birds of the air can nest under its shade. "</p>
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LUK 13:18 **Therefore He was saying, "What is the kingdom of God like, and to what shall I compare it? He is using a parable or illustration to teach an important lesson about God's kingdom.**

LUK 13:19 **"It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and threw into his own garden; and it grew and became a tree [tall bush or plant]]; and the birds of the air nested in its branches."**

- Luke illustrates with "a man," but in the next parable he used "a woman" to illustrate a lesson on the kingdom.
  - Matthew 13:31 has "field." "agros" [ag rahs] - "field, cultivated field." In the plural it means "country, farms, villages."
  - The branches of the mustard plant could support small birds.
1. Matthew 13:32 describes the proverbial smallness of the mustard seed.
    - a. Mark also stresses the smallness of the seed. (Mk. 4:31).
    - b. Luke says nothing about the size of the seed.
  2. The mustard tree [garden plant] might grow as high as 10 to 15 feet or more depending on the type and circumstances.
    - a. The word "mustard" is from the Greek "sinapi" [see nah pee] meaning "mustard plant."
      - 1) It was a well-known plant that produced minute seeds. (Matt. 17:20; Lk. 17:6).
      - 2) It often grew to sufficient size to meet the description given in the gospels. (Matt. 13:31,32; Mk. 4:31-32; Lk. 13:19).
    - b. The mustard seed, strictly speaking, was not the smallest of all seeds, but the tiny seed was proverbially used to stand for anything infinitesimally minute.

- 1) The cypress seed was actually smaller.
  - 2) The Rabbis spoke of “a spot or blemish as small as a mustard seed.”
- c. Jesus told the apostles that if they had faith, even a small amount of faith like a grain of mustard seed, they would be able to do many mighty works. (Matt. 17:20; Lk. 17:6).

MAT 17:20 And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you.

LUK 17:6 And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you.  
Gr. “sukaminos” [soo kah mee nahs] - “mulberry or sycamore tree.”

- 1) True faith can accomplish great things.
  - 2) Without it we cannot please God and can accomplish little. (Heb. 11:6; Jas. 1:6-8).
  - 3) To this day the Arabs have a phrase about faith weighing not more than a grain of mustard seed.
3. The kingdom would have small beginning, but it would experience great growth.
- a. The church had a small beginning.

ACT 1:15 And at this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said,

- 1) There were likely believers not present at the Jerusalem gathering. Luke does not maintain all believers were present. He speaks of a gathering of 120 believers.
- 2) Jesus had appeared to more than 500 brethren at one time following His resurrection. (1 Cor. 15:6).
- 3) The 3,000 on the day of Pentecost were added to the “number” being saved.

ACT 2:47 praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

- 4) The apostles were Galileans (Acts 2:14), and it is very unlikely they were the only believers there.

b. It grew very rapidly. (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 18:8).

ACT 2:41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

ACT 4:4 But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

ACT 5:14 And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number;

ACT 6:7 And the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

ACT 18:8 And Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized.

## Lessons

1. This parable teaches the importance of **little things**.

- a. The microscopic mustard seed did not look important, but look what it became!
- b. Our world often put great emphasis on bigness, but Jesus most often stressed the importance of little things.
  - 1) A cup of cold water, a visit to the sick or one in prison, a lost sheep are “little things” in the minds of most people.
  - 2) These “little things,” like the grain of mustard seed, have great value.
  - 3) Most Christians have few opportunities to do “big things” but the Christian life should be filled with “little things.” They can be done on a daily basis.

2. Great things often have **small beginnings**

- a. The greatest works of art begin with a few strokes of the brush.
- b. In literature, every book, every essay, every poem, comes from the twenty-six letters of the alphabet.
- c. The world has been changed by a poor baby born in a feeding trough in a stable in Bethlehem.

LUK 2:7 And she gave birth to her first-born son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

3. God intends for the church or kingdom to grow today.

- a. The exact size of the church is not known for sure, but it is certain there is much room for growth.

1) The world has billions of people lost in sin.

2) 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:4; Jn. 3:16

b. **What will make the church grow today?**

1) We must preach the word of God. (Rom. 1:16). See 2 Tim. 4:2.

2) We must “lift up” Christ. (Jn. 12:32,33). Christ crucified should be the heart of our message. (1 Cor. 2:2).

3) We must tell others about Jesus. (Acts 5:42; 8:4).

ACT 5:42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.	ACT 8:4 Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.
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4) We must promote unity. (Jn. 17:20-21; 1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:4-6).

5) We must manifest love for one another. (Jn. 13:34,35).

6) We must use all kinds of methods, and not exclude something because we have never done that before.

7) We must not put our faith in methods, but in the living God and in the power of His word.

a) Methods change - they come and go.

b) God and His word abide forever. (Matt. 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:23).

#### 4. What is the significance of “branches”?

a. Luke says “the birds of the air nested in its branches.” (Lk. 13:19).

b. Mark says of the mustard tree or plant “and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that the birds of the air can nest under its shade. ” (Mk. 4:32).

c. The main point appears to be that this small seed becomes a tree or plant large enough for the birds to take refuge in and feed on the small black seeds of the mustard pods.

1) The branches are not the Gentile nations.

a) Jewish rabbinic literature spoke of the Gentile nations as the birds of the heavens, but there is no indication or evidence they present coming into the church or kingdom in this parable.

b) The detail of the branches is given to show the size of the tree, and to emphasize the tremendous growth of the mustard tree [plant].

c) The tree [plant] representing the kingdom and its great growth would be composed of Jews and Gentiles, but the branches did not represent Gentiles.

2) The branches do not represent denominations. They did not exist.

a) This was not the subject matter.

b) Regardless of how one feels about denominationalism, it is not an honest treatment of the parable to read it into the parable.

3) If “the branches” have any spiritual significance, it would seem they mean “the kingdom” is a place of refuge.

## Parable Of The Leaven

LUK 13:20 And again He said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God?"

LUK 13:21 "It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of meal, until it was all leavened."

MAT 13:33 He spoke another parable to them, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three pecks of meal, until it was all leavened."

LUK 13:20 **And again He said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God?"**

LUK 13:21 **"It is like leaven [little sourdough], which a woman took and hid in three pecks of meal, until it was all leavened."** See Matthew 13:44.

- A “saton” [sah tahn] translate her e “peck” was the equivalent to a little less than 3 gallons. It amounted to a

little more than a bushel.

GEN 18:6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Quickly, prepare three measures of fine flour, knead it, and make bread cakes."

- “aleuron” [**ah** lou rahn] means “meal, flour.”
1. There is nothing significant about the three measures or pecks of meal except that this was the ordinary amount of meal used in a single baking.
  2. Though leaven customarily signified evil to the Jews (Lk.12:1; Mk. 8:15; 1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9), Jesus here made it signify something good.
  3. This parable stresses the pervasive influence of the kingdom rather than the outward growth.
    - a. Leaven can do nothing to the dough until it is put inside.
    - b. Christianity is like this. It works from the inside.
  4. Leaven imparts a new quality to the dough.
    - a. When leaven is put in the baking meal it changes the ingredients.
    - b. When Christ and His kingdom are taught, many great changes take place. (Acts 16:20; 17:6; Col. 3:5-17; 2 Cor. 5:17).
  5. Leaven works contagiously until “it was all leavened.”
    - a. It does not stop until it has been spread through the whole mixture.
    - b. The kingdom of God spreads by contagion and excitement.
      - 1) Andrew found Peter. (Jn. 1:40-42).

JOH 1:40 One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

JOH 1:41 He found first his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah"(which translated means Christ).

JOH 1:42 He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him, and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas"(which is translated Peter).

2) Philip found Nathaniel. (Jn. 1:43-45).

JOH 1:43 The next day He purposed to go forth into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow Me."

JOH 1:44 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter.

JOH 1:45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

- c. The early church grew because of the contagious enthusiasm and dedication of the first Christians.
- d. They fully trusted in Jesus and made an all out effort to win others to Christ.

- e. Nothing stopped them from proclaiming Christ.
  - f. They did not depend on gimmicks and preaching a message to tickle the ears of men, but believers were sharing Christ.
6. Jesus referred to individual transformation and the inward effect of the kingdom of God on society.

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