



Teachings and Parables of Jesus Pt 9: The Parables of the Mustard Seed and Leaven

November 3, 2019

Text: Matthew 13:31-35

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE MUSTARD SEED

1. In saying “the kingdom of heaven is likened,” our LORD implies that there is some similarity between a mustard seed and His Kingdom...something analogous between the two.
2. What is a mustard seed? A mustard seed is a very small seed (the smallest Jesus’ hearers would be familiar with) that, over time, could grow into a tree/bush 25 feet tall, plenty tall for birds to nest.
3. The point is the seed is **small** and grows very **large**, especially in comparison to its starting state. It doesn’t look like much when it begins, but it becomes something great!
4. Also, please note the simplicity of the process. A man with a field, simply sowed it, or planted it.
 - Note the **intentionality**. Given the size of the seed, how much care must it have taken to sow a simple grain of it? This suggests some forethought.
 - Note that he had a field for which he had a **plan**. This suggests personal investment.
 - Note the **faith** required. Would such a tiny seed grow? Beloved, sometimes, small faith is all that is required in God’s Kingdom to do amazing things:

Matthew 17:20 (KJV) And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

5. Now, our LORD may have meant Himself as the man with a field or that He or His Word is the seed.
 - From His humble beginning as a carpenter’s son, His humble life even during His ministry, and the reasonably “small” amount of people who followed Him at His death and resurrection, the world would be forever changed.
 - Another observation is that the Kingdom of God isn’t like other kingdoms. It isn’t flashy, yet it inexorably grows by the **power** of God!
6. But when we personally apply this text, a question arises: Do you have a field?
7. Another question: Are you willing to sow Kingdom seeds?
8. If we would but sow, the promise is great! In keeping with the metaphor, such a simple act of sowing Kingdom seed can provide rest and shelter for others!
9. Friends, take your small seeds...your nondescript seeds: your gifts that you don’t think will matter, your “meager” efforts at sharing the Gospel, your love for others...
 - Take your **insecurities** and fears, and by faith, overcome them by obeying Jesus...
 - Take your “small” offerings...and sow them!
 - **Many need the shelter and comfort that you, through the Gospel of Christ, will provide. Remember, God grows the tree. Just sow the seed!**

SOME OBSERVATIONS OF THE LEAVEN

1. Leaven can be defined as “any agent added to a flour mixture or liquids to produce a state of fermentation.”
2. The action of leaven (like yeast, Deut 16:3) was to spread and cause a chemical change in the dough, causing it to rise.
3. Again, our LORD seems to be emphasizing the “small” and “humble” but **powerful** nature of His Kingdom.
4. The leaven is “hidden” in that you cannot necessarily see it. But it is certainly there! Mixed in with the meal, the leaven is doing its work, mostly unseen.
5. When the meal is finished baking, it has risen, seemingly on its own!
6. The Kingdom is like that. It grows, by the power of God, where the **Gospel** is present. It isn’t out to draw attention to itself as the world does, yet its influence can clearly be seen.
7. Its growth isn’t based on man’s **ingenuity** but on the power of what it is. As leaven is designed to mix with meal and cause growth, likewise the message of the Kingdom of God is designed to be present in various environments and cause the Kingdom to grow!
8. One commentator said, “The penetrative and diffusive power of this leaven. It spreads till the whole was leavened. This it does because it is leaven, and works according to the law of its own essence. It was not leavened in an instant, but by gradual infection; an emblem of the spread of the gospel in the soul.”
9. Just as leaven “wholly leavens,” the Kingdom of God truly **transforms!**
10. Is your life truly transformed, truly penetrated by the Gospel of the Kingdom? Do you find yourself thinking Kingdom thoughts and yearning for Kingdom things? Have you been “subjugated” or totally taken over by Jesus? :)

SOME THOUGHTS ON VERSES 34-35:

Ever the fulfiller of prophecy, our LORD always did exactly what was spoken of Him, in this case from Psalm 78:

Psalms 78:1-3 (KJV) Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. 2 I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: 3 Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.

Interestingly, the next verses in Psalm 78 say:

Psalms 78:4-6 (KJV) We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. 5 For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: 6 That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children:

Friends, let us keep teaching people about Jesus. Who He is. What He has done. Let us declare His glorious truths to our children.

Let us joyfully labor to see the Kingdom grow like a mustard seed grows (very small and seemingly insignificant to very large) and penetrate men’s hearts and lives like leaven (ever present, sometimes seemingly “hid” but powerfully working!).

May the LORD help us do all these things in a way that honors Him.

Amen!