

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

Matthew 13:31-32 (NRSV)

³¹ He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; ³² 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."

Mark 4:30-32 (NRSV)

³⁰ He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; ³² yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

Luke 13:18-19 (NRSV)

¹⁸ He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what should I compare it? ¹⁹ It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."

Compare the differences of this parable in the three Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. What scenes are represented in this story?

Look at Ezekiel 17:22-24 and Daniel 4:10-12, 20-22. In these readings, what does the Cedar of Lebanon represent? What made Jesus use a mustard seed instead of Cedar of Lebanon? How does Jesus respond to this question?

What is a mustard plant like? How does this parable contrast to the Jewish expectation of Kingdom?

What is God's reign like in your own words?

What are the social implications of this view of God's reign?

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

Jesus told this parable comparing the mustard seed to the kingdom of God. Jesus said, "How can I describe the Kingdom of God? What story should I use to illustrate it? It is like a mustard seed planted in the ground. It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of all garden plants; it grows long branches, and birds can make nests in its shade."

How is that a picture of the kingdom of God?

When Jesus first began his earthly ministry, he had no followers. The Bible tells us that Jesus was walking along the shore of the sea of Galilee when he saw two fishermen, Peter and his brother Andrew, casting their nets. "Come, follow me," Jesus said to them. They immediately followed Jesus. As they continued on their way, they saw two other brothers, James and John, mending their nets. Jesus called them and they immediately left their nets and followed him. One by one, Jesus called his disciples until there were twelve of them. That is still a pretty small beginning, isn't it? Jesus sent out the twelve and they brought others to Jesus and the kingdom of God grew. From a very small beginning, the kingdom of God has grown and grown until it has spread over the entire earth.

Jesus started growing the kingdom of God with a handful of disciples. Every follower of Jesus is a part of the kingdom and that means that you and I are a part of God's kingdom. Each time we tell someone about Jesus, we are helping to grow the kingdom.



Questions to Consider

What type of seed does Jesus refer to as the smallest seed planted in a garden?

What is amazing about a very small mustard seed?

List some ways you are your family can help grow God's kingdom.

MATTHEW 13:31-32

