

## *The Parables Series Part 3 The Parable of the Mustard Seed*

***“The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”***  
***Matthew 13:31-32***

Jesus loved to use stories to illustrate profound, life-transforming concepts. He loved to use real and genuine settings, characters, and ideas that apply to all of us to reveal God’s heart of pursuit and love. This week we’re going to spend time allowing the parables of Jesus to speak directly to our situations, mindsets, and core beliefs about who God is. Open your heart and mind to be transformed by the powerful and captivating stories of Jesus.

Jesus tells a beautiful parable of the kingdom of God in ***Matthew 13:31-32***. He teaches, ***“The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”*** Trees are beautiful pictures of God’s ability to take what we view as weak or insignificant, a seed, and make a magnificent and life-giving creation out of it. And ***Matthew 13*** reveals how trees can be viewed as pictures of the very kingdom of their Creator. It’s remarkable that God would begin his kingdom small and grow it by his faithful stewardship into a beautiful and life-giving creation.

God took the seed of the death of one man, Jesus, to create a beautiful tree of salvation for all of humanity. ***John 3:17*** says, ***“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”*** Our heavenly Father’s wrath over our sin poured out on Jesus allowed God to free the rest of us from eternal condemnation. And through the seed of Jesus’ death, God has been creating a powerful and eternal global movement, bringing people to restored relationship with himself across thousands of years. Just as the mustard seed grows large enough to become a tree in which birds make their home, the kingdom of God has transferred our citizenship to a new home with him. ***Philippians 3:20*** says, ***“But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”*** ***John 15:19*** says, ***“If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”*** The kingdom of God established through Christ has saved us from slavery to this world and ransomed us back into restored relationship with our heavenly Father.

Not only does the parable describe the incredible expanse of God’s kingdom from a few to many, it can also illustrate the seed of salvation planted within each of us that God intends to grow into a beautiful and fruit-bearing tree. ***Luke 17:21*** says, ***“The kingdom of God is in the midst of you.”*** God’s kingdom is not built of brick and mortar, but of human hearts.

And ***1 Peter 2:2*** commands us, ***“Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation.”*** God’s desire is to water the seed of salvation he’s

planted in us with the Spirit and the word. He longs to mold and shape us into the likeness of Jesus, that we might live lives that bear incredible life-giving fruit. ***Hosea 14:4-7*** illustrates God's heart beautifully when it says, ***"I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily; he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon; his shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive, and his fragrance like Lebanon. They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow; they shall flourish like the grain; they shall blossom like the vine; their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon."*** God wants to constantly steward this gift of salvation in each of us, as he does with the global advancement of his kingdom, that we might bear the wonderful fruit of the Spirit in every area of our lives.

And God is so patient with us. The earth illustrates his patience. Trees grow year after year, season to season by his faithful stewardship. Flowers never begin as beautiful as they are in full bloom. The earth is constantly undergoing abundant transformation as God's creation grows and changes. You and I are no different. God's plan has always been to mold us into beautiful pictures of his love. He's always longed to fashion us until we walk in full, restored relationship with him. And by the life and death of Christ, he's paved the way for his desires to come to fruition. All that's left is for us to engage fully in this wonderful process he's created for us. Engage in the growth he longs to birth in you by spending time in his presence and his word. Allow his gaze to transform you into his likeness. Live in obedience to the word, and allow it to lead you to a life not conformed to this world. Follow the guidance of the Spirit as he brings healing to your heart and fruit in your life.