

**The Parables of Jesus #6**  
**The Parable of the Mustard Seed**  
**(Mt. 13:31-32)**  
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**INTRODUCTION**

**A. The sponge dinosaur**

1. When I was a kid, my mother brought home a small packet that boldly proclaimed that it had a dinosaur inside
2. The instructions said to toss it into the tub at bathtime and watch the magic happen
3. I remember tossing it in the water and instantly the water swelled the content of the packet many times its original size
4. It was a dried, compressed sponge shaped like a dinosaur

**B. We're always amazed when something like that happens**

1. "Good things come in small packages" is a modern proverb that reminds us that we often get more than expected
2. We're surprised when the smaller athlete defeats the bigger one
3. It's noteworthy when anything small produces big results

**C. That's why Jesus told the story of the mustard seed to illustrate God's kingdom**

1. It would be very possible to overlook the power of God because he doesn't always work the way we expect him to work
2. We might look for big things, but we might miss them at the source
3. This story was meant to tell us something about the kingdom that is very important

**I. THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED**

**A. Matt 13:31-32**

Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches." (NKJ)

**B. Jesus uses the idea of sowing seed in different ways**

1. In the parable of the sower
  - a. seed was the word of God
  - b. the soil was the hearts of men
2. In the parable of the wheat and the tares
  - a. the field is the world
  - b. the seed are sons of the kingdom

### **C. This parable is a different use yet**

1. Jesus is describing what the kingdom of God is like
2. Here the kingdom is like seed sown in the ground
3. It begins as a small seed, but produces a large plant
4. That's a good description of God's kingdom

### **D. A look at the particulars**

1. Jesus used the picture of the mustard seed
  - a. he does not mean literally the smallest of seeds, for there are some seeds smaller.... he speaks in a proverbial sense using a seed that would commonly be the smallest these people would plant in the garden
  - b. nor does he mean it is literally the largest of trees, for there are many trees actually larger.... again he speaks in a proverbial sense of the plant that would be commonly be the largest in the garden
2. This idea is used in several other places
  - a. Matt 17:20  
So Jesus said to them, "'Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. (NKJ)
  - b. Luke 17:6  
So the Lord said, "'If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you. (NKJ)
  - c. the power of faith is seen in the fact that it can be represented by such a small thing as a mustard seed
3. The point is not the size of the seed or the tree, but the simple contrast of a large tree growing from a relatively small seed

## **II. LESSONS TO LEARN FROM THE PARABLE**

### **A. The obvious one is the description of God's kingdom**

1. Remember the picture -- it is a small seed that produces a large plant
2. Dan 2:34-35 (Interpreting Neb.'s dream about God's kingdom)  
You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. (NKJ)
3. Planting a seed is the whole concept behind farming
  - a. no one expects one seed to feed or provide for anyone
  - b. but plant that seed and its power is multiplied

4. The idea is that great things can come from small beginnings
  - a. that was true of the Jewish nation itself - traced to one man
  - b. it was true of Jesus - humble beginning to glory of heaven
  - c. it was true of his disciples - 12 against the world

**B. The parable also illustrates the principle of growth**

1. Plant a seed and then watch it grow.... the product is amazing compared to its small beginning
2. The history of the church proves that to be true
  - a. Acts 1:15 -- 120 scared disciples gathered together
  - b. Acts 2:41 -- 3,000 baptized on Pentecost
  - c. Acts 4:4 -- number of men came to be 5,000
  - d. Acts 6:1 -- number of disciples multiplied
  - e. Acts 6:7 -- number of disciples multiplied greatly
  - f. Acts 8:4 -- those who were scattered went everywhere preaching
  - g. Rom 10:18 -- sound >all the earth -- words> ends of world
  - h. Col 1:23 -- gospel preached to all the world
3. I doubt the 120 in Acts 1:15 ever imagined that would happen!

**C. God has often used small things to accomplish his will in the world**

1. Zech 4:10  
For who has despised the day of small things? (NKJ)
2. Mt 25:24-30 -- one talent was as important as the 5 or the 2
3. Mk 12:44 -- the widow's two mites were a great gift
4. Lk 15:4 -- one sheep was worth looking for
5. Lk 15:7 -- one repentant sinner causes joy in heaven
6. Lk 15:8 -- 10 coins caused a search of the house

**D. Since that's true, there must be some meaning for us as well**

1. In your own life
  - a. do not discount small beginnings
  - b. a changed life begins with simple, small steps of knowledge
  - c. great service begins with small words or small acts of goodness
2. In the church as a whole
  - a. how many churches exist today because one or two people were determined to serve God
  - b. how many mission works are conducted because of the interest and goals of one or a handful of Christians
  - c. how much good to the community or evangelism has occurred because a few prayed fervently
3. If we are afraid to start small we might never see how grand a result might happen

## **CONCLUSION**

### **A. God's kingdom doesn't always work like things of the world**

1. We'd start off with a bang -- have a grand opening -- hold a news conference -- give away prizes -- advertise on TV and radio --- we'd make it big!!
2. God starts small, and allows it to grow
3. God doesn't seem to be interested in the flashy -- just the solid

### **B. Given the picture of the God's kingdom -- how do you see it growing in your life?**

### **C. Invitation**