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**Intro:** We are studying the parables Jesus told about the kingdom of heaven. Today we come to the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven. **God loves to take the smallest of the small, and make it the biggest of the big so that He gets all the glory!** And His kingdom will "go viral" and conquer the whole world!

**a. God chose the smallest when He chose Israel: Deut. 7:6-8:** The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you . . .

**b. He did it when Israel fought wars:** God decreased Gideon's army from 32,000 to 300 – and He won big!

**c. He did it when He chose David to be King:** He passed over all of Jesse's older, bigger, stronger sons and chose a young, little shepherd boy – David. It was David He used to slay the great giant Goliath!

**d. He did it all over the place when He chose barren women to fulfill His promise to save His people from their sins:** Sarah – barren until Isaac; Rebekah – barren until Jacob and Esau; and the ultimate barren woman – a virgin – Mary gave birth to the great deliverer Himself – the Lord Jesus Christ!

**e. God does it still today: 1 Corinthians 1:26-29:** For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

### **1. The Parable Of The Mustard Seed**

**Matthew 13:31-32:** He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took & sowed in his field. <sup>32</sup> It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants & becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

**a. Jesus is explaining the Kingdom of God again:** In the context of Jesus' life and ministry, why might He be laboring so hard to explain the Kingdom of God to His hearers? Many of the Jews and Jewish leaders expected the first coming of the Messiah (the Savior) to be more like His second coming!

- **James and John:** Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them? (Luke 9:54)

- **John the Baptist:** Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?

So Jesus is explaining that the Kingdom is coming in a different way than many expected. It's coming slowly, gradually, not by brute force, but by the sowing of the seed of the Word and the changing of human hearts!

**b. The kingdom of heaven starts out small: 1) Jesus uses the mustard seed as an illustration of starting out small:** People accuse Jesus of getting this wrong – there are smaller seeds in the world than a mustard seed. How should we answer this objection?

- **Jesus is speaking into a context: Matthew 13:32:** when it has grown it is larger than **all the garden plants**

**John MacArthur:** Dr. Shinnors, Director of the Herbarium at Southern Methodist University down in Dallas. They contain there 318,000 botanical specimens from around the world, and this doctor is a lecturer at the Smithsonian Institute. He said this, "The mustard seed would indeed have been the smallest of those likely to have been noticed by the people at the time of Christ. The only modern crop plant of importance with smaller seeds than a mustard seed, the only one in modern day, for a crop plant is tobacco," he said, "and that plant is of American origin and was not grown in the old world until the 16<sup>th</sup> century."

- **Jesus is speaking proverbially:** This was a common, proverbial way of speaking during Jesus day to speak of something being very small. Matthew 17:20 – “faith as small as a mustard seed”  
- “That's like trying to find a needle in a hay stack.” Yet you know there are things smaller than a needle.

**Pastor:** You see a Smart Car: “Wow, that's the smallest car in the world!” – Actually the Peel P50 made in the British Isles is in the Genus Book Of World Records as the smallest car in the world.

2) The kingdom of heaven doesn't seem successful at first: Jesus and twelve uneducated, common men. Jesus was getting rejected by the Jewish leaders, even His own parents thought He was crazy. His disciples never seemed to fully grasp what He was teaching. In the end they all forsook Him – one denied Him, another betrayed Him. He ended up being crucified on a cross, and His disciples were all scared and hiding!

But then something happened three days after Jesus was killed. And His disciples seemed to be transformed into bold witness about this Man Jesus! Most (all but one!) even died for the sake of Jesus' name! What happened? Jesus rose up from the grave! And so what started small began to get very big!

**Michael Faraday:** Figured out how to generate electricity; Queen Isabella II of Spain: “What possible use can be found for electricity?” “Of what use is a newborn baby?”

God loves to take what's small, and make it real big! This is what He's doing with His Kingdom.

**c. The kingdom of heaven grows to be the largest tree of all the plants in he garden: Acts 1:3-8:** To them he presented himself alive after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

- **Hab. 2:14:** For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.  
- **Rev. 11:15:** The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord & of his Christ, & he shall reign forever and ever.

**d. Birds of the air will come and make nests in its branches:** The birds of the air making nests in the large tree points to the Gospel going to the nations!

- **Ezekiel 17:22-23:** Thus says the Lord GOD: "I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar & will set it out. I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, & I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. On the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bear branches & produce fruit & become a noble cedar. And under it will dwell every kind of bird; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest.

- **Ezekiel 31:6:** All the birds of the heavens made their nests in its boughs; under its branches all the beasts of the field gave birth to their young, and under its shadow lived all great nations.

## **2. The Parable Of The Leaven**

**Matthew 13:33:** He told them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."

Three measures of flour is about 50 pounds of flour, enough bread to feed 100 people! At first the leaven seems small compared to the three measures of flour – it's hidden and inconspicuous. But eventually, slowly but surely, it spreads throughout all the flour until all is leavened. It has an influence on all the flour. So is the kingdom of heaven. It will spread and have influence over all people and over all the earth!

- **D. A. Carson:** The general thrust of this parable is the same as that of the mustard seed. The kingdom produces ultimate consequences out of all proportion to its insignificant beginnings . . . If there is a distinction between this parable and the last one, it is that the mustard seed suggests extensive growth and the yeast intensive transformation. The yeast doesn't grow; it permeates, and its inevitable effect, despite the small quantity used, recalls Jesus' words in 5:13: **Matthew 5:13:** You are the salt of the earth . . . .
- **Al Mohler:** Jesus' kingdom will "go viral" and conquer the whole world & influence the whole world!
- **Ligon Duncan:** The kingdom of heaven works from the inside out; Impacts every aspect of our being; Unnoticed

**Ligon Duncan:** The gospel does not brag. The kingdom does not advertise itself. The kingdom does not draw attention to itself as it works. It works slowly & surely . . . even if it's insignificant in the eyes of men. But the kingdom works & it doesn't draw attention to itself. One of the privileges that I had while serving at RTS was to know one of the professors that Paul Long had brought to us to serve as a missions faculty member, Dr. Will Norton. I first got to know Dr. Norton when he & I had offices together in the Dean Center & I met one of his students. In fact, one night I met this gentlemen from Africa, named Yusufu Jinkiri, late one Friday or Saturday night as he was emptying trash in the Dean Center. Later I found out that he was Dr. Yusufu Jinkiri & he was already an accomplished Christian educator. He was a real picture of humility. I never would have known his position because he never told me. I found out his position from someone else. And in many ways Dr. Jinkiri was a picture of the kingdom. He humbly went about the Lord's work without drawing attention to himself. One of the great experiences I had at RTS was when we gave a going-away celebration for Dr. Norton as he was leaving us to retire to RTS Charlotte to start the missions program there. There was an assembly called of the students & the faculty & we reminisced & we thanked Dr. Norton for his service in our midst. Dr. Jinkiri was one of the students who reminisced about Dr. Norton & he told a story that left us all in tears. It seems that the reason that Dr. Jinkiri had chosen to come to study at RTS was because of Dr. Norton. And the reason that he wanted to study with Dr. Norton is because Dr. Norton had written a massive history of the evangelistic work, a missionary work, in Dr. Jinkiri's area of Africa. Dr. Norton had written the history of how that area had been evangelized by missionaries. It was some three or four hundred pages of the history of that evangelistic work & Dr. Jinkiri was fascinated by it. But it wasn't just the story that Dr. Norton told that drew him. You see, Dr. Jinkiri knew that Dr. Norton had been the most important American missionary in that area for the work of Christ in missions. But in the 400 pages of the history that Dr. Norton himself had written, he had never mentioned his name once. And Yusufu Jinkiri said, "That is the man that I want to study under." You see, that's how the kingdom works. It doesn't draw attention to itself, it goes about powerfully, [unstoppable], moving on and never bragging and boasting.

## **3. Jesus' Parables Fulfill Prophecy**

**Matthew 13:34-35:** All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. <sup>35</sup> This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world."

**a. Jesus taught in parables: D. A. Carson:** "without a parable" does not mean that he told nothing but parables to the crowd but that he said nothing to them without using parables. In short, parables were an essential part of his spoken ministry.

**b. Jesus' parable teaching fulfills prophecy: Psalm 78:1-4: A MASKIL OF ASAPH.** Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! <sup>2</sup> I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, <sup>3</sup> things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. <sup>4</sup> We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.

**Daniel Doriani:** The context of Psalm 78 suggests that God chose to reveal the truth despite the rebellion of mankind. Psalm 78 reviews Israel's history, accenting two themes: God is the Rock and Redeemer of Israel, but Israel has been rebellious – sporadically faithful at best. Yet God never abandoned Israel; he prepared a Redeemer for her (78:67-72). The next two parables affirm this point and add one more thought. The kingdom not only grows large, it also has supreme value.

**Ligon Duncan:** There are four ways in which Jesus fulfills that saying. First of all, if you will scan that psalm, Psalm 78, you will see over and over Asaph tell you that God manifests His power, He works wonders, & He shows lovingkindness in the history of Israel. Over & over He does these things. Jesus does so more. Jesus is the greatest manifestation of God's power, the greatest manifestation of His love. In no one is God more clearly displayed in His love, in His power, in His grace, in His wonders. Notice also that Asaph shows that in spite of God's love, the people of Israel rejected Him. Jesus, in spite of His love, was rejected by many in Israel & . . . by many Gentiles. Asaph also ends this psalm on a triumphant note saying that God will set David up over Israel as His shepherd. Jesus, in the gospel of John, said, "I am the good shepherd." He is the David for which all of the Old Testament was waiting to rule over the kingdom. And of course, finally, Asaph, throughout this psalm, uses a parabolic style. He speaks in figures of speech, using figurative or metaphorical language & Jesus preached to the multitudes using parables & similitudes & metaphors & figurative language. The application, of course, is that Jesus is the fulfillment of that Old Testament prophecy. Jesus is divine. His deity must be acknowledged. Jesus is Messiah. We must acknowledge Him as the one who was promised for all, both Jew & Gentile. Jesus is the Savior. He is the only way. Jesus is the shepherd. He is our guide & leader. Jesus is the teacher. He is the authority for our life & His book, the Bible, is the only final authority of faith & practice. & we must present Jesus as He is presented in the Word if we are to bring men & women & boys & girls to Christ because that is the only Jesus who will save.

### **Jesus Is The Mustard Seed Of Mustard Seeds Out Growing All The Plants Of The Earth!**

He started out small, but He ended up larger than life!

You can't out grow Him, and you can't grow without Him!

The sidewalk of your stubborn heart can't stop Him from growing up and bearing fruit!

There's no weed killer that can make His unconquerable branches wither and die!

You can't stop His growth, stunt His growth, or cement over His growth because He's sown, supported, strengthened, and satisfied by the Supreme Sovereign Savior of the world!

He doesn't need soil!

He doesn't need fertilizer!

He doesn't need water!

And He doesn't need the sun because He's a light all to Himself!

He was smaller than small, but now He's bigger than big!

He's bigger than the biggest reality you could ever imagine and then some!

I wonder if He's the biggest treasure in your heart today?!

His beginnings were small and secluded, little and limited, but don't despise the day of small things!

He was born of a virgin accused of immorality, but don't despise the day of small things!

His parents were young, inexperienced, poor, and unheard of, but don't despise the day of small things!

He was born and laid in the feeding trough of unclean animals, but don't despise the day of small things!

He was born as a little baby, in a little country, to a little family, in a little empire, on a little planet, in a little solar system, in a little galaxy, in a little universe compared to the utter bigness of what He always has been and what He always will be! Don't despise the day of small things!

He lived an obscure, unknown life for thirty years and publicly taught for only three years, but don't despise the day of small things!

He had no form or majesty that we should look at Him, and no beauty that we should desire Him, but don't despise the day of small things!

While ministering with His disciples He had no place to lay His head, but don't despise the day of small things!

He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, but don't despise the day of small things!

His disciples never seemed to understand what He was teaching, but don't despise the day of small things!

He came into Jerusalem, humble and riding on a donkey, but don't despise the day of small things!

His disciples all forsook Him in His greatest time of need, but don't despise the day of small things!

He was falsely accused, spit upon, beaten, ridiculed, stripped down naked and hung on a cross to die the worst death in the history of this world, but don't despise the day of small things!

On that cross He satisfied the wrath of God in His own body on the tree, and as the Lamb of God He took away the sin of the world! So don't despise the day of small things!

That's my King! Do you know Him?!

He didn't stay dead and that's where all His smallness began to get real big!

He rose up from the dead and conquered all the biggest enemies of God and the human race forever!

His bigness conquered Satan in stunning superiority!

His bigness triumphed over sin by opening a cleansing fountain filled with blood!

His bigness won the victory over death so that we may live forever and live to die no more!

Now He's bigger than life, more precious than life, the only One Who can give life, and the only One Who makes life worth living!

The book written all about Him, the Bible, is the best-selling book of all time!

His few, cowardly, denying, slow-to-understand disciples have grown in numbers to compose one of the largest religions on the planet!

His disciples continue to grow and increase with people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation as they repent and believe in Him and learn to obey all He's commanded!

His Kingdom can't be stopped, it won't be stopped, and the more people try to stop it by all manner of opposition, violence, and death the more it will grow and grow back stronger!

It will continue to grow until all of God's and our enemies are placed under His feet, all His chosen, blood-bought people are saved, and He returns to create a new heavens and a new earth where holiness, righteousness, beauty, glory, and goodness will flourish forever and ever!

For all His followers He must be, will be, and cannot help but be their biggest joy, treasure, and pleasure, and their greatest hope, love, and delight in all the universe!

Are you small today? Do you feel small today? Don't despise the day of small things! If you are Christ's then God Almighty is for you and no one and nothing can successfully be against you!

Christ Jesus' Kingdom Starts Out Small  
Like Mustard Seed, But Then Grows Tall  
Birds Come And Nest, All Nations Call  
The Kingdom Leaven Spreads To All  
Each Prophecy Fulfilled, The Gall  
And Wrath Of God, He'd Curse And Maul

His Own Loved Son His Judgment Fall  
Christ Died And Rose To Death Recall  
Now He's Our All And Does Enthrall  
His Grace Shields Us Like A Great Wall  
So Good Alone On Us Befall!