

# The Parable of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please open your Bibles to the Gospel of Matthew and to the 13th chapter, Matthew chapter 13. Matthew chapter 13.

Today we're looking at verses 31 through 33, if you'll look there with me. He put another parable before them, saying, 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. 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. Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word, and we ask for your help as it's open, that you would help us understand we remember what was said of these parables, that Jesus is speaking in parables partly to hide truth from those who don't know him, who don't love him.

Lord, we pray that you spiritually would open our eyes to see and understand the truth of these parables, that they would apply to us. And we pray even for faith for those who don't know you, as that seems so clearly to be a prerequisite to understanding.

[ 1 : 43 ] And so, Lord, we pray that you would work that even through the preaching of your word. But be with us now by your spirit's power as your word's open. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Now, you may remember, if you've been here for the last few weeks, as we've gone through chapter 13, that Matthew 13 contains the kingdom parables of Jesus.

It is a series of seven parables, all of which focus on the theme of the kingdom of God. We talked about before that one reason for these parables is that they were designed to teach us about unexpected aspects of the kingdom, especially, I think, for the disciples who were there hearing Jesus' teaching.

For us, maybe we have the New Testament. We have these teachings. We probably know some of these things already. But to teach things that were unexpected aspects of the kingdom, things we might not have thought the kingdom would be like.

The disciples, for example, like most of the Jews, expected Christ's kingdom to come in a different form in which it actually appeared. They expected the Messiah to come and to overthrow the Roman government, to set up his throne in Jerusalem, and to reign over the entire world.

They expected it to be a very physical fulfillment of the kingdom, a kingdom that would be here on earth, that would reign over all the nations. And so Jesus used these parables to teach his disciples and us things in the life of the kingdom that are different from the way we might have expected them to be.

[ 3 : 13 ] So these two parables in particular, the parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the leaven, teach us about the outward and the inward growth of the kingdom. And I want us to look at each one of those points as we look at each parable.

So we're just going to look at one parable for point one and the other one for point two. Outward growth first from the mustard seed in verses 31 and 32, and then the inward growth in verse 33 with the parable of the leaven.

Let's look again at verse 31 and 32. He put another parable before them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took, and he 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. So in this parable, Jesus reminds us that Christians need to be careful about how we measure the outward growth of God's kingdom.

Now, remember, he's teaching us about the kingdom. Here's what the kingdom is like. It's like the smallest of all garden seeds. Sometimes the outward growth for us seems to be insignificant. [ 4 : 23 ] It doesn't live up to our expectations. We think of the church. Maybe we think of the church in America, what we know of the church, and we think, Why isn't the church bigger than it is? Why aren't there more Christians in the world?

And so we look at the outward things, and it doesn't live up to our expectations. If you think it's hard for us sometimes, consider Jesus as he's speaking to his disciples. Can you imagine as he's interacting with them?

Their expectations of what the kingdom was going to be like was the Messiah would come, he would overthrow the government, he was going to set up a reign, a rule on the throne. And here's the reality of what they're experiencing.

There's 12 disciples. We know in the future one's even going to turn away. But there's 12 disciples. Now, we learn from the Gospels that there's an outward group of disciples of about 70.

And at times even a group of 120 that follow Jesus. Sometimes there are crowds that follow him, but what we're kind of told is that they seem to be unbelievers. They reject him. They're just curious. And so, best case scenario, it seems like by the time Jesus goes to the cross, there's 120 disciples, tops.

[ 5 : 33 ] And many of them are turning away when they see Jesus going to the cross. They're denying him. They're walking away. And so, for them, the expectation of what the kingdom is going to be like was it's going to be global.

He's going to reign on the throne and he's going to take over the world. The reality is he's going to die on a cross and he's going to have about as many followers as there are here in this room today. That's it. In the whole world, the followers of Jesus would look about like this room. Now, when you compare that to the number of people in the world, the kingdom isn't looking so great, is it?

Right? If we're judging just by outward appearances, it's pretty small. The smallest of all garden seeds he compares it to, the mustard seed. And so, as Jesus goes about his ministry, we've seen already in the Gospel of Matthew, he's being rejected by his own people.

He's being opposed by the leaders of the nation, the ones that ought to embrace him. The people who should believe him, they're all rejecting him. They're opposing him. They're ultimately the ones who put him to the cross, put him to death.

[ 6 : 40 ] And even though large crowds are following him at times, they don't seem to accept him. They don't believe he truly is who he claims to be, that he's the Messiah.

They find him interesting, but they don't really embrace him as the Messiah. And so, largely, he's rejected. And so, by all accounts, we would count this kingdom as insignificant.

It's not really that great in comparison to the whole world. It's just a small group of people. Maybe a dozen, a few more than that. Not very many at all. But what Jesus is teaching, I think, in this parable is he's saying not to judge things, the seed, by its outward appearance.

You don't know what it's going to produce just by how it begins. The beginning may look small, but think of the mustard seed. The beginning of the mustard seed looks pretty small, doesn't it? But consider what it grows into. And so, he's teaching them.

In some ways, he's preparing them for what's to come when he goes to the cross. It may look small, but the kingdom's going to grow and it's going to become large. Though outwardly, his ministry looked insignificant in comparison to what they were expecting, it will yet have a tremendous impact.

[ 7 : 55 ] I think that's what Jesus is communicating to them. It may not measure up to your expectations, but don't discount it. It will yet have a tremendous impact. And again, consider the disciples' expectations.

They expected the kingdom to come in glory, in the glory of God being revealed here on earth as the kingdom came. Rome would be overthrown. The Messiah would reign over the nations from his throne in Jerusalem.

You may remember, this is why they were so eager. They were almost fighting over who's going to sit on his right hand and left hand. Their picture is, Jesus is going to take over the world.

He's going to reign on his throne over the entire world. And who's going to be number one and number two in the kingdom? Behind Jesus. Well, I want to sit on his right hand. I want to sit on his left hand. And they're fighting over it.

And they're getting their mom to come and talk to Jesus in secret. Lest other disciples find out. And they get mad because they want those positions. Right? They're expecting him to reign in some earthly kingdom.

[ 8 : 53 ] Who's going to be vice president of the whole world? Pretty prestigious, huh? This is what they're expecting. This is what they're longing for. But what they cannot fathom is that the Messiah has come to die.

And that it's this dying that represents the coming of the kingdom. This life, this death represents the kingdom coming. What the kingdom's coming looks like is far different than what they expected it to look like.

So what's going to happen when they realize Jesus has actually died on that cross? Are they going to think all their expectations have failed? The kingdom's over. It's nothing.

Even the leader of the kingdom, the one who should be sitting on the throne, is dead. What hope is there for this kingdom? And so Jesus is teaching them and preparing them. It's like a mustard seed. Maybe it's taking it too far, but even if the mustard seed goes into the ground, it dies.

It produces something far greater than itself. And so we see this being represented to us of the kingdom. The mustard seed is the smallest of the garden seeds planted in Palestine. But we're told that in that land, the mustard seed grows, or the mustard plant grows to be the largest of the garden plants.

[ 10 : 03 ] He even compares it to a tree. He says, birds come and make nests inside of it. So from the tiniest seed comes the largest of the garden bushes.

Maybe I try to think, what would it look like in our day and age? We think of maybe something like an acorn. That's oftentimes used as illustration in America. You put the acorn in such a small little thing, you put it in the ground, it produces an oak tree.

We all know, we probably have seen mustard seeds, how small they are, and to understand it produces this large plant. But the story is made to point out that the kingdom's outward manifestation is like the mustard plant.

It may appear to be insignificant, but it grows in truly amazing ways. And so the message in the parable of the mustard seed is one of faith, it's one of patience, it's one of persistence.

Be patient. Keep on believing. Keep on praying. Keep on working. God's kingdom will grow, but don't judge the effectiveness of the kingdom by its outward appearances, because it's more powerful than it appears to be.

[ 11 : 08 ] It's going to end up being something far greater than it looks like it is today. It's going to keep growing. And so the power of the kingdom is not in its outward form, or its size, or its appearance.

Now just to give you a little insight, this parable may be referring back to the prophecy in Ezekiel 17.23.

On the mouth and height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bear branches and produce fruit and 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.

And so we have this picture of, it's this almost sapling that's cut off from Israel. And so there's a small remnant that remains of Israel. And you think of Jesus' day again, if we're talking about numbers in the dozen or 70 or 120, this small remnant of God's people that are planted, that produces this great tree, and all the birds of every sort come and make their nest in it.

And what's being presented there in Ezekiel is really this influence, this coming in of the nations to become part of the kingdom of God. And I think this too is part of what's being communicated to us here in this parable.

[ 12 : 18 ] Jesus is saying, with this tiny seed, these, and we can even maybe say these 11 disciples, with these 11, the kingdom's going to grow, and it's going to become a place where all the nations can make their home.

The branch, the overarching tree that they're going to find shelter in. And so even here we have this prophecy, this vision of the nations being brought in to become part of the kingdom of God, making their home within the kingdom.

But right now it doesn't look like a place where the nations are going to dwell, does it? It's this little bitty tiny seed. It's nothing, so it seems. But it's going to produce something great. It's going to be inclusive of these nations.

People from every tribe and tongue and language, every tribe and language and nation will find eternal homes here in the church of Jesus Christ. But it starts with the smallest of seeds. It's easy to miss it. It's easy to overlook it. It's easy to discount it. But it will be great. And then secondly, a related parable here that are connected. Verse 33, we see the inward growth. [13:23] 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.

So in the story of the parable of the leaven, Jesus teaches us that the kingdom's growth may be imperceptible but pervasive. Again, it's pretty similar. Right? Don't discount small beginnings. Don't judge by the outward appearance. So too, we don't know what's going on inside the bread. When the leaven's in there, how it's working, how it's spreading. Leaven, if you're not familiar with the term, today we might equate it very easily with yeast. But leaven is a little different than that. It's some of the batch of the dough that's left over. It's fermented. And this batch of dough from a previous baking is then used to mix in with flour to leaven a whole batch of new dough for the next baking. Now, I hope I explained that well enough. Obviously, I'm not using leaven very often in baking. But I think I've understood that and explained it well so you can understand. But think of the same thing of yeast.

[14:36] What happens when you put, I mean, these little bitty microbes, you put them in something and they multiply, they spread, they fill all of what they're put into. So likewise, as you put this leaven into the bread, it spreads, and all the bread becomes leavened, even though the flour previously was not.

Now, often in Scripture, I think almost exclusively in Scripture except for this reference, leaven is used as a representation of sin. And so we see a number of Scripture passages that indicate this. For example, in Mark 8.15, Jesus warns His disciples against the leaven or the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. Don't allow the leaven of the Pharisees, the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, in because what happens?

It's pervasive. It fills you. It takes over the things in which it comes in contact with. And so a little bit of that hypocrisy will ruin you. You can't let any of it in.

Don't do it. You see what He's communicating. Then Paul in 1 Corinthians 5, He calls the Christian believers to purge themselves of the leaven of malice and evil because, he says, a little leaven leavens the whole lump.

[15:41] And then Paul says that same phrase in Galatians 5, a little leaven leavens the whole lump. Now, there's the principle that we're being taught. A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

The kingdom of God is like a little bit of leaven in three measures of flour. And I should have gone back and figured out exactly what this was. I think it was something like six and a half gallons of flour is what three measures is.

So it's a very large portion. I don't know if you have people in your family who cook this way. I have an aunt that, like, she always, she makes dinner for eight, but she really makes it for 80. You know, there's plenty of food left over.

So there's three measures. Maybe they're cooking for the church potluck, making a big thing of dough. Three measures of flour. And you put one little bit of leaven in. Does it look like that leaven's going to go anywhere in that?

What would you expect? I mean, it's so small by comparison, but the reality is all it takes is this little bit. It's going to fill this, all three measures of the dough. It's going to fill it up as it grows and expands into the kingdom.

[16:40] And so as these passages that I've cited negatively communicate really the same truth that Jesus is communicating here positively, in a glorious way, he's using that illustration to say, that's what the kingdom of God is like.

The kingdom of heaven is like this. The kingdom is like leaven, and you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump. This is what Jesus is saying. The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, and a little leaven leavens the whole lump.

And so we may not see, we may not be able to discern the kingdom's growth, but the kingdom is growing, and it will fill the world. I think this is true on a global scale.

If we understand physically, speaking of it, it's going to fill the whole world. This is what God commanded Adam and Eve to do. Let's go all the way back to the very beginning. Remember what

God said to Adam and Eve.

And God blessed them, and God said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

[17:47] And what I want you to see is, Jesus is coming to fix what's broken in the world. In a better way than was given to Adam and Eve, but he's fixing what's broken in the world. Adam and Eve were to fill the world with the glory of God.

They were to be vice regents of God, and spread the dominion of God to the ends of the earth. How'd they do with that? Not such a great job. We can say people went to the ends of the earth. People are living in all parts of the earth, but they're not spreading the glory of God. They turned away from God. They're living for Satan instead. Instead, they're not living for the Lord. And so, what we're told about the kingdom is, here's what the kingdom is like.

A little bit, the small beginning again, this little bit's going to fill the whole world. And so, in many ways, we could say, it's going to fulfill what Adam and Eve failed at.

It's going to multiply. It's going to fill the earth. It's going to bring the earth into submission, and God's kingdom will have dominion over the earth. Habakkuk 2 and Isaiah 11 both say, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

[19:04] Now, that looks back to what was told to Adam and Eve, and it looks forward to what's going to happen. This is what should have happened. This is what we were made to do, and we failed at. But Christ has come to redeem us, to redeem the world, to cause God's glory to spread over all the earth, so that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

It's pretty covered, isn't it? The waters covering the sea. And then we have this vision of heaven that's given to us in the book of Revelation.

We read there in chapter 5, and they sing a new song saying, worthy are you to take the book and to break its seals, for you are slain and purchased for God with your blood, men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

So Revelation 5, we're told the work's finished. It's been done. God has accomplished this through the death of Jesus Christ. So again, expectations of the kingdom. Jesus dying wasn't on the plate. It's not what's expected. He's to reign forever. He's never to die. But he goes to the cross, and through the cross, his blood perches men from every tribe, tongue, and nation.

[20:18] It guaranteed the success of the spread of the kingdom to the very ends of the earth. It's imperceptible. It's not what we would have expected. But the kingdom's growing, and it's filling the world.

Even now, we think it's been 2,000 years. Do we believe the kingdom's still growing? Does it look like all the nations are being brought in? I saw a report.

It's maybe been a decade ago, but a report saying there's still something like 1,800 unreached people groups. When are they going to be brought in? Has the mission failed?

Are we in decline? Has God's kingdom failed? No, that's what's being taught to us here. We may not see the growth, but the kingdom's growing. And it may be slow, but it's going to fill all the measure of the dough.

It's going to fill the world. Again, Revelation 7, 9 through 10. After this, I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages standing before the throne and before the Lamb clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands and crying out with a loud voice, salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.

[21:29] So with this vision of the day when it's all over, when it's been accomplished, when they all stand around the throne, all these people from every tribe, tongue, and nation, and they're singing the praises of God, washed in the blood of the Lamb in white robes in His righteousness.

So this is what Jesus is speaking of. Again, it's hidden in these parables, but He's saying the kingdom of heaven is like this, like a bit of leaven in the world, as it were, that's going to fill the world.

And so Jesus is teaching us that this is going on whether we see it or not. It doesn't matter if we're perceiving the growth of the kingdom. How it looks to us, God's kingdom is not failing.

It's continuing to grow whether we perceive it or not. And I think sometimes our own perspective of America can deceive us. Sometimes we only see what's going on in America. And there may be cycles, there may be times in which in certain nations there is decline.

But it doesn't mean His kingdom has failed. It doesn't mean it's not growing elsewhere. There's explosive growth right now in other parts of the world. And there are people probably right now who are training to go to unreached peoples. People who are there now trying to translate their language or translate the Bible into the language of this unreached people group.

[ 22 : 43 ] It's going on now whether we see it here in America or not. So for us even, don't judge by what we see. But by faith, believe that God's kingdom is growing and filling the world.

And so, He's teaching us that this is going on whether we see it or not. In fact, the very nature of the kingdom. This is what the kingdom will be like. Like leaven and bread.

We will see very little of how it works. But in the end, the world will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God. And people from every tribe, tongue, and language will be saved and be made a part of the kingdom.

That's what we're told and that's what we're to count on whether we can discern it or not. And so we need to be reminded that the kingdom of heaven is like leaven that leavens the whole lump. It will work.

Unnoticed. Maybe even unanticipated. But it will advance until it permeates the whole world and all the elects of God have been saved. Thought of that line from the hymn, One day all the ransomed church of God will be saved to send him more.

[ 23 : 45 ] That's what we're counting on. That's what he's saying. Whether we can see it or not, one day everyone for whom Christ has died will be brought in. There will be a countless multitude singing the praises of the Lamb from every tribe and language and nation under heaven one day.

It will be so and there's nothing that can stop it. There's no way to prevent it, to thwart it, to stop the purpose and design of Jesus Christ for his kingdom. And so that's what we see in these two parables.

Now, how does this apply to us? I wanted to take some time to try to apply these parables to our lives and what it means for us. First, we need to remember that the kingdom is often unseen so that we might persevere in service to our God.

I think regularly in gospel ministry, maybe in every aspect of our life, but when we do the work for the kingdom, then we wait to see God's immediate result.

And I don't know about you, but oftentimes it's easy to become discouraged when we don't see immediate results. Maybe there's other aspects in your life. Maybe it's things at work. You keep doing the same things, but it doesn't seem to change.

[ 25 : 06 ] Maybe it's in parenting. You say the same things over and over again, believe it or not. I mean, over and over again. And you think it's stuck and it hasn't yet. You think, when's this ever going to change?

When's it going to click? When's it going to make sense? But how much more so in our service to God and his kingdom? We serve God and sometimes we look for immediate results. That's especially, I think, true for pastors and elders.

Sometimes with counseling, I want people to be changed the first time we counsel. Right? I want it to be immediate. Even in preaching the word, I want people to get it. I want them to grasp it.

I want there to be change. And often it's the case for me, for our elders, I don't always see the change. I'm encouraged by the word of God. There's change going on whether I see it or not.

God's working your heart. God may be doing drastic things in your heart. I just may never see it.

And the same is true for you. There may be someone you share the gospel with and you share with them.

[ 26 : 10 ] Maybe you spend decades, maybe it's a family member you spend your whole life sharing the gospel with and you die and they're unconverted. And maybe it's sometime down the road that they finally take to heart everything you said and the word of God and they believe and they're saved.

And you don't see that result. And it's not until they die and you're in heaven that that's ever known to you. Well, that can be discouraging, can't it?

Right? We want to see immediately what we've done. We want immediate results. We don't like putting a lot of work in. Maybe I could put it this way. Maybe this will relate to you guys. You ever

tried doing a diet and you're following this diet strictly, right?

And you're hitting the scales twice a day because you're expecting immediate results. And after week one, nothing's changed. In fact, you actually gained a little. Right? How encouraged are you at the end of week one if that's the case?

Right? Do you really want to stick with it? It already states that you're having to change your whole diet and how you eat. But then on top of it, you're not even losing weight. And so, where's the encouragement to persist? I think Jesus is teaching us that's what ministry's like.

[ 27 : 19 ] Like a bad diet. The results are not always immediate. They're not always even seen. Are we capable, are we able by the strength of God to keep pressing on serving the Lord if we never see the results?

He encourages us. The kingdom of heaven is like leaven and bread. God, we may not see its growth, but it's growing. That tiny little seed that you planted may look pretty small.

You may think, I did nothing. God may grow that into a great tree. And so, we're encouraged to press on to be faithful in ministry, not to give up. We will never in this life see all the ultimate fruit of our ministry and of our service to the Lord.

The fruit of the ministry we want to see is people saved. We want to see people brought to Christ. We want to see them built up and edified and sanctified in Him. And you can't always see that with your eyes.

Right? That's internal. We don't always see the fruit of that. And so, ultimately, we cannot measure the impact of our kingdom service by the outward signs, by outward things.

[ 28 : 33 ] Don't be discouraged. When it comes to the kingdom of God, appearances can be deceiving. It's not going to look like what we expect it to look like. We see that little mustard seed and we think, that's all I've been working for?

But we're encouraged that the kingdom's growing. And so, I think, we're reminded again to set our eyes not on what's seen but what's unseen. The things that are seen are passing, the unseen is what's lasting.

And so, we set our eyes on what's unseen. We trust to God's promises. We set our sights on heaven, not necessarily on the things that we see, the results in this life. Secondly, just as a warning, I think, the other side of my first point is this.

Don't be distracted by things that look overly impressive on the outside. Right? If it's true that the kingdom is like this, that it's growing inwardly, it's small in its beginnings, we may not see the outward fruit of it, it's hidden inside the bread but it's filling the bread, then don't be overly excited about outward things.

What I mean by that is that sometimes things can look really impressive on the outside. I think even today, this is, I think, a sad truth but right now in America, I think the largest churches in America seem to be the ones that are scratching people's ears, if you know what I mean.

[ 30 : 05 ] From Paul's words. They're saying what people want to hear. They're preaching things that are not in God's word. They're false teachers. And some of the biggest churches in America are these churches and it might be easy to get excited about that and say, oh, I'm going to be a part of something like that and the truth is that's not really how the kingdom works.

And maybe to encourage us that the reality of small churches in some ways fits with how the kingdom works. God's kingdom is growing in very small, sometimes imperceptible ways to the outward world.

Some of these things that look outwardly impressive will be false. They're kind of contradictory to the way the kingdom is even designed to work. Now that's not to say there won't be, I mean, I think of Peter preaching the word, 3,000 people come to know the Lord in one day.

There will be things that God will do that will be very impressive that we ought to get excited about, but we have to use discernment. We have to be judging of these things. So, don't be discouraged, but don't also be misled by things that look outwardly impressive, but maybe aren't.

Thirdly, I said earlier that this growth, this internal growth, is true on a global scale, that it will fill the whole world. I think I have license, I think I'm free to say that it's also true on a lesser degree in terms of, on a personal level, that we experience a similar truth in our lives.

[ 31 : 30 ] God changes our lives also from the inside out. We oftentimes want outward results immediately. We want to look different, we want to be different, and the reality is that God's kingdom is growing from inside of us.

He's changing us internally, spiritually, it's not always observable from the outside, but that's true of the Christian life. He's sanctifying us, he's putting to death sin, he's growing us from the inside out. And likewise, again, this is about the kingdom of God, so I've probably just taken it too far, but let me say likewise, in terms of sanctification, ending in glorification, this is exactly what's true of the Christian life.

God from the inside out is putting to death our sin, he's making us more like his son, and there will come a day when we die that we will be glorified and made reflective of the image of Jesus Christ. Now again, that's not the primary point of, I'm acknowledging this, he's teaching us about the kingdom, and though it's true on a global scale, which I think is primarily what he's teaching of, I think it also relates to us on a personal level.

[ 32 : 36 ] And so the kingdom works in such a way that you almost never notice it. It works from the inside out and permeates every area of our life. You ever notice sometimes sanctification in the way we grow spiritually?

It's not so, maybe when you first become a Christian there's these immediate changes because there's things you put to death, but the rest of the Christian life sometimes it may seem like we're not growing at all. But then as we begin to analyze, we realize, well I really am not who I was. Every decision in my life, I'm doing things for God that I wasn't doing before. I'm not doing things that I once did for myself. I'm doing some of the same things but I'm not doing them for the same reasons anymore. And so this change sometimes is hard for us to perceive.

But it permeates us and it leaves nothing unchanged in the Christian life. Fourthly, I want to encourage you that Jesus is pointing his disciples to the cross in these parables.

God takes his son and he hangs him on the cross and everyone despises him and this is the seed that God uses to plant the kingdom of the Lord.

[ 33 : 42 ] Let that sink in. Who would have thought like this is how you're going to start the kingdom? Oftentimes, think of church growth methodology and Jesus would have failed a class on church methodology, wouldn't he?

Wait a minute, so your whole plan is to start with 11 guys and you're going to die and be ridiculed and made fun of and with those 11 guys you're going to conquer the world? No.

Just think of like even capitalism and business plans in America. Right? Probably not the plan they would have, we're going to kill off the CEO and we're going to rule the world with 11 people in a business.

Can we think of a better plan maybe? Can we start with a few more people? Can we, before we take the company public can we grow it a little more? But this is how God starts his kingdom like a mustard seed very small by all accounts by the world's accounts foolishness.

The gospel is foolishness to those who are perishing. This is how you're going to grow the kingdom. 1 Corinthians 1.28 even tells us God chose what is low and despised in the world and the things that are not to bring to nothing the things that are.

[ 34 : 48 ] So if you want more encouragement not only does it start with these small beginnings he also pits what's the rejects of the world to grow that kingdom. No offense to any of you guys. But he chooses the things that are not to bring to nothing the things that are.

He chooses those who are humble those who know they need a savior. He uses them to grow his kingdom. Not the Pharisees not the scribes not those who are self-righteous. And at the cross truly the kingdom looked like it had been defeated.

It looked its most insignificant but it's at the cross that's the very hour of triumph for the kingdom. And so Jesus is trying to prepare his disciples for that and he's giving us perspective to interpret what happened at the cross.

The kingdom didn't fail. The kingdom may start small but it's growing. And in general he's teaching us that this is the very nature of the kingdom. Small beginnings grand results.

What may at first seem inadequate it may seem small it may seem insignificant as God's means for reaching the world will in the end prove to be mighty and powerful as he works out his purposes and his kingdom advances.

[ 35 : 59 ] And so I see this message the content of what's here to be an encouragement to us as believers. Be encouraged. Don't judge by outward circumstances your own life in many ways.

The growth of the kingdom but be encouraged that these small beginnings are producing something great. And God has chosen the foolish things of this world to be a part of that. He's

brought us in to be a part of this.

And so we get to joy and join him in being a part of the growth of this kingdom that's going to take over the world. Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father we thank you for the truths that are presented to us in this gospel and we pray that we would be encouraged by these things that you would not allow our hearts to be discouraged.

Lord so often it seems like our work has failed because we don't see the immediate results but Lord help us to be faithful and patient and trusting in the truth of what you've taught us in your word. Lord we do pray that your kingdom would grow that it would advance that it would reach all the tribes and tons and nations all the peoples of the world that you draw them into your kingdom that you may be glorified that you may be worshiped by them all.

Lord thank you for making us a part of that. Encourage our hearts as we go from here that we would continue in the work. Lord help us to share the gospel with those in our family and our co-workers and people we come in contact with that Lord it may seem like we're failing when they reject it but we know that's not the reality of what the kingdom's like.

[ 37 : 26 ] Don't let us judge by those appearances but we pray that you would use us to grow your kingdom into the glory that it shall be. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.