

Down to Earth – The Kingdom Goes Viral

Matthew 13:31-33

³¹ He told another parable to them: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and planted in his field. ³² It’s the smallest of all seeds. But when it’s grown, it’s the largest of all vegetable plants. It becomes a tree so that the birds in the sky come and nest in its branches.”

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Today we are starting to talk about some BIG but something intimately small. Something grand and yet simple. Something “other world” – but something very present. We are talking about the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is not just something we are looking forward to in the future but it is also something breaking into the world even now. **It’s a future hope – but it is already here.**

And when we are talking about the Kingdom of God – what we are talking about is that the kingdom of God is the rule and reign of God. So wherever that is happening – that’s where the Kingdom of God is – where it is fulfilled. So it will be in heaven – but it can also be here in our lives.

Jesus talked about the kingdom a good bit, and one of those places was in Matthew chapter 13 beginning verse 31. Matthew 13 is a chapter full of parables – stories that Jesus tells about the Kingdom of God. Beginning in verse 31 he says

“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and planted in his field. ³² It’s the smallest of all seeds. But when it’s grown, it’s the largest of all vegetable plants. It becomes a tree so that the birds in the sky come and nest in its branches.”³³ He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast, which a woman took and hid in a bushel of wheat flour until the yeast had worked its way through all the dough.”

The parables that Jesus tells throughout his ministry that are moral stories with one overarching moral point. The moral point in these two is that the kingdom starts small – we might not notice it fully at first, but it then becomes big and basically takes over whatever lets it in. And what I think is very special that the Kingdom of God starts in an unexpected and underestimated way.

Jesus talks about the mustard seed and he calls it the smallest of all seeds – **[Mustard Seed]** we know that there are smaller seeds. But Jesus uses a storyteller’s technique to drive home a point. The smallest seeds would never be expected to grow into a large plant. Or just a little bit of yeast – **[Yeast]** we would underestimate its ability to work through about 60 pounds of flour. It starts small and becomes viral and explodes and grows.

I know it’s easy to understand this viral concept. Last year we had a squirrel get into our balcony and we posted the clip from the worship service. **[show the**

viral video thing we showed in the church – no sound – just

rolling as I keep talking] We simply thought it was funny. The next

thing we knew it had gone viral. And we found ourselves being interviewed on tv news shows the country and found our way in newspapers. It was overwhelming.

It unexpected and underestimated. And it went viral. **[make sure the**

squirrel video ends at or before this point]

Then, of course, there is COVID-19. Back in January it was “their” problem. Some said that it was nothing for us to worry about. It was unexpected and underestimated. And it went viral.

The Kingdom of God comes out of nowhere – it is unexpected and underestimated. **The Kingdom of God ... is unexpected and underestimated.** And it’s appropriate that Jesus is the one telling us about the kingdom – after all – he was unexpected and underestimated. Philip and Nathanael would both end up as Jesus disciples, but when Philip was trying to convince Nathanael to come meet Jesus – even when Philip tells him that he had met the Messiah – Nathanael basically laughs and says – “can anything good come out of Nazareth?” No one expected Jesus to be the Messiah and no one could predict the way he would change the world.

Later on – in the Acts of the Apostles – we read a story where Peter and John are teaching in Jerusalem at the Temple and the religious leaders realize that they are uneducated and just plain ordinary men. To the Jewish religious leaders – the disciples were unexpected and underestimated. And yet through the power of the Holy Spirit – they were doing great things for God.

The Kingdom of God is unexpected and underestimated. Often, when we think about it – we think of BIG end time kind of kingdom. Maybe if we want to see the Kingdom – we need to take the time to notice the little ways that God is at work in our life and in our world – that could be the beginning of something big.

But let's look at the other part of this parable – the bigger meaning of this parable – that the kingdom of God ultimately becomes unstoppable. It starts small – but it becomes a viral movement that cannot be stopped. Jesus talks about the kingdom because Jesus knew about the kingdom. He knew what was coming. He knew what it would be like to live in the kingdom. So, he tells us – this is coming, and this will be great.

Jesus tells us that the Kingdom is like a mustard seed that someone plants in the garden and it grows and grows. I have to admit – I am not a farmer. I know that shocks you. And so I had to do some research on Mustard. What is special about it is it produces an abundance of seed and so it will spread throughout your garden if you aren't careful. **[Mustard Field]**

Jesus says that the kingdom is like a mustard seed that someone planted – we have to be intentional about accepting God invitation into the kingdom through salvation through Christ – but when we do – the kingdom wants to spread all through our lives. Calling us to live in the kingdom every day.

The same thing goes with the story of the yeast. Now – most of my understanding of yeast comes from watching Pioneer Woman on Saturday mornings. With the story of the yeast and the 60 pounds of flour – if you intentionally allow it in – if you mix it into your life – then it will spread and influence all that you are.

So what Jesus is may be saying to us is that we should allow the Kingdom of God to take over. To take over our life. To take over who we are. Let the kingdom of God work all the way through your life – the good parts and the bad. The parts you show and the parts you hide.

I know that it hard for us – because we usually allow the world around us and the culture around us to form us and shape us – but we are called to allow the Kingdom of God in – so that it can grow and take over our life.

These two parables that Jesus told about the Kingdom both started with action. A man planted the mustard seed. The woman mixed in the yeast. And they took over. **Where in your life do you need to mix in the**

kingdom of God? Even if you start in a small way? **In what**

situations do you need to plant the seed of the kingdom of

God? Even if you start in a small way?

If you will welcome the kingdom of God into your life – into your situations – into your issues and problems – into your family and work – even in a small way – it may be unexpected – and you might underestimate it – but the kingdom of God will take over. And wouldn't that be AMAZING.