

Parables of Jesus: Mustard Seed

Mark 4:30-32

A parable is “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.”

“Parables are ‘narratives that mean more and other than they seem to say, and mean different things to different people. And their meaning, when discovered, is not likely to lie at the purely cognitive level, but will include (indeed, may even simply be) a call to response at the level of attitude, will, and action. To understand a parable is usually to be changed or at least challenged to be change.” R.T. France

Parable of the Mustard Seed.

Mark 4:30-32 NIV

The parable of the mustard seed (in Mark) falls into several teachings of Jesus where we see and hear the use of a sowing & planting seeds as a way to talk about the kingdom of God.

Why in the world is Jesus using agricultural language to describe the kingdom of God? Why not use something else?

By using ordinary & unexciting imagery Jesus was intentionally taking apart people’s expectation of what the kingdom of God looks like.

He is making quite the bold and provocative statement.

The kingdom of God begins in small and unexciting ways.

Why would the greatest kingdom they had been waiting for so long be compared to an insignificant mustard seed?

Brassica Nigra



Salvadora Persica



Jesus is contrasting an insignificant beginning with an impressive final size.

“The imagery of the mustard bush suppresses any tendency toward triumphalism. The parable highlights the contrast between ‘an insignificant beginning and an impressive final size.’ But the image of the mustard that ‘becomes the largest of all plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade,’ pales in comparison with the grandiose images associated with the noble cedar of Lebanon, which is portrayed in the OT as a glorious tree that is associated with earthly empires...” R.T. France

Growing in service.

In God’s kingdom small beginnings leads to growth in service rather than power.

“Due to its rapid germination, the mustard bush threatens to encroach on existing vegetation and depicts God’s kingdom as an annoying, ineradicable weed that can overtake other kingdoms sown on earth.” Eugene Boring.

Mark 10:42-45 NIV

Growth in service is the way the kingdom of God will end up bringing healing and transformation to a world that desperately needs it.

We have to reject the temptation of triumphalism.

Triumphalism is thinking we have to have all the control whether political or personal in order to succeed or be able to win the battle for God and for our future.

Our job is to faithfully live a life of loving & serving everyone including our enemies.

The accomplishment of growth and victory is strictly a work that is done by God not ourselves.

Intentionally incorporate serving into our way of life.

How are you practically growing in loving and serving others?

Silence and Solitude.

Discipline of Community.

1. Does my definition of success mirrors the values of the kingdom of God or the values of our culture?
2. How are you practically growing in loving and serving others?
3. What are some spiritual disciplines that you can incorporate into your way of life to help you remind you that we are to grow in service.?