

"A parable is a story from real life or a real-life situation from which a moral or spiritual truth is drawn." Boice

### **Things to know to correctly read a parable in the Bible:**

Direct discourse between characters in a parable is always significant

When reading a parable the emphasis is on the end of the parable.

Parables are not allegories, hidden messages, or historical accounts. Parables are not deeper than they read.

The point of a parable is directly related to its context, and aimed at those who are hearing it.

### **Jesus taught in parables to make one impactful truth in the moment to those who heard it.**

The parables were a fulfillment of prophecy

The parables reveal those who have rejected Christ

The parables are light to those who believe

### **4 Truths about the Kingdom of God:**

1. The kingdom of God begins in the hearts of those who hear the Gospel, accept it, and bear fruit.

Mark 4:1-9, 14-20

Four Hearts: 3 Bad & 1 Good

The "Hard" Heart

The "As Long As It's Easy" Heart

The "I haven't really surrendered" Heart

The "I've counted the cost" Heart

2. The Kingdom of God grows in ways that you don't see at first

Mark 4:26-29

Ultimately we know that the kingdom of God grows because of the Lord and not because of us.

3. The Kingdom of God has humble beginnings, but in the end it will fill the earth

Mark 4:30-34

4. The Kingdom of God is centered on a humble Savior/King.

**As citizens of the Kingdom of God...**

1. We humble ourselves and exalt King Jesus
2. We trust in the way the Lord grows the church when those who are working are faithful with the Gospel
3. We anticipate multiplication and growth, but we never let go of humility
4. We are called to make the invisible kingdom visible in our midst.

## Commentary, Notes, & Quotes:

Rather, the seed is so harmless and negligible that the farmer at first may be unaware of its growth. "He does not [even] know how" it happens.

James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 142.

### Ezekiel 17:22–23 (ESV)

<sup>22</sup> Thus says the Lord God: "I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out. I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. <sup>23</sup> On the mountain 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.

### Referencing and pointing to Jesus

#### Jeremiah 23:5–6 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup> "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. <sup>6</sup> In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'

As with the preceding parable, the advent of the kingdom is not something humanity brings about but something God gives. The greater point, however, is that the kingdom of God arises from obscurity and insignificance

James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 145.

But as in the previous parable, the emphasis lies on its small, obscure beginnings. It is now hidden and easily overlooked. Had Jesus desired to emphasize the power and glory of the kingdom of God he could have told a parable about a cedar, which was a symbol of might (Ps 80:10; 9:10; Zech 11:2) and splendor (Cant 1:17; Jer 22:23). But the mystery of the kingdom is not present in the cedar; it is present in a tiny mustard seed. "What appears to be the smallest is nevertheless the greatest. In that which is hidden, the foundation of a work is laid that will encompass the whole world."<sup>79</sup>

<sup>79</sup> A. Schlatter, *Die Evangelien nach Markus und Lukas*, 48.

James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 145.

In parts of the Old Testament, birds represented messengers of Satan. This has led some interpreters to speculate that this is a negative parable. Some think that this parable represents

the lost mission of the church. The church was intended to be an itinerant movement. By becoming institutionalized (becoming rooted), the bush grew large and acted like a tree. Therefore, some interpreters think this parable warns against church growth. The actual text, however, does not bear out this kind of interpretation. The bush is seen as giving good things to others. The text speaks of what God can do with small beginnings. It is an assurance of harvest. The birds of the air may represent different nations (see Ezek. 17:23; 31; Dan. 4:12). Perhaps Jesus was telling the disciples to get ready—that many different people would become a part of his kingdom. The parable may be interpreted as a reference to worldwide mission and growth.

Rodney L. Cooper, *Mark*, vol. 2, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 71.

The OT prophets occasionally use the image of birds nesting in branches to allude to the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's chosen people (Ps 104:12; Ezek 17:23; 31:6; Dan 4:9–21).<sup>80</sup> This offers a clue to v. 32, "the birds of the air can perch in its shade." In addition to the surprising growth of the kingdom, the parable of the mustard seed contains a hint of God's grace to *all* peoples. This may explain its anchor position in chap. 4, for it would have signaled to Mark's Roman Gentile readers that their inclusion in the kingdom was foreordained by the Lord. "Out of the most insignificant beginnings, invisible to human eyes, God creates his mighty Kingdom, which embraces all the peoples of the world."<sup>81</sup>

<sup>80</sup> A similar idea is preserved in *Joseph and Aseneth*, a Jewish novella dating from perhaps the time of Mark: "And your name shall no longer be called Aseneth, but your name shall be City of Refuge, because in you many nations will take refuge with the Lord God, the Most High, and under your wings many peoples trusting the Lord will be sheltered" (*Jos. Asen.* 15:7).

<sup>81</sup> Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, rev.ed., 149.

James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 145.

Come Adore the Humble King by Matt Papa

Come adore the humble King  
Lowly in the manger  
Fall before His majesty  
Hail the little Savior  
Hope what hope no tongue could tell  
God has come with us to dwell  
His name is Emmanuel  
O praise the humble King

Come adore in humble state  
He the song of angels  
Join the wise who call His name  
And with all creation  
Who oh who would condescend  
God unknown now calls us friend

Love that none could comprehend  
O praise the humble King

Come adore the King who came  
To our world to save us  
Born to heal our prideful race  
Crown us with forgiveness  
Fall oh fall before the one  
Who in mercy left His throne  
Christ the Lord God's only Son  
His glories now we sing  
O praise the humble King