

## **RED Letter Stories4** **“More Than A Parable”**

To me, stories are better if they are true! I mean I appreciate a writer’s imagination, the skill of carefully placed words, and an interesting plot, but there’s nothing better than a story rooted in reality. We’ve all watched a movie that stepped outside the realm of reality and dismissed it as fiction because it didn’t seem real. I like real, and so do you. Jesus next tells us a short parable about a mustard seed. In this short made up story, He tells us of a real story that hasn’t even happened yet! He is doing more than “vision-casting”; He is actually telling us the future! And not just the future, but OUR future!

### **Jesus’ Story**

#### ***Matthew 13:31-32 NAS***

*31 He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field;*

*32 and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES."*

#### ***Mark 4:30-32 NAS***

*30 And He said, "How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it?*

*31 "It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil,*

*32 yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR can NEST UNDER ITS SHADE."*

#### ***Luke 13:18-19 NAS***

*18 So He was saying, "What is the kingdom of God like, and to what shall I compare it?*

*19"It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and threw into his own garden; and it grew and became a tree, and THE BIRDS OF THE AIR NESTED IN ITS BRANCHES."*

### **Jesus’ Point**

-In this story, Jesus again goes “agricultural”. He uses the analogy of planting and compares the kingdom of heaven to a mustard seed and its growth into a full-grown plant.

-Jesus does not interpret or explain His story to the audience; likely because its point is simple and obvious. The meaning was apparently self-evident. The kingdom of heaven will start small and grow large; that’s His point.

-What’s the deal with the mustard seed? Of the many garden plants grown in the fields and gardens of Palestine (i.e., barley, wheat, lentils, and beans), the mustard plant had the smallest seeds. Many varieties of mustard plants are rather small bushes, but the mustard plant of Palestine often grows to a height of twelve to fifteen feet. So just as Jesus stated,

when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants, and from a comparison viewpoint, becomes a tree.

-The idea of a small mustard seed growing into a large plant proverbial, and the disciples would have immediately understood Jesus' point: the kingdom of heaven, though now very small and seemingly insignificant, would one day grow into a large body of believers.

-The fact that Jesus mentions the birds of the air nesting in the tree either attested to the fact that the tree was large enough to handle the additional weight of a nest of birds or that perhaps it (the kingdom of heaven) would serve as a shelter, protection, and benefit to the entire world. Whenever the gospel of the kingdom of God is faithfully proclaimed and practiced, it benefits the world.

\*Jesus' ultimate point is that, in spite of great opposition, represented by three bad soils and the tares, His kingdom will start small and grow in number and influence.

### **The Takeaway**

-As more and more people become good soil and respond to the seed of God's Word, and as more and more people who are initially tares and become wheat by accepting Jesus, the kingdom of heaven, today, the church, grows larger and larger. What once was small, like the smallest of common seed, has now become large and obviously significant.

-As we share the gospel, the church grows larger.

**Bottom Line – The cumulative growth of the church continues in size, power, and influence; what are we doing to live and share its good news?**