



THE GOSPEL OF
MATTHEW



The Parables of the Mustard Seed and Leaven

Matthew 13:31–35



Matthew 13:31–32

³¹ 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. ³² 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.”



Matthew 13:33

³³ 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.”



Matthew 13:34–35

³⁴ All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. ³⁵ This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet:

“I will open my mouth in parables;
I will utter what has been hidden
since the foundation of the world.”



1. A tiny start with exponential growth (13:31–32)

³¹ 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. ³² 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.”



black mustard seed



black mustard plants

A large black mustard tree is in full bloom, its branches covered in dense clusters of small yellow flowers. The tree's trunk and lower branches are dark and gnarled. In the foreground, a person wearing a purple t-shirt and a red cap stands in a field of tall grass, providing a sense of scale. To the right, there is a bush of red flowers. The background shows a clear blue sky and some palm trees.

black mustard tree



Daniel 4:10–12

¹⁰ I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great. ¹¹ The tree grew and became strong, and its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth. ¹² ...the birds of the heavens lived in its branches...



Isaiah 55:10–11

¹⁰ “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
¹¹ so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”



2. A hidden start with pervasive influence (13:33)

³³ 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.”



When the small lump [of leaven]... was kneaded into a fresh batch of dough, the microorganisms from the starter permeated the larger batch. The resulting fermentation released carbon dioxide gas that causes the batch to rise. The leavening process makes the baked bread lighter and improves its flavor.

— Chuck Quarles



a *seah* measurement of grain
(12 dry quarts)



Genesis 18:17–18

¹⁷ “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do,
¹⁸ seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and
mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be
blessed in him?”



Matthew 11:25

“I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children...



3. An eternal plan fulfilled in Christ (13:34–35)

³⁴ All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. ³⁵ This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet:

“I will open my mouth in parables;
I will utter what has been hidden
since the foundation of the world.”



Ephesians 1:7–10

⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.



1 Corinthians 1:27–31

²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;

²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

³¹ ...as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”



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