



Kingdom Wisdom

Kingdom Growth

Matthew 13:31-35

How to Prepare

Begin preparing by reading the full passage a few times. Then answer the questions for yourself. Then think about how your Small Group might answer them. Try re-wording the questions to fit you and your Small Group. Don't feel tied down to the discussion guide, just be sure to discuss the main point of the text in your conversations.

Resources-

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/a-mystery-made-sense-of-me>

<https://www.gotquestions.org/parable-mustard-seed.html>

<https://learn.ligonier.org/devotionals/mustard-seed-and-leaven>

Sermon Outline:

Matthew 13:31-35

1. Christ's Kingdom Grows from Unimpressive to Comprehensive. Vv. 31-32
2. Christ's Kingdom Grows Organically and Exponentially. Vv. 33-35

Matthew 13:31-35

The Mustard Seed

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."

The Leaven

33 He spoke another parable to them, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened."

34 All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable.

35 This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

"I will open My mouth in parables;
I will utter things hidden since
the foundation of the world."

Discussion Questions

Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 13:31-35.

INTRODUCTION

Here is a question or two to help introduce the topic and jump-start discussion.

1. What was one key takeaway from the sermon or the text that challenged or encouraged your understanding of the Kingdom of God?

UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION

These questions should help your Small Group dig deeper into the text and then apply it to your lives today.

I. Christ's Kingdom Grows from Unimpressive to Comprehensive. Vv. 31-32

2. In what ways are Jesus' descriptions of the mustard seed and mustard plant completely accurate? Why is it important to recognize and remember that Jesus isn't making scientific claims about mustard seeds and mustard plants?

(The mustard seed is not the smallest seed in the world... but that's not what Jesus is claiming. In relation to the other seeds that people would have used for agriculture in that context, the mustard seed was the smallest seed. Likewise, the mustard plant is not the largest tree... but again, that is not His claim. In comparison to other agricultural crops and plants grown in gardens, the mustard plant was the largest plant to the point that you could even call it a tree instead of just a plant. Jesus is using the relative smallness of the seed and relative largeness of the plant as an analogy to make a point. To miss this and become fixated on something scripture is not remotely saying is to completely miss the point of what scripture is saying.)

3. How does the image of the smallness of the mustard seed illustrate the "unimpressive" nature of Christ's Kingdom coming into the world? How does the image of the mustard plant growing to a great size illustrate the "comprehensive" and "worldwide" reach and influence of Christ's Kingdom?

4. In what ways did Jesus' Kingdom come into the world small and "unimpressive" compared to the way worldly kingdoms often start? In what ways has His Kingdom grown to encompass the whole world, and how has this growth been distinct from how other kingdoms grow?

(Christ's Kingdom is built on the gospel, which includes the message of a dying Messiah. That is not how most kingdoms gain influence. On top of that, Christ's main followers were a group of untrained fishermen and tradesmen numbering only 12, and one of them was a traitor. But His Kingdom does not conquer by force or because of convincing and enthusiastic influence. His Kingdom grows because of the power of the message of the gospel! And since His resurrection and ascension, His gospel has been preached in every continent, but it hasn't been preached to every tribe, tongue, and nation in the world... yet.)

5. Why is it important to recognize that we are still in the growing stage of the Kingdom? How does the biblical scope of Christ's Kingdom, which includes every tribe, tongue, and nation, go beyond our understanding of "worldwide" and "comprehensive?"

(We live in the overlap of this old age and the age to come. In a sense, the Kingdom has already come, but, in another sense, the Kingdom is yet to come. Theologians call this concept the "already-not yet" reality of the Kingdom of Heaven. The reality is that the gospel is still going and the Kingdom is still growing, because, while Christianity may be on every continent of the world, it has yet to reach every people group, language, and ethnicity. There are still people groups in the world that have no access to the gospel. And God has tasked us with taking the gospel to them and growing His Kingdom.)

II. Christ's Kingdom Grows Organically and Exponentially. Vv. 33-35

6. Why does Jesus use the image of the seemingly ordinary act of a woman baking bread to illustrate the growth of the Kingdom? What does this suggest about the nature of God's work in the world?

(Simply put, Kingdom growth happens through uncomplicated and ordinary ways. All it requires is that you know the gospel, are living the gospel to the best of your ability, and are telling people the gospel.)

7. How does the image of the leaven illustrate the organic nature of gospel growth? How does the image of the lump of dough illustrate the exponential growth of the gospel?

(In Doriani's commentary on Matthew, he says that "The gospel, like yeast, slowly transforms all that it touches." Jesus is making it clear that the gospel transforms people through the natural and normal connections Christians have with people. As believers live out and share their faith with the people in their contexts, the gospel will transform those people who believe. The exponential growth happens as those new believers then begin to live out and share their faith with the people in their contexts. The cycle goes on and on.)

8. Why is gospel proclamation necessary for the growth of the Kingdom? Where does this passage indicate that we should begin our proclamation of the gospel?

(The gospel is "the power of God unto salvation." There is no Kingdom growth without the gospel, because faith in the gospel is the only way one can enter the Kingdom. The imagery of the leaven and the quote from Psalm 78:2, including its immediate context -Psalm 78:1-8, seem to indicate that evangelism begins with our families, especially the younger generation.)

9. Why is it important to recognize that the call to make disciples (which begins with gospel proclamation) is for all Christians? What happens to the exponential growth of the Kingdom if we take this call seriously?

Commentary (from ESV Study Bible)

Matt. 13:31–32 The remarkable contrast between the small beginnings of the mustard seed and its final, large mustard plant had earned it proverbial status in Judaism (cf. 17:20). It was the smallest of all agricultural seeds in Palestine. becomes a tree. The mustard “tree” grows to a height of 8 to 12 feet (2.4 to 3.7 m). Israel was not prepared for an insignificant beginning to the kingdom of God, so this image would have shocked the listeners. (See also note on Luke 13:19.)

Matt. 13:33 Jesus uses the metaphor of leaven, which usually has a negative connotation in Scripture (cf. 16:6; 1 Cor. 5:6–7), to symbolize the positive, hidden permeation of the kingdom of heaven in this world. The kingdom is indeed active though not fully visible to the world, because it begins with an inner transformation of the heart. Three measures was probably about 50 pounds (39 liters) and would have produced enough bread to feed a hundred people.