

# The Mustard Seed

Matthew 13:31-35. Mark 4:30-34, Luke 13:18-21

## PPT Title

### The Mustard Seed

**Main Point:** The Kingdom of God will grow and grow.

**Key Verse:** *May Your kingdom come. May what You want to happen be done on earth as it is done in heaven.* - Matthew 6:10

**Props:** Mustard Seed; dry yeast and bread dough with yeast that has risen

### BACKGROUND



**Say:** Jesus was the greatest teacher ever. He had amazing truth that He wanted to tell people. He wanted people to know who God was, what God was like, and what life was like in His kingdom. Most of the time, the truth that Jesus wanted to teach was very different than what the people already believed. Jesus wanted to change the way people thought. So Jesus taught these truths in a way that people could understand; He taught in parables. Parables are real life stories with a deeper meaning of truth. Parables used common, everyday people and situations to teach things that are difficult to understand.

It is sort of like this: A kindergarten teacher could say that  $5-1=4$ . This is truth. But for young children who do not yet understand subtraction, she might say, "I had 5 apples on my desk. Yesterday Sam ate one of my apples. Now I have 4 apples left." The apple story is a parable about subtraction.

Jesus used parables to teach spiritual truth in a way that people could understand and remember.

**Additional Teaching for Older Students:** Sometimes, the people - especially the Jewish leaders - were stubborn (Matthew 13:15). They did not want to hear the truth. When Jesus told truth by using a story, they couldn't really argue with Him. For example, instead of saying, "Your behavior is wrong," Jesus could tell a story about their actions, and each person listening could figure out how it applied to their own life.

Jesus told many parables about what the kingdom of God is like. The kingdom of God is VERY different from this world, and Jesus wanted people to know how wonderful it is, so they would want to become a part of it. Jesus told His disciples that through His parables, they had been "given the chance to understand the secrets of the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 13:11) **Ask:** Wouldn't you like to learn the secrets of the kingdom of God? Over the next several weeks, we'll read the parables and explore the secrets that Jesus wanted us to know.

### MUSTARD SEED



**Say:** Jesus told the crowd another story. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed. Someone took the seed and planted it in a field. It is the smallest of all your seeds. But when it grows, it is the largest of all garden plants. It becomes a tree. Birds come and rest in its branches." - Matthew 13:31-32

**Say:** When you hear the word mustard, you probably think of the spicy yellow stuff you put on a hot dog. That is the same kind of mustard. People use mustard as a spice, and when they grind up mustard seed and mix it with water or vinegar, we get ketchup's

best friend. (We believe the Romans were the first people to make prepared mustard, so it is possible that Jesus ate mustard similar to ours!)



The mustard seed is one of the smallest seeds there is. But when it is planted in the ground, it grows up to be one of the largest plants. It can grow up to 12 feet tall. That's twice as tall as a grown man! It can look more like a tree than a plant. As Jesus said, birds even come and rest in its branches.

**Hold up a mustard seed.** The seed starts out very small, but it is very powerful. Within the seed is the ability to grow an enormous plant. The growth is slow and steady. If you looked at it every day, you might not see much change. But if you planted the seed, walked away, and then came back in one year, you would see a huge change! The seed would become an enormous plant, bearing fruit and providing a place of rest for the birds. **Just try to imagine a plant, 12 feet tall and 6 feet wide, all packed into this tiny seed!** Now that is one powerful seed.

How is this like the kingdom of God? Well, we can look at this parable in two ways. In the big picture, this parable explains the kingdom of God worldwide. And on a more personal level, this story explains the kingdom of God within each believer.

### WORLDWIDE



**Say:** The people that Jesus was speaking to were Jewish. Remember, the Jews were God's chosen people. Through the years, God promised that He was going to send a man to save them. The people misunderstood what this meant. They thought God would send a king to rescue them from the Roman government. They expected the Savior to set them free with military force. But that was not at all what God had planned. God sent the Savior to save them from their own sin.



With this parable, Jesus was telling His listeners that their way was not God's way at all. God's way was meek. The Savior, Jesus, came as a newborn baby. He grew up as a carpenter's son. He quietly stepped onto the scene. He spoke out to small groups of people, and then more and more people came to listen. He had a small group of followers at first. Without much warning, the kingdom began to grow as people put their trust in Jesus.



After Jesus' death and resurrection, a handful of disciples were left to spread the truth of God's kingdom. They were like that tiny seed. In the huge population of the entire world, they were like a little speck. But just like that mustard seed, they were full of hidden power. They had God's Holy Spirit in them. As the disciples traveled and taught, more and more people believed. The worldwide kingdom grew and grew. Just like the mustard plant produces more seeds for planting, the disciples made more disciples. The disciples' disciples made disciples. Just like the mustard plant grows tall and wide, the kingdom of God spread in every direction. God's kingdom continues to grow today. The truth of the kingdom will be preached in ALL nations (Matthew 24:14).



*All over the world the good news is bearing fruit and growing. It has been doing that among you since the day you heard it. That is when you understood God's grace in all its truth.* - Colossians 1:6

When Jesus taught this parable, God's kingdom on earth consisted of only a few ragged fishermen. But in time, the kingdom has grown to reach nearly every single nation. It has grown just as Jesus said it would!

**Application:** Many of you are part of God's kingdom. You are like one of the buds on the huge plant. God has used many of you to spread His kingdom. And He will continue to use you at home, at school, and someday maybe even around the world. Like the mustard plant grows and grows, God's kingdom will continue to grow until Jesus returns.

**Teacher Note:** The original language in Luke 13:19 suggests that this seed is not a deliberate "plant," but a careless "toss" (ballo). Nonetheless, the seed made it's way

into the earth, sprouted roots, and grew. This may be Jesus' way of addressing the Jews who did not care to hear the truth and tossed it aside. In spite of their disregard for the kingdom, it would take root and flourish.

## IN EACH BELIEVER



**Say:** The parable of the mustard seed also describes how God's kingdom grows in the life of each believer. When a person puts his trust in Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside of him (2 Corinthians 5:5). This is similar to the mustard seed being planted in the ground. No one can see it from the outside, but it is definitely there.

At first, the believer may not even feel very different, but the Spirit is powerful. It has the power to transform a person, just like the seed has the power to produce a huge plant.

The full-grown plant produces good things. It makes branches that are good for the birds to rest on, and it makes mustard seeds that are good to eat and good for making more plants.

Likewise, the Holy Spirit produces good things in each believer. The spiritual fruit that comes from the Holy Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. But that's not all! The Spirit also brings forgiveness, healing, righteousness, glory, grace, compassion, knowledge and truth.

Like the plant, the growth is sometimes slow. You might not see changes overnight, but in a year's time, the influence of the Holy Spirit in the person's life has grown greatly. In a few years' time, the results might amaze you. The person will be very different from the way he was. His beliefs, attitudes, and actions will no longer be ruled by his own thoughts and feelings. He will be ruled by the Holy Spirit.

**Application:** Remember how we looked at the huge mustard plant and tried to imagine all those leaves, flowers, and branches packed into this tiny seed? Now, let's imagine something even more amazing. If you have put your trust in Jesus, all the good things of God's kingdom are packed inside of you! If you are a believer, God's Spirit is in you. Close your eyes, and try to imagine God's love, joy, peace, forgiveness, healing, righteousness, glory, grace, compassion, and so much more, inside of you!



By God's amazing grace, those things grow in you little by little. It will take more than a week or month. But in a few years, if you depend on the Spirit inside you, you will be amazed at how much the kingdom has grown in your life. Before you know it, without warning, you will be bursting with kingdom fruit. You will live your life to bring honor to God, the King, and you will focus your life on how to grow the kingdom far beyond yourself.

## YEAST IN THE DOUGH

**Say:** Then Jesus told another parable that was very similar.

*Jesus told them still another story. "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast," he said. "A woman mixed it into a large amount of flour. The yeast worked its way all through the dough." - Matthew 13:33*



I love eating bread or rolls with yeast in it. Yeast makes bread taste delicious (like the rolls at Ryan's or O'Charley's). I have some yeast here. **Hold up yeast.** When yeast is mixed into bread dough, there is a chemical reaction that makes tiny air bubbles all through the dough. These air pockets make the bread light and fluffy when you bake it. If you don't add yeast, your bread will be flat and firm - not fluffy at all.

It only takes a very small amount of yeast to puff up a large amount of dough. I have a big bowl of puffed-up dough here. **Show your dough.** It only took a teaspoon of yeast to puff up this entire batch of dough.

This parable about the yeast was very much like the parable of the mustard seed. The main point of both parables was this: Sometimes things that start out small end up really huge! One small thing (like the mustard seed or the yeast) can affect everything around it in a BIG way. These parables must have been a great encouragement to Jesus' disciples who had joined the kingdom when it was very small on earth.

**Application:** Sometimes we get discouraged when we are trying to live out the kingdom life. Sometimes it seems like no one notices when we do the right thing. Sometimes we don't feel like we are producing enough fruit. Sometimes it seems like people don't want to hear the truth about Jesus.

These parables should encourage you very much. While we might not be able to "see" the growth of the kingdom every day, it is growing - both in the world, and in the hearts of the believers. We could not stop the growth of God's kingdom any more than we could take the yeast out of a batch of dough, or force a mustard plant back into its seed! Listen to the promise that Paul wrote to encourage his friends:

**PPT Verse**

*I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue His work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. - Philippians 1:6*

**Teacher:** Re-read the verse, and insert the names of kids in your group. (*I am certain that God, who began the good work within Haley, Trevor, Amaan...*)

**Say:** This promise applies to each person who belongs to the kingdom of God. God ALWAYS keeps His promises! God will grow His kingdom in the believers and around the world.

**PPT Key Verse**

**Key Verse:** *May Your kingdom come. May what You want to happen be done on earth as it is done in heaven. - Matthew 6:10*

**PPT Main Point**

**Main Point:** The Kingdom of God will grow and grow.