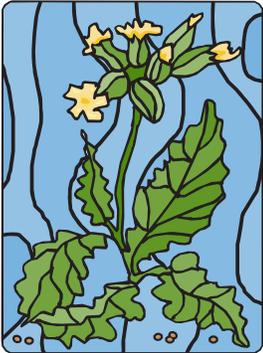




Mustard Seed

Acts 27 - 28



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

The kingdom of God grows worldwide, and it grows within each believer.

Day #1: Treasure Map

How would you feel if you found a real treasure map? Where would you keep it? Who would you tell about it? There are two things that make a treasure map so irresistible. First of all, it leads to treasure! Secondly, the treasure can only be found by those who have the map. A treasure map is like a secret that is told only to those who hold the map.

Jesus had something like a treasure map. He had the secret to the greatest treasure of all time! It was a treasure greater than silver or gold. This treasure could never be spent, never be stolen, and never be taken away. Jesus had the truth that led to the Kingdom of God. And Jesus came to earth to tell His secret to anyone who trusted Him enough to listen.

Jesus used parables to explain the truth of God's Kingdom. Parables are real life stories with a deeper meaning of truth. Parables use common, everyday people and situations to teach spiritual things that are difficult to understand.

+ (Jesus') disciples came and asked Him, "Why do you use parables when you talk to the people?"

He replied, "You are permitted to understand the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, but others are not. To **those who listen to My teaching**, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. - Matthew 13:10-12a NLT

***** Get your Bible. This is your treasure map! It explains the secrets of life in God's kingdom. Eternal life in God's kingdom is FAR greater than any other treasure on earth! Unlike earthly treasure, the kingdom of God is an ENDLESS treasure. You should share the map with everyone you know!

Day #2: Branching Out

Go outside and look at the plants in your yard. Can you believe that each plant and each tree began as a little seed? Jesus said the kingdom of God was like a mustard seed. It starts out very small, but in time, it becomes very large.

When Jesus made the kingdom of God available once again on earth, it began with a handful of men, women, and children who put their trust in Him. They were like the tiny mustard seed. But the seed took root and began to grow.

Within one generation after Jesus' resurrection, the kingdom had spread all over the Roman Empire and beyond. It spread in every direction - east to India, south to Ethiopia, and west to Britannia. Now the kingdom covers the globe. Nearly every single country has Jesus-followers in it.

+ *This good news of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world. It will be a witness to all nations.* - Matthew 21:14a

This was God's kingdom plan, announced by Jesus in a simple parable. God's plans stand firm forever (Psalm 33:11). We can see that the kingdom is still growing, just as Jesus promised it would.

***** Look at a big tree in your yard. If this tree were a symbol of God's kingdom, where would you be? If your trust is in Jesus, you would be a branch on that tree. Just as every tree branch helps the tree to grow, God will use you to grow His kingdom. Remain in Jesus - He is the source of life for the kingdom.

Day #3: Conforming

If you have any clay or play-doh, get some out. If you don't have any, you can make some dough quickly by mixing some flour with a little bit of water. Now, take that dough and make it take the shape of something else. Find a hard object, such as a fork. Push the dough onto the fork. Watch as the dough molds to the shape of the fork. The dough is **conforming** to the shape of the fork. The fork is solid and unchanging, so the dough conforms to the fork, never the other way around.

In a similar way, God's standard is solid and unchanging. As believers, we should conform, or

Day #3 continued:

mold to, God's perfect will. When we **conform** to God's perfect standard, that is God's kingdom growing in us. (Parents: This is sanctification.)

How does this look in real life? Let's say you are in the habit of speaking disrespectfully to your mom. But then God's Spirit lets you know that is wrong, so you stop speaking disrespectfully to her. That is you **conforming** to God's holy standard. Or maybe at one time you didn't think much about whether other children had enough food to eat. But then you saw photos of hungry children, and God's Spirit made you want to help them. That is you **conforming** to God's compassionate will.



Don't be like the people of this world, but let God change the way you think. Then you will know how to do everything that is good and pleasing to Him.
- Romans 12:2 CEV



Discuss one change that has happened in your life - an area where you have conformed to God's will. Pray that you will be as soft as brand new play-doh when it comes to conforming to the perfect will of God!

Day #4: Steady Growth

Find a baby picture of yourself. Now look in a mirror. What changes have taken place over the past several years?

These physical changes did not happen over night. It took months for you to learn to walk and talk. It took years for you to grow as tall as you are now.

In a similar way, your spiritual growth will happen over time. Yesterday we talked about conforming to God's ways. This is a lifelong process. Today you are more conformed than you were when you first put your trust in Jesus. Next year, you will be more conformed than you are today. Do not be discouraged if you can't see huge changes every day.



And 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

In the verse above, whose work is it? It is God's work! He started the changes in you, and He will continue the changes in you! Just like you don't have to work at growing taller, spiritual growth should come naturally to you if you trust Jesus, because His spirit lives inside of you. Simply abide in Jesus; remain with Him. Get to know Him better by reading His word and listening to His voice. Obey

Day #4 continued:

whatever He asks of you. You can rely on God to change you.



Start a growth chart by putting a piece of tape on the doorframe of your room. Every month, mark how tall you are and put the date next to the mark. Let this physical growth chart remind you of the spiritual growth that God is causing inside of you.

Day #5: Packed Full

Look at the seed below. It is actual size. Can you imagine an entire tree packed into this little seed? This little seed contains an apple tree. Can you imagine the juicy fruit that is waiting to burst forth? Can you picture the birds building their nests in its branches? So many good things are waiting inside this one tiny seed. This is one amazing seed!

Before this seed can grow into a tree, the hard protective covering on the seed must fall off. This happens once the seed is planted in the soil. The covering cracks as the roots grow down into the soil, and the plant stretches up toward the sun. Once the coating falls off, the life that has been stored up inside the seed is free to burst out.

Now, let's imagine something even more amazing than this little seed. 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!

Your old nature is like the protective coating keeping all the good things stored up inside. But when you listen to God's voice and submit your will to God's plan, the old you gives way and allows the kingdom fruit to bloom. 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.



What I'm about to tell you is true. Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only one seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. - John 12:24



Ask your mom or dad to cut an apple seed in half. See the dark protective covering that keeps the insides in, until it is planted. Ask God to remove anything in your life that keeps you from bearing good fruit. Ask God to produce lots of kingdom fruit in you and through you (John 15:8).

