

KINGDOM GROWTH // Luke 13:18-21

Message from the series, The Gospel of Luke

This passage in Luke comes just after the showdown in the synagogue, when Jesus faced the challenges of the hypocritical Pharisees. Jesus is demonstrating that he is on a kingdom mission—heaven is invading, and the parable that Jesus tells at this point illustrates what that kingdom of God is like.

The kingdom of God, synonymous with the kingdom of heaven, is not a geographic location—it refers to the rule of God in the hearts of his people. Christ is the chief shepherd of the church, and we are under his domain. When we are saved and born again, we are transferred from the kingdom of darkness, to the kingdom of the Son, the kingdom of light (Colossians 1:13).

There are three guiding points about this kingdom:

1. The kingdom of God is ruled by Christ.
2. The kingdom of God is already but not yet, and we live in the time in between: between D-Day and V-Day, between the accomplishment of his earthly mission and the final victory celebration.
3. The kingdom of God is growing in spiritual advancement.

Main Principles:**1. The Mustard Seed: Kingdom growth is organic but universal in expansion.**

The mustard seed is an image of what God is doing *through* you, indicating external growth—growing the kingdom from something very small to something very big. Jesus personifies the mustard seed—his earthly beginnings seem small and insignificant: an ordinary carpenter who died as a criminal. But because of his resurrection, here we are 2,000 years later. (See Ezekiel 17:22-24 for an Old Testament parallel and 1 Corinthians 3:6-9 for a New Testament connection)

2. The Leaven: Kingdom growth is obscure but holistic in transformation.

The leaven is an image of what God is doing *in* you. It has less to do with numbers, but more to do with nature, the makeup of something. It is internal growth. God works quietly in the lives of believers—we may influence others without even realizing it, or give an encouraging word that is like yeast in an unleavened life, prompting new life that grows ever outward. The work of leaven is invisible, but unstoppable. Trust that the leaven is working in your life.

Seven Motivations in Applying the Parable:

1. Focus on making one disciple at a time—there's power in the concept of "who's your one?"
2. Take strides to mix into your community—get inside to have leavening influence.
3. Share the gospel with anybody and everybody—find small snippets of time to gossip the gospel.
4. Strive for excellence in ministry no matter the result.
5. Seek daily exposure to scripture and prayer—God changes you through his word.
6. Show up on Sundays—give God the mustard seed of your week.
7. Give your life away—unless a seed is buried and dies, it will never live and bear fruit.

Start small, mix in, watch the kingdom grow.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Effective interpretation of a parable means making the plain things the main things and the main things the plain things. What are the plain things and main things in this parable?
2. In what ways have we seen mustard seed growth in our individual or church lives? In what ways have we seen leaven growth?
3. What next step can we take in applying these seven areas of motivation to our daily walk?