

Matthew 13:31-32
The Mystery of the Mustard Seed
July 21, 2019 – Rev. Rick Lyon

Intro - Third of eight parables Jesus told in Matthew 13.

Why did Jesus use parables?

We find out in Matthew 13:10.

Matthew 13:10 - The disciples came and said to Him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" He answered and said to them, "Because it's been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it hasn't been given."

Webster's mystery: *something not fully understood.*

Isaiah 35 - Even the wilderness and desert will be glad in those days. The wasteland will rejoice and blossom with spring crocuses. Yes, there will be *an abundance of flowers and singing and joy!* The deserts will become as green as the mountains of Lebanon, as lovely as Mount Carmel or the plain of Sharon... Say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, and don't fear; your God is coming to *destroy your enemies.* He is coming to save you." ...and the redeemed of the LORD will return. They will enter Jerusalem *singing, crowned with everlasting joy.* Sorrow and mourning will disappear, and they will be *filled with joy and gladness.*

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1. The kingdom of heaven starts small.

Read v.31-32a

Dr. Lloyd. H. Shinnars was a world famous botanist, regular lecturer at the Smithsonian Institute and director of the herbarium at SMU for 25 years. He said: *"The mustard seed would have indeed been the smallest of those to have been noticed by the people at the time of Christ. The principle field crops (barley, wheat, lentils and beans) have much larger seeds, as do other plants which might have been present as weeds and so forth. There are various weeds and wild flowers belonging to the mustard, amaranth, pigweed, and chickweed families with seeds that are as small as or smaller than mustard; but they wouldn't have been known or noticed by the inhabitants. They're wild and they certainly wouldn't have been planted as a crop."*

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man planted in his field

Luke 17:20 - "The kingdom of God isn't coming in ways that can be observed."

Zechariah 4:10 - Who dares despise the day of small things?

1 Samuel 14:6 - Jonathan said to his young armor-bearer, "Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised men. Perhaps the LORD will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving, whether by many or by few."

When Gideon went out to face the Midianites with 10,000 soldiers what did God do?

Jesus: ***"If you give a cup of water in His name you'll never lose your reward."***

Leo Buscaglia: Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.

It's easy to think:

- **I'm just one person**

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- **It doesn't matter what I do**
 - **In the grand scheme of things, who I am, what I do and what I give is insignificant**
 - **but that's not true--GOD USES SMALL THINGS...**
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2. The kingdom of heaven grows.

Read v.31-32

According to an article in an online gardening magazine: The mustard bush is an evergreen shrub species grown in Africa, India and the Middle East... The mature size of a mustard bush depends on its environment, but most will reach a similar size despite a naturally slow growth rate. Mustard bushes reach an average mature height of between 6 and 20 feet with a 20-foot spread, although exceptional plants can reach 30 feet tall under ideal conditions.

Theory #1 - The birds are bad.

In the first parable Jesus told, the birds represented Satan.

As the kingdom grows, Satan infiltrates it.

- **counterfeit Christians, counterfeit churches, a counterfeit gospel, counterfeit righteousness and a counterfeit Christ.**

Theory #2 - The birds are good.

In the OT, birds usually represented the different nations of the world.

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In Daniel 4, Nebuchadnezzar has a dream about a tall tree filled with birds that gets chopped down.

Ezekiel 31:5-6 - It [Assyria] towered higher than all the trees of the field... All the birds of the air nested in its branches... all the great nations lived in its shade.

Revelation 5:9 - And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy... because You were slain, and with Your blood You purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation."

Acts 2:41-47 - So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer... All the believers were together and shared everything they had... And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Paul: *"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth."* (1 Cor.3:6)

"Gardening God's Way"

Plant three rows of squash:

Squash gossip, squash indifference, squash grumbling.

Plant four rows of peas:

Prayer, purity, patience and perseverance.

Plant three rows of lettuce:

Let us be kind, let us be faithful, and let us love one another.

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No garden is complete without turnips, so:

Turn up for church, turn up to serve and turn up to encourage one another.

To complete our planting we must have thyme:

Time for God, time for study and time for prayer.

And, most importantly, make sure your garden gets plenty of exposure to the Son.

The kingdom of heaven starts small. The kingdom of heaven grows.
