

TEXTS: Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19.

ANALYSIS:

1. A way to picture the kingdom of God.
2. A parable to present the kingdom of God.
3. A way to show how the kingdom of God is like or comparable to something else.
4. The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed.
5. A man took and sowed a mustard seed in his garden field.
6. A mustard seed is smaller than all other seeds. "In biblical times, several types of mustard had extraordinarily tiny seeds. Sometimes today we see necklaces and other pieces of jewelry that are made with mustard seeds. Even so, as one writer explained, "the seeds of the East are really about one-tenth of the size of the ones that grow in America and Europe" (James Meador, *Who Rules Your Life? Exploring The Kingdom Parables Of Jesus*, 1979).
7. When a mustard seed is full grown, it is larger than the other garden plants. It becomes a tree in which birds can build their nests. "Under favorable conditions, a mustard seed would grow into a very tall shrub tree, reaching ten to twelve feet in height" (James Meador, *Who Rules Your Life? Exploring The Kingdom Parables Of Jesus*, 1979).



APPLICATIONS:

1. In general, God's ways are not men's ways.

- A. Isaiah 55:8-9.
- B. "Each year when new cars hit the market, car makers appeal to the public to pay close attention to the latest features: a smooth running engine, luxurious options, and comfortable riding. One phrase we hear over and over, year after year is 'engineering miracle.' Suppose, however, that the automakers announced a new, expensive, and smooth-running sports car! After years of plans and drawing boards, the new model rolls off the assembly line. But the ads and commercials tell you that the sleek sports car was made from a bent fender, a rusty bumper, broken screws, a burned-out headlamp, a half-used battery, a high-mileaged transmission, and some treadless tires! To develop a fine automobile from such materials—now that would be an 'engineering miracle'! Now, suppose instead that you were going to start a worldwide religion. You could start with big money, a big city, and big people. The religion of Sun Moon got started that way. Or, you could start with no money, a small, troubled country, and people nobody ever heard of. You know, of course, who was able to build a worldwide religion from four fishermen, several tax collectors, a political revolutionist, several prostitutes, and average people who had no money, no contacts, no wealth, nor knowledge. It certainly made no logical sense that a worldwide religion could begin with such humble materials. And you could call that a true 'engineering miracle'" (James Meador, *Who Rules Your Life? Exploring The Kingdom Parables Of Jesus*, 1979).

2. In evangelism, success is about lots of people doing lots of "little" things.

- A. Man's "big" things have not delivered.
- B. God's little things always do. Acts 8:4.
- C. Do not despise the day of small things! Zechariah 4:10.
- D. Consider the results of our recent exhortation group meeting. Consider what could happen if we were more hospitable!
- E. "The parable ... lays down a truth which is universal and which is valid for all time. Always the greatest things start from the smallest beginnings. All music comes from the octave. From these eight notes come every hymn, every song, every concerto, every symphony, every oratorio that was ever written. In the last analysis all literature is built on the twenty-six letters of the alphabet. From them come every novel, every treatise, every poem, every speech that was ever made. We live in an age which worships size and numbers. Yet history proves again and again that it is not the big things but the small beginnings which are of paramount importance. Nowadays we take a pride in the fact that the biggest ocean lines in the world, the 'Queen Mary' and the 'Queen Elizabeth,' make the weekly crossing of the Atlantic to America. We quote their colossal dimensions and we enumerate the thousands of people which they can transport. On the 11th December, 1620, a little ship called 'The Mayflower' set sail from

England to America because the people in her could not find the religious liberty and freedom they desired. On that ship there were 101 people; and she herself was but a tiny thing. And yet the plain fact of history is that that voyage from Plymouth in 1620 by that little ship and that little group of people did more to change the world and alter history than any of the voyages of the great liners in the centuries to come ... The total number of the Christian Church after the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus was one hundred twenty ... We must never be discouraged by small beginnings and by the apparently infinitesimal effect that we can make. If a thing is the right thing it has God behind it and in the end it will make its mark" (William Barclay, *And Jesus Said, A Handbook On The Parables Of Jesus*, 1952).

3. **The "little" things are the big things of the kingdom.** Have you ever wondered why Jesus emphasized what He did in Matthew 25:34-46? God's people must view what's effective far differently than the world. Sadly, this is rarely the case.
4. **Keep it simple stupid.** "Remember that God's Son was born in a manger! This simplicity bothers some people" (James Meador, *Who Rules Your Life? Exploring The Kingdom Parables Of Jesus*, 1979).
5. **Don't grow weary in well doing!** Galatians 6:6-10.
6. **The rule of God works in individuals as it does in the church as a whole.** When we study this parable, we tend to exclusively equate the kingdom of God to the universal church, i.e. to external growth. While a valid application, it isn't the only application. It equally applies to internal growth. Luke 17:5-6; Matthew 17:20B.