

Call to Obedience #299
 PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
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The Kingdom of God Grows and Grows

By Reimar Schultze

“And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it” —Mark 4:30–32

These verses contain Jesus’ second great parable of the kingdom of God as recorded in Mark 4. It tells us how the kingdom of God grows, and grows, and grows, and nothing and nobody in the world can stop it from growing! It is important that we consider these messages of the kingdom of God, because Jesus came to earth with no other design but to establish his kingdom. He established the kingdom for us to enter into and to live within it forever. This is why we have the Lord teaching us, in what we call the Lord’s prayer, to pray, *“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done”* (Matt. 6:10). This is why, my friend, Jesus went everywhere preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. And this is why Jesus declared that the purpose of the rebirth is so we can enter the kingdom of God. You see, in the third chapter of John, a Pharisee came to Jesus by night, and Jesus told him, *“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”* (John 3:3).

This begs the question, “Why should a man be born again?” And the answer is, “So that he may enter the kingdom of God.” Jesus’ whole coming and ministry were about the kingdom, and here in Mark and in other passages, we have parables that say something like this: the kingdom of God is like ten virgins, or a net, or like a treasure hid in a field, or like leaven, or like a sower, or like a mustard seed.

Each parable Jesus told about the kingdom presents a slightly different facet of the nature of his kingdom. The primary purpose of this mustard seed parable is to tell us that, although the kingdom of God begins in a very, very small way, in the end it will be the greatest kingdom ever known to man, supplanting all other kingdoms!

This parable of the mustard seed tells us that the kingdom of God starts with *littleness* and it ends with *largeness*. It tells us that it starts out looking insignificant, and it ends up looking most significant. It starts out looking like almost nothing, and it ends up becoming everything! Of course, we have a prelude of this even in the Old Testament where what God starts, generally starts in a very, very small and insignificant way, yet blossoms and grows under his guidance and blessing.

For example, God started by creating one man and one woman. Well, if some of you would have been God, you probably would have created a whole village, or a whole city! But God started with one man and one woman.

Then, as you continue on in the Bible, you see that God started with seventy people that went down into Egypt—just seventy Jewish people—and, my friend, 400 years later, there were a million and a half Jewish people coming out of Egypt. So, you have in each case a progression

from littleness to largeness.

Just go back 2000 years and consider that all the Christians in the world could be placed into one single room. There were only about 120 of them—that's all you had at the beginning of the Church. Now, let me ask you, 2000 years later, how many rooms would it take to hold the Christians of the world? Can you tell me the number of that? Or how large of a room would it require for all of them to be in the same room? From littleness to largeness!

And here in the parable, we have the story that the kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed. At the beginning, it is the smallest of all seeds. But then, in the end, it becomes the largest of all herbs, so that it actually takes on the size of a tree. Jesus is saying the kingdom of God is like that. History tells us that it has been so, and today we see it with our own eyes as his church is spread around the whole earth. When you meditate on that, it might just cure you of a lot of discouragement, depression and anxiety.

Many of you are worried about who will be the next leader of your country, or which way your nation is going to go. Others of you worry about the economy, or are concerned about the rise of immorality, such as the rise of the homosexual movement, and so forth. Well, I'll tell you, meditate on this parable of the kingdom of God, the parable of the mustard seed, how it grows from the smallest to become the greatest, and you should take comfort that, no matter what happens in politics, no matter what happens to the economy, no matter what happens to the moral condition of certain nations and certain people, God's kingdom will continue to grow and grow until the end of time.

Sometimes, if it doesn't grow much in one place of the world, it grows so much the more in another place, but the overall picture is that in every single decade, in every single century since Jesus came to earth, the kingdom of God has been growing, and there's never been one century when there was a setback. The kingdom of God has always been advancing—just as Jesus said it would.

Right now, it is not growing much in Canada and the United States, nor in Europe, but it's growing with leaps and bounds in Africa, in Asia, in Central and South America. Oh, glory to God! You cannot stop the growth of the kingdom. It is in the nature of the kingdom to grow as it is in the nature of a bird to fly, of a fish to swim, of a monkey to live in a tree, and of a mole to live in the ground.

No matter what happens politically, socially, economically, and in your own life from day to day, God's kingdom will continue to grow—nothing can stop it! And, as long as you hold on to it in your own life, the kingdom of God continues to grow and bring forth its fruit in and through you. Praise his holy name! If the whole world would set itself against the growth of the kingdom, it could no longer stop it than if the world would set itself against the law of gravity. Oh, my friend, communists could not stop it, poverty can't stop it, famine can't stop it, floods and fires can't stop it, earthquakes can't stop it, terrorists and wars cannot stop the growth of the kingdom.

If you have the kingdom of God in your heart, sickness can't stop it from expanding within you; neither persecutions, nor trials, nor adversities, nor financial hardship—nothing can stop it! Jesus said that the kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed: it begins very, very small, but in the end, it will be like a great tree shooting out its branches into all directions, and the birds of the air shall lodge in the shadow of it.

Well, I encourage you to be born again, and after you're born again, to enter the kingdom of

God, because that's the reason for which you were born again. Then, let that kingdom of God grow within you, and let that kingdom spread its branches into every corner of your heart, of your soul, of your intellect; let it reach into your motives, into your actions and reactions, that you might be filled with the fullness of God.

So the kingdom of God starts as a little mustard seed and becomes one of the greatest of all herbs, a place for the birds of the air to rest. Birds in the Bible refer to different things in different places. For example, in the book of The Revelation, birds mean evil spirits and demons. But here, in this case, birds refer to peoples and nations who find rest in the branches and in the shadow of the kingdom of God. From Ezekiel 17 we read, "*Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent, In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell*" (vv. 22–23).

So, the *fowls of the air* mean people here; and in Ezekiel 31:6, the birds of the air refer to nations, great nations, "*All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations.*"

Wherever you have a shrub, a shrub-like tree, or even an ordinary tree, you have birds in the branches, and larger birds who find a resting place in the heat of the day under the branches of such trees or shrubs. That the kingdom of God will be a blessing to people and nations is, of course, the fulfillment of God's prophecy to Abraham that through him and through his seed all families of the earth shall be blessed. Such is the kingdom of God.

My friend, if you receive the kingdom of God in your life, you become a blessing to others. You'll be a comfort to others, and they will find rest in your spiritual branches when they are with you. Other people will be encouraged and strengthened as they are around you. You will become a blessing to the unsanctified, to the discouraged, to the troubled, to the lost, and they will seek you out for help.

At first, as the mustard seed is sown, it's little and helpless; sitting there covered by dirt for protection. Then, as it begins to grow, a little blade will come out. At first, the new convert, the new Christian, although he boasts great things and is excited and thrilled, needs a lot of protection, a good covering. But as the kingdom of God grows within him, he will eventually be able to carry others. The branches of his life become godly influences: they'll go to his children, his parents, and his school teachers, and the fellow workers in the factory or in the office.

Oh, to have the growth of the kingdom of God and the gracious power of it. As the kingdom of God is working in your children, they'll be a blessing to the teacher and not be a problem. The teacher won't have to yell at them or say anything twice. Instead, they'll find comfort in your children.

If the kingdom of God is within you as a worker in the factory, you will be on time. You will be conscientious with your work, and you'll have a spirit of cheerfulness and encouragement. Oh, how the branches of the kingdom of God are powerful; they have reached into industry and led to the abolition of slavery; they've influenced politicians to raise the standard of morality; they've gone into science. The branches of the kingdom of God have reached into our

courts of law, into commerce, into our colleges, universities, and the military. And they have left their mark on every coin, on every penny, nickel, dime and dollar in our country, and they have reached into the Pledge of Allegiance to our flag, into the constitution of the United States, and into our holidays or holy days.

Oh, the kingdom of God began small as a mustard seed in the womb of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and then it spread to Jerusalem, to Judea, and Samaria by Peter, and then it went by the apostle Paul to Asia. It went by Philip to Ethiopia, to North Africa; and then by Thomas the apostle to India, and then through Hudson Taylor to China and through Adoniram Judson to Burma, and it continues to grow to this very day. Hallelujah!

The kingdom of God, Jesus said, is like a grain of mustard seed which is less than all the seeds of the earth. But when it grows—my friend, when it grows—it can't be stopped in the human heart, and it will spread out over the whole earth!

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