

### 3. Already But Not Yet Kingdom

*10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. - Matthew 6:10 NIV*

The rule and reign of God has begun on the earth, but it is not yet complete. We are citizens of heaven, but we still reside on earth. We have caught a glimpse of the kingdom, but not everything has come under God's rule. This is the tension that we live in. We pray to see God's will done on earth as it is in heaven. And so we wait, but not passively.

*What is one situation where you are still waiting for God's will to be done? Is it salvation of a loved one, an injustice that you long to see made right, suffering that only God can address? Share these in your group and pause to pray for each situation to be transformed. Boldly ask God to show you how you can be used to bring His kingdom into this situation and take a small step of obedience that God might grow into something greater for the good of His Kingdom.*

#### WRAP-UP

*The mustard seed parable reveals a profound truth: even the smallest faith can yield remarkable growth in God's kingdom. Matthew, Mark, and Luke present two distinct perspectives – one of inclusivity, portraying the Kingdom as a refuge for all, and another warning of subtle infiltration of evil into the church. We feel an "already but not yet" tension as we pray to see God's will be done here as it is in heaven, and we wait patiently as God grows our mustard seed faith. This parable reminds us that from small beginnings, significant transformations for His Kingdom can emerge.*

#### MEMORY VERSE

*31 Here is another illustration Jesus used: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed planted in a field. 32 It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of garden plants; it grows into a tree, and birds come and make nests in its branches."  
- Matthew 13:31-32 NLT*

*Challenge – Many seeds were planted this weekend as dozens declared their faith through baptism. Pray for them and watch for ways to support them as they grow spiritually.*

### Small Beginnings, Big Impact Storyteller #10

#### INTRODUCTION

The beauty of God's Word is that it is alive and speaks to us individually, revealing more facets of truth with each reading. The parable of the mustard seed is found in the books of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Each Gospel author wrote from a unique background to a certain audience and thus the context of their accounts gives us a different perspective on this parable. When we read Matthew and Luke, we realize this parable may convey a warning to the church as did the parables it is set amongst. In the Gospel of Mark, we will find it more as instruction or encouragement, highlighting the potential for remarkable growth and transformation from small beginnings. Ultimately, whether viewed as a warning or as encouragement, the parable invites contemplation, discussion, and personal reflection in response to Jesus' teaching about the mustard seed.

#### Ice Breaker

*Is there anything in your life that started out small but ended up bigger than you anticipated? (e.g. a pet, an investment, a plant, a home improvement project?)*

#### Key Passage

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#### STUDY QUESTIONS

##### 1. Growth Potential

*5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" 6 He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you. - Luke 17:5-6 NIV*

Jesus used the mustard seed as an example in response to the disciples' request to increase their faith. Their request and Jesus' response both addressed the issue of size- the disciples wanted "bigger faith" and Jesus said "small" is already enough. Jesus shattered their assumptions when he essentially told them they needed only seed-sized faith. If doing God's work didn't depend on the size of their faith, there must be something else more critical involved.

*Why do you think Jesus used a living seed rather than an inert grain of sand to illustrate what could be done with a little faith? What does this response reveal about what God can do when we offer Him something relatively small?*

God can unleash His power in spectacular displays, like the pillars of fire and cloud, or the destruction of the walls of Jericho. But as we know from the story of Elisha, the Lord does not need something spectacular to precede Him, he also shows up in a gentle whisper. So, while the disciples may have thought spectacular faith was needed for God to work, Jesus pointed them back to humble beginnings that God could use to grow into something greater.

## **2. Small Beginnings- Surprising Growth**

The Gospel is full of humble beginnings that produced significance; Jesus' birth, His hometown, His first disciples, His triumphal entrance to Jerusalem, the cross.

*What are some contemporary examples of small beginnings that ended in significance? What examples have you seen in the Christian community (not just New Life) that started small and produced something significant for God's Kingdom?*

The Kingdom of God has been described as anywhere the King rules and reigns. It can and should be part of our everyday lives if we call Jesus Lord. But we can easily miss the kingdom moments as we go about our lives.

*What are some of the small ways you can make yourself available to God in your everyday life? Have you shared the story of your journey to faith with people in your sphere of influence- neighbors, co-workers, students, friends? Reflect back on this week. Was there any little moment, perhaps a brief encounter, that has the potential to grow into something greater given the chance?*

In the parable of the mustard seed, the seed grows into a tree that houses the birds of the air. Let's consider a couple of perspectives on what this might mean.

*31 Jesus answered them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor--sick people do. 32 I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners and need to repent." - Luke 5:31-32 NLT*

*In Luke 5:31-32 Jesus explains who he is calling to. If "the birds" represent those who seek to live in the Kingdom of God, who do we expect to find "nesting in its branches"? How should we respond to sinners and tax collectors coming into the Church? Mark tells this parable alongside the parable of a lamp that should not be hidden but shine for all to see, and a farmer who sows seed that produces a crop and a harvest without his help. In this context, Mark would lead us to welcome all who come to "nest in the branches". We can see this as an invitation to inclusivity.*

*But some scholars hold a second perspective on this parable.*

In Matthew Ch. 13, this parable is one of several parables that seem to give us warnings. The Parable of the Farmer who sows seed tells us three things we should beware of that can steal away God Word (including birds who represent "the evil one"). The parable of the Wheat and Weeds warns us that there is weed seed sown amongst the wheat and God will separate and burn it at the time of harvest. The parable of the yeast tells us that yeast is hidden in the dough and permeates the loaf. Jesus warned against the "yeast of the Pharisees" and Paul tells us in Galatians 5 and 1 Corinthians 5 that sin and false teaching are the yeast that should be removed from the dough. Further on in Matthew 13 we find the parable of the fishing net that brings in good and bad fish, and their sorting is likened to the separation of wicked from righteous at the end of the world.

*In each of these parables we see an evil element slipped into the good 'Kingdom of God'. How do you think this might apply to evil that slips in the church today? If sin and false teaching were settled into a church, how can it effect the church's growth and effectiveness for God's Kingdom? What historic or contemporary examples are there of sin or false teaching that infiltrated the church and what damage did it do?*