

The Parables of Jesus: The Mustard Seed & The Yeast

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Date: 02 May 2021

Preacher: Kent Dixon

- [0 : 00] Good morning and welcome to our service for Sunday, May 2nd, 2021. My name is Kent Dixon. I'm the lead pastor of Bramard Baptist Church here in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.
- Welcome this morning if you're joining us online live this morning or tuning in or listening later. Welcome wherever you are, however you come this morning.
- Welcome here, welcome to this safe place, and welcome to our online version of our welcoming community here at Bramard. So it's a joy to have you and welcome here this morning as you connect with us.
- We send out a weekly email message from me as well as a weekly email newsletter. So if you're interested, that email newsletter includes updates from our church, prayer and praise requests, and other information.
- So to stay connected with our church and what's going on in our community, you will want to receive that. So if you'd like to, please send an email to info at bramardbaptist.com.
- [1 : 07] That's B-R-A-E-M-A-R-Baptist.com. And we'd be more than happy to add you to that email distribution list so that you can stay connected with us.
- And if you already receive that, I encourage you to read it. And yes, I can tell if people read them or not. So we do have a really great opening rate in terms of people clicking on that email and reading it.
- So, but I do encourage you to engage with that because it is your main source for updates. It's your main source for current prayer requests, ways to celebrate answered prayer and updates on things like that.
- And you'll read about those things in our church. So I encourage you to engage with it if you receive it. And also, we'd be happy to add you if you'd like us to do that as well.
- I'll be leading us in celebrating communion together a bit later. So please gather whatever you have handy, a glass of water or juice, a cracker or a small piece of bread, and have that handy for communion later.
- [2 : 15] Well, it's been encouraging for me to hear that people have taken a hold of our new care group ministry. We're excited about connecting with one another in the church. And people are really getting on board with that.
- And that's exciting. And so remember, we're not asking you. So this is the leadership of the church and me as your pastor. And so we're not asking you to stop caring for the people that you've always connected with, the people that you've always engaged with in the past.
- We're just looking to ensure that everyone is being cared for in an intentional way. And so that's why we've launched this ministry. And we believe that care groups will help make that happen.

So let's say you have someone in your care group that you've received the information about your care group. You have someone in your group that you may not know. Well, guess what? That's a good thing.

Human beings are creatures of habit. We sit where we've always sat. We talk to who we always talk to. But stretching our comfort zones, I believe, is a very healthy thing, especially in church, especially in a community of believers.

[3 : 23] So please reach out to other people in your care group. Encourage one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. You can be a blessing to someone else.

And in turn, they will be a blessing to you. So engage with your care groups. I really encourage you to do that. Let's pray this morning. Almighty God, you are a gracious Father, clothed in majesty.

You are mighty, and yet you save us with mercy. Almighty God, you are an exquisite creator with hands that carve out beauty.

You are the author of life, yet you give us such freedom. Almighty God, you know each of us intimately. Your heart is full of love, yet you watch over us in our weakness and guide us daily.

Prince of Peace, we draw near to you and drink in the promise of eternity. Lord of Peace, we walk with you and seek your guidance as we learn to be more loving.

[4 : 33] Lord of Peace, in your sanctuary we are safe. Safe to let down our guard and dwell in your truth. Risen Lord, you came for the needy, the poor, the oppressed, the forsaken, and those that society has forgotten.

Risen Lord, your life renews our hearts from within. Thank you that we carry your promise of forgiveness. Risen Lord, we ask for your spirit to work through us as we minister to the world and share your love with all.

Almighty God, Prince of Peace, Risen Lord, We humbly dedicate our lives to you. And we come before you in worship this morning.

Amen. We're continuing in our sermon series, the parables of Jesus this morning. And throughout the series, as I mentioned, we're going to revisit some of these familiar stories.

Some of the stories as well we'll look at will maybe be less familiar to you or even relatively new. And we're going to explore the Bible, the parables Jesus told in the Bible over the coming weeks.

[5 : 58] And my prayer each week for us is going to be that may God grant us eyes to see and ears to hear the truth that is found in the parables of Jesus.

As we considered the parable of the sower last week, we recognize that a key focus of many of Jesus' parables was communicating the idea of, the qualities of, the values of, the kingdom of God.

And the kingdom of God refers to God's rule over creation. Not just at a fixed moment in time, but for all time. The arrival and ministry of Jesus Christ and his revelation as the Son of God was to announce that the kingdom had come.

The kingdom had come through Jesus, literally through his arrival and his ministry, through what he would accomplish through his death and resurrection.

But we also need to recognize that God's ultimate plan for all creation, and we looked at this a bit last week, will not be fully realized until Jesus returns and God's reign over his kingdom is fully realized.

[7 : 17] As we pray in the Lord's Prayer, Thy kingdom come. This morning we're going to be exploring two shorter parables. The parables of the mustard seed and the yeast.

And just like the parable of the sower from last week, these parables also focus in on the kingdom of God, that message of the kingdom of God. And before we dig into scripture this morning, I want us to consider something.

Are you familiar with what a simile is? That's not a weird way of saying smile. That's not a simile. It's not to assimilate, which sounds similar.

So does similar. Similar sounds like simile. But a simile is an expression in the English language that's used to compare two things. And remember we've talked in previous weeks in our series about a parable being used to compare two things.

So in a simile, there's an easy way to identify when someone is using a simile in a sentence. If you hear a comparison being made between two things, and you hear the word either like, or the word as, as used in the comparison, that identifies a simile.

[8 : 43] So in language, we often hear the word like being used as a filler. People, if you, it's interesting because you may even know people who do this, but just as a is a filler at times, I, a, so you're taking a split second to process your thoughts before you say something, like is used as a filler.

You will hear someone say, so like, I went to the store, and like, I said to the person I was talking to, I need like something, so it's a filler, right?

You can hear it used as a filler. But when it's used as, in a comparison situation, that identifies a simile. Are you familiar with the movie Forrest Gump?

Maybe you are, maybe you're not. But the main character, whose name is Forrest, ironically, uses a simile that he learned from his mother. And I wish we were together in person, so I could say, see how many of you actually know this.

But as Forrest Gump says, quoting his mother in the movie, quoting his mom, Forrest says, and I'm going to do my best Forrest Gump impersonation, my mama always says, life is like a box of chocolates.

[10 : 02] You never know what you're going to get. Is that familiar to you? That is a simile. So not to compare the wisdom of Jesus to the wisdom of Forrest Gump.

Forrest is very wise. But they both used similes. Life is like a box of chocolates. There's a simile. And in teaching parables, you can listen for the ways Jesus compares one thing to another.

And you'll often hear him use similes as he teaches. So we're actually picking up where we left off in the book of Matthew last week. You can turn to Matthew 13, beginning at verse 31 in your Bibles.

He, Jesus, told them another parable. The kingdom of heaven is like, simile alert, a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field.

Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that birds of the air come and perch, or pardon me, perch in its branches.

[11 : 18] Jesus, the mustard seed. All the parables in Matthew chapter 13 teach us about God and his kingdom.

But they seek to explain what the kingdom is really like versus what our expectations of a kingdom might be. We probably have expectations, preconceived ideas, of what a kingdom is, what a kingdom would look like, right?

We can relate to that. So while God rules over all creation, and in that sense, his kingdom is literal, the kingdom of God is more a spiritual kingdom than a geographical one.

We think of kingdoms as borders and countries and rulers and so on. We're very grounded and literal in our thinking in many ways, and that's part of it. But as we become citizens of God's kingdom, we recognize and trust Jesus Christ as our savior.

And so that is a literal commitment, but it is also a commitment of our heart and of our spirit. So let's go back to this idea of the mustard seed.

[12 : 33] Why does Jesus equate the kingdom of God with something as seemingly insignificant as a mustard seed? Well, if you are a gardener or you have studied this at all in any depth at any point, mustard seeds are very, very, very, very small.

And yet, as Jesus talks about, they grow into large and hardy plants, ultimately even larger than that into a bush or a tree. So as Jesus suggests, the mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds.

But while it starts out small, it grows steadily and consistently, eventually, as Jesus says, establishing itself as a tree and a tree that is so large and so substantial and grounded that birds will come and perch in its branches.

The seed of the kingdom, the seed of the good news, as we considered last week, has the potential to grow and spread exponentially.

In teaching this parable, Jesus is communicating this potentially exponential growth of the kingdom of God. As he did with the parable of the sower, the kingdom of God starts with good seed, good news, right?

[14 : 03] and it has the potential to not only change lives, but to transform all of creation. The connection between the kingdom of God and a mustard seed is one that you may remember hearing Jesus use at another time in the Bible.

Perhaps, does that ring a bell? In Matthew 17, verse 20, Jesus is having a conversation with the disciples about faith. And he says, I tell you the truth.

If you have faith as small as, I would love to hear it in person, a mustard seed, tiny faith even, you can say to this mountain, move from here to there and it will move.

Jesus says these great next words, nothing will be impossible for you. Jesus is equating that small amount of faith, even if we have that, it is extremely powerful.

God can and will use it. Jesus is also suggesting that even though this new movement of the kingdom of God may have started very small in first century Galilee, we can recognize how that small seed of faith, that small seed of the kingdom of God and the message of the good news of Jesus has grown into a massive tree with huge roots and branches that reach out into the world and into nearly every culture and country and language around the world.

[15 : 58] Amen to that. God's kingdom is growing and is at work. Maybe you'll think of a mustard seed a bit differently from now.

Huh? Maybe you'll think of mustard with a little more reverence the next time you use it on your kitchen table. And I have to admit that I do relish that thought.

Sorry. Well, our second parable this morning is the parable of the yeast and sometimes it's also referred to as the parable of the leaven as in leavening.

While the gospel of Mark has the parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the yeast separated in different parts of the gospel of Mark, they're included right next to each other in the books of Matthew and Luke.

And most commentators suggest that Jesus likely always told them as a pair. And I think we may tend to think of the times that Jesus spoke in the Bible as the only times he said this phrase or used this parable or told this story.

[17 : 11] But we need to remember that Jesus didn't just speak on the occasions that are recorded in scripture and say those things at one moment in time. These were probably things that he said regularly were part of his ongoing teaching.

So as I said in Matthew and Luke, these two parables, the mustard seed and the yeast, are together. So turn with me in your Bibles, if you have your Bible, or you can listen, to Matthew 13, verse 33, where we read, he told them still another parable.

The kingdom of heaven is like, another simile alert, yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough.

At the beginning of our series, you may recall that I mentioned that some of Jesus' parables were longer. We have explored the sower, and that's a longer parable.

There are others that we will explore in coming weeks that are also, again, some more familiar, some longer, some shorter, and so on. So there's quite a range and quite a bit of variety.

[18 : 31] But here we have the parable of the yeast. 26 words. No explanation. So last week we have the sower and Jesus explained it for us very helpfully in Scripture.

There is no explanation of this parable by Jesus. No further information. 26 words. That's it. So it's interesting that there are times in Scripture where yeast, the idea of yeast, the concept of yeast, is used as a metaphor or a direct comparison to something bad.

Yeast is used in Scripture to describe sin. It's used to describe bad moral influence or bad moral character. But why is it used to reflect those things?

That's interesting. Well, let's look at yeast for a second. Yeast is a single-celled fungal organism. And it can spread and it can cause infection in our bodies.

Many of the things that we take antibiotics for are to counter microorganisms and infections that get into our bodies. And yeast acts in that way and can cause infection and problems in our bodies.

[19 : 55] Yeast can be difficult to contain and control. And it can spread unchecked. But if you contrast that view, contrast that view of that negative view of yeast with the idea of yeast and its effect that it has in bread, in baking.

Contrast those two. Because yeast is essential to the majority of the kinds of bread that we're likely most familiar with.

And so we can see that in certain circumstances, yeast can certainly be beneficial. So by comparing the kingdom of God to yeast in this parable, Jesus is using yeast to create a different perspective.

And as a symbol here, in this parable, yeast represents, I would ask you to guess, growth. Although it's a relatively minor and insignificant ingredient, when mixed thoroughly into a baker's dough, yeast permeates the entire loaf.

I hope that gets a rise out of you to learn that. Just as yeast has a dramatic effect on the process of baking bread, similarly, the kingdom of God grows.

[21 : 23] It has grown. It will continue to grow exponentially. And from seemingly insignificant origins, God's kingdom continues to change lives and change the world.

Now, do you recognize how likely then it seems that Jesus probably told these two parables together? He paired them because they were complementary, because they related to one another and strengthened each other in a pair.

And as I said, Matthew and Luke paired them in this way. In the parable of the mustard seed, Jesus makes known the extent and outward spread of the kingdom.

And then in the parable of the yeast, Jesus focuses attention on the internal power of the kingdom that leaves nothing unaffected.

Outward spread, exponential growth of the kingdom and the impact of change that it can have, the way it influences and transforms.

[22 : 40] My friends, my challenge to us this morning is to seek to be mustard seed thinkers. leaders. Let me explain that.

Let's be people who aren't quick to dismiss our circumstances or our opportunities as too small, as insignificant, as something God can't or won't use.

I guarantee you that God does not see our circumstances, our skills, our gifts, our willingness, our heart, our love for him as insignificant in any way.

Nothing is too small for God. Rather than seeking the big changes that we think, are valuable or we may perceive to be valuable, let's recognize even the small ways that God is at work in our own lives and in the lives of other people.

And just as yeast transforms bread, let's seek to be people whose hearts, whose minds, whose eyes are always open to the ways God is seeking to use us to change the circumstances of the people we meet in our lives.

[24 : 15] My friends, let's be mustard seed thinkers and let's be the yeast of these as we seek to be influencers for God in the lives of others and in the world around us.

friends, God wants to change our perspective. He wants us to remind us, he is seeking to remind us that things that are small or significant to us may actually be of the greatest significance and value to him.

In case you haven't noticed, and I hope you have in your own life, God is in the business, he makes it his business, to use even the most humble circumstances and humble people in the most miraculous and amazing ways if we will let him.

we're celebrating communion together this morning and we recognize that communion identifies us as citizens of this kingdom that we're talking about in these parables, the kingdom of God.

And as I speak about this, just a reminder to get a small glass of water or juice, whatever liquid you have available and get a small cracker or piece of bread, whatever you have available there as well, so that we can celebrate communion together this morning in this unique and special way.

[25 : 59] Remember, it's not what you have available to eat or drink that are important, but what they represent for us. This morning as we celebrate communion together, we're intentionally focusing on the truth and the power of the sacrifice of Jesus, the price that we could never pay.

The price that was paid so that we can receive God's grace, God's mercy, so that we can be forgiven and restored in relationship with our merciful and gracious God.

When we remember the sacrifice of Jesus, broken, damaged, and dismembered aspects of our past lives are brought together again or put back together.

our mind and body and soul are restored in a present tense sense of hope and wholeness. Helplessness in the face of the unknown future gives way to resurrection hope.

As we prepare to celebrate communion together this morning, I'll begin with these words of approach. We gather at this table to celebrate life, the life of God in the world, made flesh and blood in Jesus and embodied in us.

[27 : 24] We come to remember the body that was broken, the hands that touched the untouchable, healed the hurting and did no violence. The feet that got dusty along city streets and at the lake shore, the arms that welcomed the stranger and embraced the outcast, the legs that entered homes and synagogues and danced at celebrations, the eyes that blazed at injustice, knew how to cry and saw the potential in everyone, the belly that shared table with the unexpected people and shook with laughter, the lips that wove stories and painted pictures of a new community and a better world, this blessed body that was broken, abused and rejected, we come to remember for we are called to be the body of Christ.

As you, risen Christ, remember our lives, so we remember you. And not only at this table, but in our lives together, may we embody your kingdom and remember and remember your life in the world.

And now I'll share some words of thanksgiving. Let's pray. Oh God, we give thanks for this bread and cup, a timeless reminder of the flesh and blood life of Jesus, broken, rejected, yet unstoppable.

in Christ, we see a life that could not be ended by death, a purpose that could not be silenced by the forces of violence, a desire deep within you for the transformation of the world.

as we eat the bread and drink the cup, Father, we thank you for the acceptance and tenderness with which you have transformed our shame into dignity and loved us into life.

[29 : 31] We thank you for cherishing the potential in us and for calling us to be partners in your vision for this world. As we eat the bread and drink the cup, Father, we call upon your spirit to come alongside us so that together in the company of your spirit, we may give ourselves afresh to the task of remembering you, of being the body of Christ, of living your life in this world.

Amen. Now, please take a moment to gather your bread or crackers. water. This broken bread we share is the body of Christ.

It is a sign of all that we live and risk together as the community of Christ. Let all who see Christ take and eat.

Now, please gather your juice or water. water. This cup we drink together is the wine of the kingdom of God, the sign of God's undertaking for the life of the world.

Let all who seek Christ take and drink. Let's pray. Father God, we have taken the bread and cup into our bodies.

[30 : 59] now may these hands be the hands of Christ in the world. May they do no violence. May these eyes see those who are overlooked.

May these ears listen to those who are unheard. May these voices be raised for the voiceless, lest our songs of praise be empty.

may these feet take us where Christ leads and may these hearts and minds be open to your spirit.

Christ has remembered us. May we remember Christ. Amen. On Communion Sundays in our church, we receive a benevolent offering that's used to help folks in our community and in our church family who need a helping hand.

And as you can relate perhaps or can recognize that the pandemic time is a challenging time for many people. And so the reality of collecting benevolent donations and financial gifts that we can use to help people is a bit different.

[32 : 21] But I encourage you to continue sending offerings to the church because benevolent offerings that we receive are still used to help people and we do very intentionally seek to help people when and where we can.

I also encourage you to look for opportunities to show kindness and mercy to other people whether you're out in the community or connecting with people in your care group or friends or family or whatever that looks like for you right now.

Seek to show kindness and mercy to the people you interact with in your life during this challenging time. We're going to sing this morning by closing with this familiar song that you know I love and I hope you're gaining you're getting to love it more all the time.

I am resolved. We are resolved to serve Christ. We are resolved to be mustard seed thinkers and the kind of people whose lives are like yeast transforming our own lives transforming our circumstances allowing God to use what we perceive to be insignificant to change and to be used as agents of him in the world.

And so my friends as you sing this song again may the words encourage and uplift your spirit and as the song ends go in peace.

[33 : 49] May you have a blessed week. God loves you. Enjoy this song and be blessed by it. Amen. I am resolved no longer to linger drawn by the world's delights things that are higher things that are nobler these have allured my sight and I will hasten to him hasten so glad and free Jesus greatest highest I will come to thee I am resolved to go to the

Savior leaving my sin and strife he is the true one he is the just one he hath the words of life and I will hasten to him hasten so glad I'm free Jesus greatest highest I will come to thee much he is what said me to their never Thank you.