

THE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM  
“THE POWER OF THE KINGDOM”

*Matthew 13:31-33*



**Theme:** Despite the appearance of defeat, the believer can know that God's Kingdom will prevail and permeate the world with the glory of God.

I. THE INITIAL PERCEPTION OF THE KINGDOM – *13:31-32a*

A. *THE GATHERING OF OUTCASTS*

1. After the parables that described the resistance that the Gospel will face – (the problems of rejection & contamination) Jesus addresses the power that attends the Gospel – lest the disciples feel intimidated.
2. Jesus uses the figure of a “*mustard seed*” to describe the initial assessment of the church – a small, insignificant, unimpressive group of illiterate, lower class fanatics who followed the carpenter's son from Nazareth who was a self-proclaimed Messiah.
3. Here Jesus indicates that the “*mustard seed*” is “*smaller than all other seeds*” used in gardening in that day.

A. *THE GRIM OUTLOOK*

1. Thus, at the initial human assessment of the church, things looked fairly grim – with little prospect of growth.
2. After Jesus' ascension, there were about 120 believers who met together in Jerusalem – not one of them was from Jewish religious leadership or the economic or social aristocracy – cp. *Acts 1:15*
3. The assessment that a band of rag-tag, illiterates wouldn't last too long at all – cp. *Acts 5:34-39*.
4. **APPLICATION:** Despite the appearance that the church has lost its ability to influence society, don't lose hope in the power of the Gospel – revival could sweep our great land at any time!

II. THE INSPIRING PROGRESS OF THE KINGDOM – *13:32b*

A. *THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH*

## *The Gospel According to Matthew*

1. *“When it is full grown”* – indicates that the tininess of the mustard seed is the initial and not final condition.
2. A growth process occurs that takes the seed and causes it to produce fruit – a process which Jesus guaranteed would happen – cp. *16:18; Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1.*

### **B. *THE GREATNESS OF THE CHURCH***

1. This tremendous growth becomes marvelous as we have seen Christianity become the greatest faith in the world – *“it is larger than the garden plants, and becomes a tree ...”*
  - a. The black mustard plant can grow up to 12-15 feet in height with a thick main stem.
  - b. From an incredibly small seed, such a large plant is a remarkable outcome – a surprise to those who had discounted it’s potential early on.
2. The ultimate fulfillment of this greatness will occur when the literal, physical Kingdom is established – cp. *Revelation 11:15.*

## **III. THE INCREDIBLE PROVISION OF THE KINGDOM – *13:32c***

### **A. *THE GATHERING PLACE FOR SINNERS***

1. In this tree *“the birds of the air come and nest in its branches”* – indicating that the church would ultimately become a haven for sinners desiring rest.
2. Such an invitation to gather to Christ has always existed – cp. *Matthew 11:28-29; 23:37.*

### **B. *THE GREATNESS OF THE PROVISION***

1. Jesus indicates here that the Kingdom would become a means for provision of shelter, protection, and benefit to the entire world – cp. *Daniel 4:10-12, 20-22.*
2. The believer, when walking obediently to the Word of God, becomes a blessing to all those around him – it is from the teachings of god’s Word that obedient Christians has established high standards of education, justice, the dignity of women, the rights of children, prison reform, right to life, the equality of all men,

etc ...

3. APPLICATION: the church must exist as a conduit through which the blessings of the Kingdom of God will touch the lives of those without Christ – welcoming those from outside to “*come and nest*” so as to taste the “kindness of God that leads ... to repentance” – cp. *Romans 2:4*

#### **IV. THE INFLUENTIAL PENETRATION OF THE KINGDOM –** ***13:33***

##### **A. THE GROWTH OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHURCH**

1. Jesus switches His comparison here to refer to “*leaven*” – a reference to that permeating fermentation that serves as a contagion.
2. Although “*leaven*” commonly refers to that which is negative, here it is used in a positive sense – a reference to the Kingdom’s influence and permeation.
3. Consistent with the initial unimpressiveness of the Kingdom described by the mustard seed, here Jesus emphasizes that a small piece of leavened dough can permeate a large piece of unleavened dough – “*three pecks of meal*” – to make it rise.
4. ILLUSTRATION: the gift of starter dough from a mother to her newly married daughter – which would produce leaven throughout her lifetime.

##### **B. THE GENERATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHURCH**

1. Another principle of “*leaven*” is that it does its work internally – permeating within – the “*leaven was hid in ... until it was all leavened.*”
2. The hiding here does not emphasize concealing, but emphasizes the deep penetration of the Kingdom within the lives of people.
3. APPLICATION: It is the power of God’s Kingdom within a believer that makes his witness effective, and that is the influence on the world that Christians should seek to have..