

Mark 4:26-34(ESV) ²⁶And he said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. ²⁷He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. ²⁸The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.” ³⁰And he said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? ³¹It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, ³²yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.” ³³With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. ³⁴He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.

1. Jesus often spoke in parables to provoke a reaction from the listeners (Gordon Fee, Douglas Stuart – How to Read the Bible For All It Is Worth, pg. 138). The parable itself is the message. The story captures the hearers and shows them where they fit in the story, where they fall short, and evoke a response to the ministry of Jesus. Some of the parables were quickly understood and others were not. **2. Every parable has one main point. “Do you get the point?”** Ideally, you would find yourself somewhere in the parable and desire to do what Jesus was asking of the hearers.

Let me give to you an example of a parable that makes the point easy to understand. A religious leader named Simon invited Jesus into his home for dinner. Jesus was not considered the honored guest, the visiting rabbi. Simon did not offer Jesus the common hospitality of the day, an intended put down on his guest, Jesus. The town prostitute enters the room and makes a complete fool of herself fawning all over Jesus by crying her heart out and using her tears and hair to wipe the feet of Jesus. The Pharisees drew the conclusion that Jesus was a false prophet because he did not condemn this lady of the night, an utter embarrassment to those who thought themselves better.

Jesus knew exactly what the Pharisees were thinking. I quote, “Jesus tells his host [Simon] a simple story [parable]. **Luke 7:41-43(NLT)** ⁴¹“A man loaned money to two people - 500 pieces of silver to one and 50 pieces to the other. ⁴²But neither of them could repay him, so

he kindly forgave them both, canceling their debts. Who do you suppose loved him more after that?" ⁴³Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the larger debt." "That's right," Jesus said. Friends, Simon got the point.

The money lender was generous. God is like the money lender. The two debtors, the two who owed the money back were Simon and the town harlot. The parable is a word of judgment and acceptance, calling forth a response from Simon and the harlot. Simon and the harlot could not miss the point. Simon had egg all over his face in front of a large crowd of dinner guests. The harlot heard a word of acceptance, not judgment, a word of forgiveness as Jesus meant it to be. Parables are powerful.

Luke 7:43-50(NLT) ⁴³Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the larger debt." "That's right," Jesus said. ⁴⁴Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Look at this woman kneeling here. When I entered your home, you didn't offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵You didn't greet me with a kiss, but from the time I first came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume. ⁴⁷"I tell you, her sins - and they are many - have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love." ⁴⁸Then Jesus said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven." ⁴⁹The men at the table said among themselves, "Who is this man, that he goes around forgiving sins?" ⁵⁰And Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." I doubt Jesus was ever invited back.

The two parables we are about to look at are similar in meaning. The Kingdom of God is announced. What happens in the kingdom of God? What is the kingdom all about. The Kingdom of God is primarily about three things. 1) Sowing, 2) growing, and 3) harvesting.

3. Sowing, planting the seeds of the Gospel hopefully in good soil. 4. Growth, caused by God, takes place as the seeds germinate. 5. The harvest refers to the day of judgment, when Jesus comes again, and the Christians are separated from the non-believers. Often the parables give to us a sense of urgency of the importance of planting seeds and being prepared for the harvest, the day Jesus comes again. In the meantime, God somehow supernaturally provides the growth. Time is short. Jesus can come at any time. Are you ready? Keep planting seeds and never stop. Everything is at stake. The Lord is at hand. Be ready.

²⁶And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground." In the past few weeks, I have noticed some of your beautiful well-kept yards. Only you know when, but sometime in the past you planted seeds or bulbs. Yes, you watered them, but something occurred that you did not make happen. You planted the seeds with great tender and loving hands. When the seed germinated, it began to grow. Not all the seeds germinated and grew. I do not think any of us deserves the credit for the growth no matter how much work you put into it. You did not cause the seed to die. You did not pull out of that dead seed a sprout that eventually matured into a plant. It happened yes, but you did not cause it to happen. Some of the seeds you planted did not serve their purpose. They simply stayed seeds and did not germinate. I must say some of your yards are rather stunning.

So, what is the Kingdom of God like. Jesus says God's kingdom is like a person scattering seeds of the ground. ²⁷He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. ²⁸The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

One definition of the Kingdom of God is this. **6. The Kingdom of God is God's rule and God's reign in your life.** Let us say that together. In order to belong to the Kingdom of

God you must believe in the King. **7. Only Christians belong to God's Kingdom.** In order to belong to the Kingdom of God you must give your total allegiance to the King. Of course, the King is Jesus. Those who do not belong to the Kingdom of God belong to the kingdom of this world whose ruler is the prince and power of the air, the kingdom of Satan.

In the Gospel of John, we find this verse. **John 1:12(ESV)** *“¹²But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”* **8. When God brings us into His Kingdom, we become God's children.** **9. We are children of the King which makes us all part of God's royal family.** One pastor said, “We are all a bunch of big shots.” The King adopts us into his family and so often the initiation into the Kingdom of God is baptism. Having said that there are a lot of unbaptized people in God's kingdom. They have been adopted. They have received Christ into their lives, they have simply put off being baptized. Others who have been baptized may choose to stay out of God's Kingdom and God honors their choice. This is why the promises parents make at baptism are so important to keep. Eternal life is at stake. The seed of the Gospel may be planted at baptism, but it does not always germinate.

To belong to the Kingdom of God is a privilege far beyond what we can imagine. God is building a place for you that you will live in forever. When Jesus ascended into heaven he went there to prepare a place for all who belong to the King. Jesus told us, **John 14:2-3(ESV)** *²In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.* Friends, what God is preparing for us we cannot even begin to imagine how extravagant and beautiful it will be, and it will last forever. You will be grateful for eternity that you belong to the King, that He adopted you into His kingdom. Please never put off receiving Christ into your life.

10. Jesus is telling us that since we are members of God's kingdom, God wants all of us to be planters of seed. The seed or seeds are the words and works of the Gospel. It is telling people about Jesus. Planting seeds is a way of honoring the King. **11. You cannot make the seeds grow for that is God's business, not yours.** You can plant seeds. Once those seeds are planted, we really do not understand nor can we explain exactly how they grow or why they did not germinate. That is God's business, not ours. God causes the growth. We are the planters of seed.

I do know this, if you never planted the seeds in your garden, the soil would not produce such beautiful flowers and more.

²⁹But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.” **12. The sickle and the harvest refer to the 2nd coming of Jesus when all of the children of God's Kingdom will be revealed. It is the day of judgment.** Those who belong to God's kingdom will be separated from those who belong to the kingdom of Satan.

13. Planting seeds includes speaking the words of the Gospel and doing acts of Christian love. Planting seeds is living a life that brings glory to God. Planting seeds is knowing that you are a child of the King and you have so much to spread everywhere. Your entire identity is wrapped up in following Jesus, your King. You are sons and daughters of the King through adoption. Each one is equally important to the King.

³⁰And he said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? ³¹It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, ³²yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

Sometimes we can make a statement that is not literally true but contains a seed of truth nevertheless. Jesus makes a statement to prove a point. Jesus speaks of a mustard seed that

when planted on the ground is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth. Jesus is speaking here in hyperbole, making a generalized statement to prove a point. Literally, there are seeds smaller somewhere in the cosmos than the mustard seed but if that is all you can think about, you miss the point of the entire parable. On our farm we grew mustard for the seed. I know how small mustard seed is and for the life of me I have never seen a smaller seed. If I put one mustard seed on my finger you would not be able to see it. It is smaller than a dot made by a pen. They are the tiniest of seeds. Our mustard seed plants grew to over 8 feet tall. They were absolutely enormous. Yes, birds could build a nest in these fully grown mustard plants.

Friends, comparing mustard seeds to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, you can speak one sentence of God's love to a non-believer, and God takes what you said, and grows that person into a giant for Christ. You do not have to give the whole Bible and please don't. You just have to be yourself in Christ, who God made you to be, and you plant these smallest of seeds by displaying the love of Jesus in actions and words. **14. The smallest of seed that you plant may produce the largest of harvest.** The growth would never have taken place had you not planted that tiniest of seeds of faith.

The harvest is coming. The day of judgment is right around the corner. Friends, there is a sense of urgency in these parables. 1. Be planting seeds. 2. Be ready for the harvest. Amen and Amen.