

Parables of the Mustard Seed and Yeast (Matt 13:31-33; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-21)
Jesus' sequence of parables on the Kingdom of God

Following the Parable of the Sower (Matt 13:1-9; Mark 4:1-9; Luke 8:4-8) and the Parable of the Weeds (Matt 13:24-30; 36-43), Jesus shares two short parables next: the Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matt 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19) and the Parable of the Yeast (Matt 13:33; Luke 13:20-21). What is Jesus saying about the Kingdom of God?

1. As you compare the three accounts of the Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matt 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19), what do you see Jesus emphasizing in the figure of speech in comparison to the Kingdom of God? Who is Jesus telling the parable to? If it helps, mark up the passage!

Matthew 13:31-32, ESV	Mark 4:30-32, ESV	Luke 13:18-19, ESV
<p>31) He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. 32) It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."</p>	<p>30) And he said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? 31) It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, 32) yet 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."</p>	<p>18) He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? 19) It is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."</p>

2. As you observe the two accounts of the Parable of the Yeast (Matt 13:33; Luke 13:20-21), what do you know about leaven / yeast? What is Jesus saying about the Kingdom of God?

<p>33) He told them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened." (Matt 13:33, ESV)</p>	<p>20) And again he said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? 21) It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened." (Luke 13:20-21, ESV)</p>
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3. Sometimes it is worthwhile to evaluate if Jesus is teaching a parable as part of a series of parables on a particular subject. A good example of this is a sequence of parables in Matthew 13 when Jesus teaches about the Kingdom of God with: the Parable of the Sower, Parable of Weeds, Parables of the Mustard Seed and Yeast, Parable of the Hidden Treasure and Costly Pearl, and Parable of the Dragnet. As you study each parable, discover what Jesus is saying and whether there is a significance in the order of His presentation. Fill in the row of the Parable of the Mustard Seed and Yeast.

Parable	Who hears Jesus' interpretation?	What is being emphasized?
1. Parable of the Sower (Matt 13:1-9; Mark 4:1-9; Luke 8:4-8)	Everyone	In contrast to Jewish expectations, the kingdom of God was not about political power or land. In His Parable of the Sower, Jesus indicates that the good news of the kingdom will be heard by all kinds of people, but only a small number will hear, understand, accept and have an abundant spiritual life from it.
2. Parable of Weeds (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43)	Disciples	In contrast to the Parable of the Sower, the Parable of the Weed presents the seed as either Believers or non-Believers. In a world that contains both Believers and non-Believers, Jesus places an emphasis on His role as Judge deploying His angels to separate non-Believers from Believers before ushering them into the Kingdom of God.
3. Parables of the Mustard Seed and Yeast (Matt 13:31-33; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-21)		

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Teacher Notes

Following the Parable of the Sower (Matt 13:1-9; Mark 4:1-9; Luke 8:4-8) and the Parable of the Weeds (Matt 13:24-30; 36-43), Jesus shares two short parables next: the Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matt 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19) and the Parable of the Yeast (Matt 13:33; Luke 13:20-21). What is Jesus saying about the Kingdom of God?

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Help the student understand context by encouraging him to locate the passage in the Bible and see what is said before and after the passage in question. In this instance, the answer is found in Matthew 13:34:

All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable.

Jesus is telling both parables to the public

Teach the student what a simile is – a comparison of one thing to another that is different by using words of comparison: "like" or "as."

"The kingdom of heaven **is like** a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field."

The kingdom of God was compared to a mustard seed. The mustard seed is among the smallest of seeds of the world (the orchid seed is smaller). The mustard plant (likely *brassica nigra*) is an annual that typically grows to a four foot shrub; however, it has been known to grow as much as fifteen feet near the Jordan River. Its leaves and shoots can be used as an herb and its seed as a spice.

The point of the parable places an emphasis in the power of the seed; its small size belies how big the plant will ultimately be. In like manner, the small and humble beginning of Jesus' ministry belies the future glory of the kingdom of God.

2. As you observe the two accounts of the Parable of the Yeast (Matt 13:33; Luke 13:20-21), what do you know about leaven / yeast? What is Jesus saying about the Kingdom of God?

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Ask the student: do you see the simile? Inform the student that leaven is yeast.

“The kingdom of heaven **is like** leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened.”

Jesus compares the kingdom of God to yeast.

Ask the student: how is yeast different from a mustard seed? Does dough grow like a mustard plant?

Like the Parable of the Mustard Seed, the kingdom begins in a small way; however, unlike the mustard seed, yeast does not grow. Instead yeast transforms and changes the flour into dough.

With this analogy, Jesus teaches that the kingdom of God is a small living agent that, once initiated, cannot stop until it transforms and changes completely.

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3. Parables of the Mustard Seed and Yeast (Matt 13:31-33; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-21)	Everyone	The Parable of the Mustard Seed places an emphasis in the power of the seed; its small size belies how big the plant will ultimately be. In like manner, the small and humble beginning of Jesus' ministry belies the future glory of the kingdom of God. In the Parable of the Yeast, the kingdom begins in a small way; however, unlike the mustard seed, yeast does not grow. Instead yeast transforms and changes the flour into dough; the kingdom of God is a small living agent that, once initiated, cannot stop until it transforms and changes completely.