

Sermon Notes
Good News Church
Psalms, Proverbs & Parables
"Birds & Branches"
Matthew 13:31-32
Drue Warner
9-6-26

Context: In Matthew 13, Jesus tells seven stories (parables) to provide pictures for people to better understand what is the Kingdom of God – planting, farming, baking, hunting, and fishing.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| ▪ The Sower | ▪ Hidden Treasure in a Field |
| ▪ The Harvester (Wheat & Weeds) | ▪ Pearl of Great Price |
| ▪ Mustard Seed | ▪ Fishing Net |
| ▪ Yeast | |

Jesus is trying to communicate every way He can that the Kingdom of God is amazing! He wants us to make the Kingdom of God our top priority... 1) Find it 2) Dwell in it!

Matthew 13:31-32

31 He (Jesus) presented another parable to them, saying, "The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; 32 and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

What does Jesus mean by 'The Kingdom of God?'

Kingdom of God (def): "any place over which God has operative dominion" and... "the rule and reign of Christ, especially in the hearts and lives of His people." This reign expands in width (as people come to faith in Christ) and in depth (as people mature spiritually).

"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." - Romans 14:17

The Kingdom of God is not so much about being a physical kingdom that can be seen, but it is a spiritual kingdom that can be experienced.

1. The Kingdom of God starts with sowing seeds of anything that has the DNA of God's Kingdom – love, joy, peace, righteousness, etc.

31 He (Jesus) presented another parable to them, saying, "The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field;

God has been sowing seeds of His Kingdom, through His people, since He created Adam and Eve and placed them in the garden.

- **INTENTION (Old Testament)** – Tending Sheep (David), Serving Wine (Nehemiah > Artaxerxes), Winning a Beauty Pageant (Esther), Harvesting Wheat (Ruth)
- **INTERVENTION (New Testament)**
 - **At Bethlehem**, God planted a tiny seed in the form of a baby, in a place where nobody was looking, and in a way that nobody was expecting.
 - **At Pentecost**, the mustard seed of the Holy Spirit caused the Kingdom of God to multiply from 12 followers to 3,000 who believed at Pentecost to approximately 2.4 billion Christians in the world today (up from 2.2 billion 15 years ago)

3 Tips for Sowing Seeds:

1. TIP 1: Love with no strings attached.

“Loving without strings attached is the real essence of Biblical blessing. When we become comfortable with unconditional love, I think we will find that it does witness correctly to who God is, and it’s a power that naturally draws people in.” – Hugh Halter (The Incarnational Kingdom)

Fruitful ministry may have more to do with mowing a lawn, washing a car, or trimming a hedge, and less to do with how “spiritual” our conversations have been.

Love opens the door. Truth sets them free.

2. TIP 2: Try to develop a sense of “Whimsy” (no pretense).

Whimsy allows people (outside of the family of God) to be themselves when they’re around us, without feeling judgment for their behavior (i.e. bad language, habits, etc.). Whimsy is what attracted people to Jesus, and it’s what is often missing from Christians.

GOOD QUOTE: “Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant. To plant the Kingdom of God and see it grow, you need good seed and good soil. Bad people make good soil because they have a lot of fertilizer in their lives.” - Neil Cole

3. TIP 3: Be yourself. Do what you love.

- **Neighborhood Ministry** > Love. Serve. Bless. // **Plant.** Water. Grow.
– 1 Cor. 3:6

- **Sugar Hill Men’s Group fire pit**

“Is any pleasure on earth as great as a circle of Christian friends by a good fire?” – C.S. Lewis

- **Steve Stanley (Car Shows)**

2. God loves to do the unexpected.

*32 and this is smaller than all other seeds, but **when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree***

- God uses our seemingly insignificant, unspiritual acts of love and service to advance His Kingdom. *NOTE: It may be years and years before you see any of the fruit from the seeds you are planting.*

The gospel is all about “radical acts of love”

- The further people are from God when we love them, the greater the experience of the gospel in their lives (i.e., pulling weeds with a sex offender)
- **Application: Who is a person in your life whose jaw just might drop open if you did something nice for them?** Start thinking of this as your mustard seed and ask God for ideas on how you can plant it, then do it!
- **God loves the underdog!** Our love for the underdog comes from God! We see it throughout history in the people that He has chosen to expand His Kingdom.
 - **Joseph**
 - **Abraham** – was a “nobody from nowhere” whom God chose Him to be the father of many nations and to make covenant with.
 - **Moses** – had a speaking problem, but yet God called him to speak boldly to the most powerful man on the earth.
 - **David**
 - **Peter** – initially known to be a coward for his 3 times denial of Jesus
 - **You and me** – we are constantly aware of our weaknesses, but God wants to use us IN our weaknesses!
 - **APPLICATION: What is an area of your life where you feel overwhelmed and under-resourced?** Start thinking of this as your mustard seed and ask God where He wants you to plant it, write down a plan, and do it.

3. The Kingdom of God provides shelter for all kinds of birds.

32 and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.

- There are a lot of strange birds in that tree (and we’re included)! We’re a mixed up and messed up bunch.

- The Kingdom of God provides opportunity for outsiders to be welcomed in, the lonely to belong, and the lost to be found.
 - This is why we do church the way we do. It's not a gimmick. We're seeking the least, lost, lonely, desperate, hopeless, broken, burned out, burned up, you name it, to share the shade of and invite into the Kingdom of God.
 - GNC is like the "Mustard Tree" in this parable. We're an *"outpost where weary travelers can find rest for their souls."* > WELCOME & HOSPITALITY
 - *"The Church is the only organization that exists for the benefit of its non-members." //* *"People aren't looking for a friendly church. They're looking for friends."* – Rick Warren
 - ***"Consider others as more important than yourselves."* – Philippians 2**
 - This is who we are! Food, seating, priority of welcome.
 - Go last in the food line, take the worst seats, park 20 spaces down the street, whatever it looks like to you.
 - We want to do everything we can to help people come into the Kingdom of God.
 - Q: How large are our branches (welcoming) and how green (life-giving) are our leaves?
 - Application: What are we doing to connect and build relationships with people who are outside of relationship with Christ?
 - *"My goal is to live life in such a way that uptight Christians doubt my salvation and non-Christians ask questions."* – Steve Brown

CLOSING

Q: What's the #1 thing birds look for in big trees with strong branches and lots of leaves? Safety (shelter, contentment, home, etc.)

- It's the same with us! We want to know that we're safe, and when we are in Christ, we are.

Q: Did you know that you can be 100% confidence that you will be eternally safe?

- ***"For God so loved the world, (that's a big tree!) that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."* – John 3:16**
- ***"My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life."* – John 6:40, 47**

- **CONFIDENCE** - "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life." – 1 John 5:13
- "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." – John 1:12-13

WHAT'S YOUR RESPONSE?

⁵³ When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there. ⁵⁴ Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and **they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers (fear of the Lord)?" they asked.** ⁵⁵ "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶ Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" ⁵⁷ **And they took offense at him.** But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town and in his own home." ⁵⁸ And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith." – Matthew 13:53-57

You can either turn towards Jesus or turn away. If you turn towards Him by faith, He will never let you go! "Whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life."

In the shelter of God's great big "tree of life," you will be safe, not just in this life, but for all eternity.

BLESSED ASSURANCE

by Fanny Crosby (1873)

*"Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
O, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.
This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Savior all the day long."*

And THAT'S Good News!