

The Ubiquitous Kingdom

Luke 13:18-19



Seeds connote potential



Metaphorical Trees

- “For the Israelites of Jesus’ time, the tension between everyday reality and a mythical vision of Israel as God’s chosen people was felt with particular urgency.” (Keating, p.6)
- “The cultural symbol for this myth was the great cedar of Lebanon... The kingdom of God as a nation would be the greatest of all nations just as the great cedar of Lebanon was the greatest of all trees.” (Keating, p. 7)
- Psalms 92:12-13*
- Ezekiel 17:22-23*
- Hosea 14:4-6
- Isaiah 41:19-20

Cedars of Lebanon



Luke 13:18-19

¹⁸ He said therefore, “What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? ¹⁹ It is like the mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches.” (NRSV)

¹⁸ Then Jesus asked, “What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? ¹⁹ It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds perched in its branches.” (NIV)

—This parable is also in Matthew 13:31-32 and Mark 4:30-32

“smallest seed; largest garden plant”

Mustard Tree?



Mustard Plants are Pervasive

“Watch out if you let the pods get too ripe, or your garden will become overrun with mustard plants... Pick the pods before they are entirely ripe; otherwise they will shatter and the fine seed will blow into every corner of your garden.” —LeAnn Zotta, vegetablegardener.com

“...He [Jesus] tells his listeners that the kingdom of God is like mustard, which grows like a wild bush. I once heard a farmer say it is like kudzu, and a city preacher compare it to the wild weeds that grow out of the abandoned houses and cracks in the sidewalks. The mustard seed’s growth would have been familiar to first century Jews and its symbolic meaning unmistakably clear. It may have been growing in the wild around them as Jesus spoke.” —Shane Claiborne, *The Irresistible Revolution*.

Mustard Plants are Useful

Mustard plants are grown in vineyards to serve as a biofumigator, suppressing soil-borne pests and diseases.



Other Uses for mustard plants/seeds

- Used in ancient medicine
- Leaves are used as edible greens
- Seeds ground for spice



What on earth is Jesus saying?

- The kingdom is pervasive, it will grow within all other kingdoms.
- The kingdom is very different from what you were expecting.
- The kingdom's greatness is defined differently than the greatness of earthly kingdoms.
- The kingdom is a curse to those who don't find it useful.
- The kingdom has many blessings for those who understand it and choose to become part of it.
- The kingdom spreads by multiplication.

What about those OT cedar prophecies?

- Is it possible that the KOG is both?
- Pervasive and uncommon
- Powerful and meek
- Is Jesus simply pushing back against Jewish nationalism?
- “Culture War”
- Think bigger!

“The Jesus revolution is not a frontal attack on the empires of this world. It is a subtle contagion, spreading one little life, one little hospitality house at a time. Isn't it interesting that Saul of Tarsus went door to door (Acts 8:3) trying to tear up the contagion like it was a cancer? But the harder people tried to eradicate it, the faster it spread. And, in the end, even Paul caught the contagion. The mustard weed grabbed him.”

—Shane Claiborne, *The Irresistible Revolution*

Let's apply some mustard

- As Christianity began from a small seed to become a ubiquitous kingdom, has the seed of the gospel grown to permeate your whole life?
- How can you show the value of the kingdom to those who may view it in the way that one might view invasive plants in their garden?
- How can you multiply the kingdom in your sphere in the same way that the mustard plant multiplies?



The Reminder of Mustard



follower.