

Short Stories By Jesus

Session 4: The Mustard Seed

1. Thinking about Seeds and Gardening

What words would you use to describe a seed?

What are some things a gardener must do to grow plants? Are there any things a gardener should not do?

2. This week's parables: Read Mark 4:30-32, Matthew 13:31-32, and Luke 13:18-19 (in one sitting)

What three elements do these three parables have in common?

What details differ among the three parables?

In Mark and Matthew, Jesus says the mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds. It is not—nor does it grow into a tree, as Jesus says in Luke. Does Jesus's apparent lack of botanical knowledge present a problem in understanding the parables? Why or why not?

Find in your Bibles and read these verses that refer, as does the Mustard Seed parable, to "the birds of the air": Genesis 2:20; Psalm 104:12, 16-17; Ezekiel 31:3-14; Matthew 6:26; Matthew 8:20.

Do you think any or all of these passages might add to our understanding of the parable? If so, how? If not, why not?

3. The Context of the Parable: Read Matthew 13:33 & Luke 13:2-21

How are the parables of the yeast like the parables of the mustard seeds? How are they different?

Do you think the parable of the Leaven enhances our understanding of the parable of the Mustard Seed? Why or why not?

4. Watch Video

Read aloud these quotations from *Short Stories by Jesus* (the book):

The parable does mark a contrast between small and great. . . . It has something to say about seeds and birds, growth and shelter. These are the component parts of the parable, and it is from these that meanings may best be drawn.

No seed is, or should be, seen as insignificant; each contains life within it.

Even small actions, or hidden actions, have the potential to produce great things.

We are part of a larger process, and although we may start an action, once started, it can often do quite well on its own.

5. Call to Action:

What assumptions does our society hold—and what assumptions do we as individuals hold—about who and what is “significant” and what actions matter that the Mustard Seed parable challenges?

What might the parable suggest Christians, both as the church and as individuals, do in order to nurture the growth of the kingdom of God?

What might the parable suggest Christians do not need to do in order to nurture the kingdom’s growth?

Closing Prayer

Loving God, giver of life and gracious provider, we praise you for calling us into your kingdom through your Son Jesus, and we pray that we will spread your loving rule through knowing when to act and when to wait upon you. Amen.