

MUSTARD SEED & FLOUR

Matthew 13:31-35

The parables of the mustard seed and flour are short parables that on their surface teach important lessons on how the kingdom of God grows. But there are odd elements in both stories. A farmer doesn't want mustard in the fields, and a mustard bush doesn't naturally become a tree. And why is the woman using so much flour? Paying attention to these questions, and exploring the Old Testament stories Jesus references within these stories, can lead us to a deeper understanding of Jesus' teaching.

Monday: Read Matthew 13:31-32.

The mustard seed is tiny, but grows into a large plant. How have you experienced God using small acts of faith to create and spread abundant blessings?

Tuesday: Read Matthew 13:33.

A little yeast, when added into flour, can go a long way with kneading. How can we be a part of spreading the love of God's kingdom?

Wednesday: Read Ezekiel 17:22-24.

In Ezekiel, the tree represents the people of God. The birds symbolize the Gentiles, those from other nations. How does God call us to be a blessing to others?

Thursday: Read Daniel 4:1-27.

In his dream of a tree, King Nebuchadnezzar learns that restoration comes from doing what is right and being kind to the oppressed. Where do we need to share kindness today?

Friday: Read Genesis 18:1-15.

Sarah baked way more than enough bread for the foreign guests. What does radical hospitality for the visitor or outsider look like today?

Saturday: Read Matthew 13:31-35.

How can acts of radical hospitality - welcoming a stranger, generously meeting the needs of someone who asks - reveal the presence of the kingdom of God to us and to others?

SUMMARY

Continuing with stories that come from fields and farming familiar to most who first heard him, Jesus continues his teaching on the kingdom of God. The parable of the mustard seed is short and sweet, but within this small story Jesus says more than we may notice at first. The parable of the yeast and flour is even shorter, but if one notices Jesus' reference to an Old Testament story, a whole new truth emerges. Put the two stories together, and one finds a powerful invitation with instructions on how to experience God's kingdom.

God uses our small, seemingly insignificant acts of radical hospitality in mighty, kingdom-forming ways.