

Mustard Seeds, Treasures, and Pearls

Series: Can You Explain That To Me?

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-46

July 26, 2020

Welcome again to worship.

THE HITCHHIKER

Can you explain that to me?

During our sermon series “Can You Explain That To Me?”, we are looking at parables of Jesus which needed extra explaining. I want to invite you to turn to page 6 in your bulletin as we look at Matthew 13:31-33, 44-46.

Now, before we dive into the passage, I want to remind you of something I said last week. These parables are talking about the kingdom of heaven. I said last week that the kingdom of heaven here is not in heaven. Don't think that Jesus was describing what it will be like when we get to heaven. He was talking about here on earth. The kingdom of heaven is God ruling in the lives of His people. It is God's method of managing the affairs of the world and the concerns of His Church.

So, the work God is doing through this church is the kingdom of heaven. The work He is doing through His committed followers is the kingdom of heaven. That puts weight and meaning into what we do, doesn't it? If we are seeking the Lord in everything we do, then that means the kingdom of heaven is in everything we do.

So, let's first look at Matthew 13:31-32:

Here is another illustration Jesus used: “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed planted in a field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of garden plants; it grows into a tree, and birds come and make nests in its branches.”¹

Scholars still dispute what plant is meant by the mustard seed. What we believe to be Jesus' mustard seed is not the smallest of all seeds that Jesus' listeners could have known; the orchid seed is smaller. The mustard seeds usual height was about four feet. But, because it would grow anew each year, birds could not nest in it.

But that's what we know of today. Apparently, in Jesus' day, it was different. Around the Sea of Galilee, it could reach a height of at least 10' high, often reaching 15' high. Ancient Rabbinic writings talk of a canopy of one mustard seed plant that covered the tent of a potter. Another talked of a mustard seed plant that became a tree which was large enough for a man to climb like any other tree.

This isn't just for mustard seeds. One commentator talked of common cabbages, a cabbage grown off the coast of France, that were 7-9' in height. The largest pumpkin ever grown in North American history weighed 2,528 pounds.

Here's what Jesus is saying. The kingdom of heaven in you, in this church, in the world, can grow far beyond what anyone can think or dream.

DAVID WOOD

But it depends on the field. How good is your field? Are you spending time daily in the Word and in prayer? Are you submitting to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in obedience and faith? Are you weeding out the bad influences and filling your life only with His influences?

So, write this down: **Jesus can grow me into a mighty tree.**

¹ Matthew 13:31-32 (NLT2)

Jesus gave the people around similar parable in Matthew 13:33:

*The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough.*²

Every baker knows that a little bit of yeast goes a long way in baking. But let's consider baking in Jesus' day.

The image Jesus is describing for us is that of a rural Galilean woman. Yeast, or leaven depending on your translation, would be mixed through the meal. Three pecks of flour, roughly a bushel, was all that a woman could knead, and the resulting bread would feed about a hundred people.³ A hundred people. All because of the yeast.

The property of yeast is to change, or assimilate to its own nature, the meal or dough with which it is mixed. So, Jesus was saying that the kingdom of heaven was like that. The property of the grace of Christ is to change the whole soul into its own likeness; and God intends that this principle should continue in the soul until we wholly bear the image of the heavenly, as before we bore the image of the earthly. In other words, we look more like Christ than ourselves before Christ.

But the yeast must permeate all of the dough. The baker must knead the yeast into all the dough. Likewise, the kingdom of heaven must be kneaded into all of our lives: our Saturday night lives and well as our Sunday morning lives. Our lives are to be changed into righteousness and true holiness.

So, write this down: **Jesus can change me into a holy influence.**

There's one final parable I want to consider today; this one from Matthew 13:44-46:

*The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field. Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it!*⁴

We are not to imagine that the treasure here means a pot or chest of money hidden in the field, but rather a gold or silver mine, which the man who found out could not get at, or work, without turning up the field, and for this purpose he bought it. There is no sense in the purchase of a field for a pot of money, which might simply have carried away.

Likewise, the people of Jesus' day knew of pearls. Pearls could be found as close as the Red Sea, and some pearls could be worth the equivalent of millions of our dollars.

Our Lord's meaning seems to be this: The kingdom of heaven – the salvation provided by the Gospel – is like a treasure or a pearl, something of inestimable worth. When we see the potential treasure in an unsaved life, what are we to do? Do everything we can dig it up, to lift it up, to allow it to be seen by all.

So, write this down: **Jesus can make change me a treasure hunter.**

There are treasures all around us. People's whose lives are of infinite value to God.

² Matthew 13:33 (NLT2)

³ Bible Background Commentary, Matthew 13:31-33

⁴ Matthew 13:44-46 (NLT2)

The eternal salvation from sin and its consequences is the supreme good of every man, woman and child, should be sought after above all things, and prized beyond all that God has made. Those explorers who search sea and land for temporal gain, condemn the laziness of so called Christians, who, though they confess that salvation is the most certain and the most excellent of all treasures, yet seek worldly possessions in preference to it!⁵

My friends, in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus wants to grow you into a mighty tree that brings comfort of shade and a home of safety. In the kingdom of heaven, Jesus wants to change me into a holy influence, becoming more like Christ and less like you. In the kingdom of heaven, Jesus wants you to be a treasure hunter for the lost souls in your field of influence.

A rock hound named Rob Cutshaw owns a little roadside shop outside Andrews, North Carolina. Like many in the trade, he hunts for rocks, then sells them to collectors or jewelry makers. He knows enough about rocks to decide which to pick up and sell, but he's no expert. He leaves the appraising of his rocks to other people.

As much as he enjoys the work, it doesn't always pay the bills. He occasionally moonlights, cutting wood to help put bread on the table.

While on a dig twenty or so years ago, Rob found a rock he described as "purdy and big." He tried unsuccessfully to sell the specimen, so he kept the rock in his closet. He guessed the blue chunk could bring as much as \$500, but he would have taken less if something urgent came up like paying his power bill.

That's how close Rob came to hocking for a few hundred dollars what turned out to be the largest, most valuable sapphire ever found. The blue rock that Rob had abandoned to the darkness of a closet two decades ago – now known as "The Star of David" sapphire – weighs nearly a pound and could easily sell for \$2.75 million.

We have no idea of the priceless value of who is right beside us.

⁵ Adam Clarke's Commentary, Matthew 13:44-46