

# The Jefferson Spirit

Sundays at 9:00AM  
& 10:30AM

Lay Leader: Maurice Hoffmaster

February 16, 2025



## "Planted in Faith, Growing in Grace"

In Mark 4:30-34, Jesus uses the parable of the mustard seed to describe the Kingdom of God. He compares it to the smallest of all seeds, which, when planted, grows into the largest of garden plants, providing shelter for the birds. This simple yet profound illustration reminds us that God's work often begins in small, unnoticed ways but grows into something powerful and transformative. Through this parable, Jesus encourages us to trust in the process of spiritual growth, remain patient in seasons of waiting, and embrace the expansive reach of God's Kingdom, which welcomes all who seek refuge in Him.



## Scripture Reading: Mark 4:30-34 (NIV) - The Parable of the Mustard Seed

30 Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? 31 It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. 32 Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade."

33 With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. 34 He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

### Interesting facts about Mark 4:30-34:

Here are some interesting facts about Mark 4:30-34 and the Parable of the Mustard Seed:

- The Mustard Seed Wasn't the Smallest Seed in the World – While Jesus describes the mustard seed as the smallest of all seeds, it wasn't literally the tiniest on earth. However, in the agricultural context of His listeners, it was commonly recognized as one of the smallest seeds used in farming, making it a fitting metaphor.
- The Mustard Plant Grows Rapidly and Wildly – Though it starts as a tiny seed, the mustard plant can grow up to 10-15 feet tall, with a wide spread of branches. This symbolizes the rapid and unstoppable expansion of God's Kingdom from small beginnings.
- Birds Nesting in the Branches Has Symbolic Meaning – In biblical imagery, birds resting in a tree's branches often represent nations and people groups finding shelter and belonging (see Ezekiel 17:22-24, Daniel 4:10-12). This hints that the Kingdom of God is open to all, not just the Jews, but also the Gentiles.
- Jesus Spoke in Parables to Reveal and Conceal – Mark 4:34 says that Jesus explained everything privately to His disciples. He used parables to reveal truth to those with open hearts while concealing it from those who rejected His message (Mark 4:11-12).
- A Small Beginning for a Great Movement – Christianity started with Jesus and twelve disciples, a seemingly insignificant group. Yet today, Christianity has spread to billions of people worldwide, much like the mustard tree growing from a tiny seed.
- This Parable Encourages Patience – Just as a seed takes time to grow, God's work in our lives and in the world doesn't always happen instantly. The Kingdom grows steadily, even when we don't immediately see the results.
- Mustard Plants Were Considered Invasive – In ancient Israel, mustard plants could take over gardens if not managed. This reflects how the Kingdom of God cannot be contained or stopped—it spreads wherever it is planted!
- This parable teaches us faith, patience, and trust in God's plan, reminding us that even the smallest acts of faith can lead to great things in His Kingdom.



### Upcoming Events:

February 16 - Potluck after church has been CANCELLED

February 18 - April 8th every Tuesday from 7-8pm Online Bible Study exploring Liz Curtis Higgs' bestselling book, *Bad Girls of the Bible*.

February 22 - Community Movie Night

March 2 - Holy Communion

March 8 - 9-10am - Men's Prayer Meeting at the church.

March 9 - Birthday Celebration with Pancake Breakfast

March 9 - 12:30 Community Vacation Bible School Meeting. Vacation Bible School will be held this year on Sunday, June 22 - Thursday, June 26th.

March 13 - 7pm Administrative Council Meeting

### Prayer Requests:

Don Perkins & Carol Waple requests prayers for George Willingham.

The Families of Howard Graham & Doris Branch request prayers on the passing of Cliff Graham.

The Dinsmore Family request prayers for Donnie Kolb is recovering from surgery last week.

Prayers for Debra Rippeon on her health issues.

Prayers for Terry Oland recovery in hospital after heart attack.

### Why did Jesus teach in parables?

Jesus taught in **parables** for several important reasons, which reveal both **the wisdom of His teaching** and **the nature of the Kingdom of God**.

#### 1. To Reveal Truth to Those Who Were Open to It

Parables were **simple stories with deep spiritual meaning**. Those who were genuinely seeking God would understand their meaning. Jesus said:

**"The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables."** (Mark 4:11)

His disciples, who wanted to understand, received deeper explanations. Parables helped truth **come alive** for those who had open hearts.

#### 2. To Conceal Truth from the Hard-Hearted

Not everyone was willing to accept Jesus' message. Some **religious leaders** and others rejected Him outright. Jesus used parables to separate those who were truly seeking God from those who were just looking to criticize or trap Him.

**"Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand."** (Matthew 13:13)

Those who were **spiritually blind** would hear the stories but **miss the deeper truth**.

#### 3. To Make Spiritual Truth Memorable

Jesus often taught **farmers, fishermen, and everyday people**. He used examples from **their daily lives**—seeds, trees, farming, fishing, family relationships—so they could **remember** His lessons easily.

For example:

- **The Parable of the Mustard Seed** (Mark 4:30-32) teaches how God's Kingdom starts small but grows huge.
- **The Parable of the Lost Sheep** (Luke 15:3-7) shows how God pursues the lost with love.

These images **stick in the mind** and help people **apply spiritual truths to their lives**.



#### 4. To Challenge Listeners to Think and Seek More

Jesus didn't just give simple answers—He made people **reflect, question, and seek** deeper understanding. Parables often had a **twist or unexpected ending** to challenge people's assumptions.

For example:

- **The Good Samaritan** (Luke 10:25-37) shocked His Jewish listeners because the hero was a Samaritan, a group they despised.
- **The Prodigal Son** (Luke 15:11-32) challenged the idea of God's love, showing that even a rebellious son could be forgiven.

Jesus wanted people to **engage** with His teaching, **search their hearts**, and **respond** to God's call.

#### 5. To Fulfill Prophecy

Jesus' use of parables was also a fulfillment of prophecy. Psalm 78:2 says:

**"I will open my mouth with a parable; I will utter hidden things, things from of old."**

By teaching in parables, Jesus was fulfilling **God's plan** to reveal truth in a way that required **spiritual discernment**.

Conclusion: Parables Invite Us to Go Deeper

Jesus' parables were more than just stories; they were **invitations**. Those with **open hearts** would understand and grow in faith. Those with **closed hearts** would miss the message.

That's why even today, when we read Jesus' parables, we should ask:

- **What is Jesus revealing to me?**
- **How does this challenge my thinking?**
- **How can I live out this truth?**

Jesus wasn't just telling stories—He was calling us to **see, hear, and respond** to God's Kingdom.



## Order of Worship

Welcome

Opening Prayer

\*Call to Worship (Congregation)

Leader: Come, all who seek the presence of God!

**People: We come with open hearts, ready to listen and receive.**

Leader: The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed—small yet full of great promise.

**People: We gather in faith, trusting that God's love will grow within us.**

Leader: God calls us to be light, to be salt, to be seeds of grace in the world.

**People: We come to worship, to be strengthened, and to go forth as disciples of Christ.**

Leader: Let us rejoice in the Lord, for His Word is life, and His love endures forever!

**All: Amen! Let us worship God together!**

Children's Message

**\*Song (Please see hymnal board)**

**Scripture Reading: Mark 4:30-34**

**Sermon: Planted in Faith, Growing in Grace**

Offertory

\*Doxology - p.95 UMC Hymnal

**Song (Please see hymnal board)**

**\*Confession and Pardon**

Leader: Let us come before God with humble hearts, confessing our sins and seeking His mercy.

**People: Gracious and loving God, we confess that we have not always lived as Your faithful people. We have allowed doubt to overshadow our trust in You. We have let fear hold us back from sharing Your love. We have failed to love our neighbors as You have commanded. Forgive us, Lord. Renew our hearts, strengthen our faith, and help us to grow in Your grace, that we may bear witness to Your Kingdom in all that we do. Amen.**

Leader: Hear the good news! Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, proving God's love for us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

**People: In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!**

**All: Glory to God! Amen.**

Announcements

Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

**\*Song (Please see hymnal board)**

**\*Sending Forth**

Postlude

**Fun Quiz: The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Mark 4:30-34)**

1. According to Jesus, what happens when the mustard seed grows?

- A) It becomes the largest of all garden plants
- B) It stays the same size forever
- C) It disappears
- D) It turns into gold

2. Why did Jesus use parables to teach?

- A) To make people laugh
- B) To make spiritual lessons easier to understand
- C) Because He didn't want people to know the truth
- D) Because He liked telling stories for fun

3. Who did Jesus explain the parables to in private?

- A) The Pharisees
- B) The Roman soldiers
- C) His disciples
- D) The marketplace vendors

4. What is the main lesson of the Parable of the Mustard Seed?

- A) Small beginnings can lead to great things in God's Kingdom
- B) Trees are important for the environment
- C) Mustard seeds are good for cooking
- D) Jesus wanted people to start farming

5. How can we apply this parable to our lives today?

- A) By trusting that even small acts of faith can grow into something big
- B) By planting mustard seeds in our gardens
- C) By finding the smallest things in our homes and collecting them
- D) By counting how many birds are in trees

## Sermon Insights

### Sermon Lesson:

The Parable of the Mustard Seed in Mark 4:30-34 teaches us that God's Kingdom starts in the smallest, most unexpected ways but grows into something far greater than we can imagine. Jesus reminds us that even the tiniest seed of faith, a simple act of kindness, or a quiet prayer can be the beginning of something powerful in God's hands. Just as a mustard seed grows into a great tree providing shelter for birds, our faith, when nurtured, can impact lives and bring hope to others. We may not always see immediate results, but God is always at work, growing His Kingdom through our obedience and trust. So, let us not underestimate small beginnings—because in God's plan, even the smallest seed can lead to a great harvest. Where is God calling you to plant your faith today?

### Application:

- **Plant Small Seeds of Faith Daily** – Just as the mustard seed starts small but grows big, your faith grows through small, consistent actions. This week, take a step of faith—pray for someone, read a short passage of Scripture each morning, or trust God in a small decision. Even the smallest act of faith can lead to something great in God's Kingdom.
- **Be Patient and Trust God's Timing** – Growth takes time, and so does God's work in our lives. If you're waiting for an answer to prayer or feeling discouraged, remember that just because you don't see growth immediately doesn't mean God isn't working. This week, remind yourself to trust in God's process, even when progress seems slow.
- **Provide Shelter and Encouragement for Others** – The mustard tree grows large enough to provide shade and a resting place for birds. Likewise, we are called to be a place of encouragement and support for others. This week, be intentional about lifting someone up—send a kind message, listen to a friend in need, or invite someone to church. Your simple act of kindness can be a place of refuge for someone else.

### Conclusion:

The Parable of the Mustard Seed in Mark 4:30-34 reminds us that God's Kingdom grows in ways we may not expect—starting small but becoming something great. Just as a tiny seed transforms into a mighty tree, our faith, small acts of love, and trust in God can lead to incredible impact. Even when we don't see immediate results, we can trust that God is at work, growing His purposes in our lives and in the world. This week, let's plant seeds of faith, be patient with God's timing, and provide encouragement to those around us. No matter how small our efforts may seem, when placed in God's hands, they can grow into something greater than we ever imagined. What small step of faith will you take today?