

Theme: In the parables of the seeds, Jesus teaches that the Kingdom of God begins small and seemingly insignificant, but it will certainly grow until it becomes great and fruitful through the power of God and His Word.

I. Augustine's *City of God*

- A. August 24, 410 - Rome falls and is sacked by Alaric
- B. The first time in over 800 years - many wondered how Christianity would survive. Others blamed Christianity!
- C. Augustine wrote *The City of God* - a brief description
- D. He died August 28, 430 as the Vandals sieged his city of Hippo
- E. We are often confused when we see this world - where is God's kingdom? What is happening?

II. Sister Parables of the Seeds

- A. These parables do have some differences

He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷ Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. ²⁸ All by itself the soil produces grain — first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. ²⁹ As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come." 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 seed you plant in the ground. ³² Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade." Mark 4:26–32

1. The parable in vv26-29 only occurs in Mark
2. Only the first parable details the stages of growth

3. Only the first parable ends with the harvest

- B. The two parables have many similarities

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1. Both begin with "What is the Kingdom of God like?"
2. Both use a seed to describe the Kingdom of God
3. Both give focus to the growth from the seed

- C. The two parables are meant to be read together

1. Mark placed them side by side to be read together
2. They have very similar themes
3. The similar themes guide us in reading the parables
 - a. They teach us what we should expect regarding the kingdom of God - and what we should NOT expect
 - b. They teach us how the kingdom of God grows - and Who gives that growth
 - c. These parables help us know how to live in this age

III. A Growing Kingdom

A. The Kingdom of God begins small and is seemingly insignificant

He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters **seed** on the ground... 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 seed** you plant in the ground. Mark 4:26, 30–31

1. The Kingdom is like a seed - even the smallest seed
2. All seeds are small and seem insignificant
3. The mustard seed was proverbially considered the smallest seed in ancient Israel
4. People expected the Kingdom to be like a mighty, full-grown cedar - but Jesus says it is actually like the tiniest of seeds!
5. Once again Jesus uses the parables to teach that the expectations of the people regarding the Messiah and His Kingdom were miles wide of the truth!

B. The Kingdom will grow, become fruitful, and be great

Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, **the seed sprouts and grows**, though he does not know how. ²⁸ All by itself the soil **produces grain — first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head...** ³² Yet when planted, **it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants**, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade.” Mark 4:27–28, 32

1. The Kingdom begins small but it grows and matures
2. Notice the detailed growth until it matures & produces grain in the first parable

3. The mustard seed was the smallest garden seed but became the biggest bush/tree in the garden.
4. The mustard seed grows so much that birds can find rest in its shade!
5. God had already revealed this through Daniel
While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. ³⁵ Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth... ⁴⁴ “In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. ⁴⁵ This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain... Daniel 2:34–35, 44–45
 - a. In Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, a small rock struck the statue and then grew until filled the whole earth
 - b. This was about the Kingdom of God that would be set up during the times of the four Kings - ending with ancient Rome
 - c. Jesus is the Rock Who came and established the Kingdom of God - and it will grow until it fills the whole earth!
 - d. Note - In Daniel 4 there is a great tree where the birds of the nations find rest. There it was Nebuchadnezzar, but Jesus now says the real tree is the Kingdom of God where all can find rest!
6. Never despise the day of small beginnings with God’s Kingdom - it is certain to grow!

C. The Kingdom grows by the power of God and His Word
Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. ²⁸ All by itself the soil produces grain — first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. Mark 4:27–28

1. The farmer sows the seed - and then must wait for God to work!
2. The farmer sleeps and gets up, but the seed keeps growing
3. The seed and soil work by themselves to grow and produce fruit - this is God at work in the world He has made!
4. The farmer does not even know exactly how or why it works - and he does not need to!
5. Today we have uncovered many secrets of the world around us - and we still can't create life like this!
6. Paul teaches us the same thing about the growth of the Kingdom of God
I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. ⁷ So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 1 Corinthians 3:6–7
 - a. Paul first planted the seed of the Gospel in Corinth
 - b. Apollos then came and watered the seed
 - c. But only God could make the seed grow - and He did!
 - d. This is so that the credit goes to God - all glory belongs to Him!

7. Believers can be encouraged and endure in the face of suffering because we know that God's Word is going forth and God's Kingdom will survive, thrive, and grow until Jesus returns!

IV. Applying the Word

A. Am I at peace regarding God's Kingdom?

Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. ²⁸ All by itself the soil produces grain — first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. Mark 4:27–28

1. The farmer sows the seed and then is at peace
2. The farmer can sleep while he waits for the crop to mature - he does not endlessly fret!
3. The farmer does not understand how it all works - and he does not have to! He is at peace knowing that the fruit will come forth in the end!
4. Many Christians today seem to lack the peace that Christ promised to us - but nothing will prevent God's Kingdom from coming!
5. Brothers and sisters, we are to sow seed - and then sleep knowing God will do what we can not!

B. Am I patient during this season of God's Kingdom?

Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. ⁸ You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. James 5:7–8

1. James uses a farming metaphor to call us to patience!
2. At one time he had struggled with the hidden and slow nature of the kingdom too!

3. But farmers have to be patient - crops don't grow in a day! Some crops can take years to mature - but the crop will come!
4. We are called to be patient in this "now but not yet" time of the growth of the Kingdom.
5. The Zealots had no patience and tried to force the Kingdom through military and political means - and brought disaster on themselves and the whole nation!
6. This is a great temptation in our instant internet age!
7. We can no more make the kingdom come to fullness than a farmer can make a crop mature ahead of schedule!

C. Am I confident that God's Kingdom will grow?

It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. ³² Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade." Mark 4:31-32

1. Jesus wants us confident in the power of God's Word to grow His kingdom!
2. This was the point of the parable of the sower and both of these parables!
3. All of the parables in Mark 4 show us that God's Kingdom will come and be fully revealed - in God's time!
4. It is easy to see and focus on all of the obstacles and the lack of visible growth or fruit - but God's Word will not return void!

5. The Kingdom began so small, but it has grown around the world - and it will continue to grow until Jesus returns!
6. If I am lacking patience and peace it is usually because I am not confident that God will do as He has promised!
7. This is why Jesus has given us these parables - they require us to meditate, and the more we do so, the more our confidence, patience, and peace will grow!

D. The Table of the Kingdom

1. The King invites you to His Table in the presence of all your enemies and protects and feeds you
2. This Table provides strength during this age of waiting for the fullness of the Kingdom
3. Come and receive from your King

A Growing Kingdom

Mark 4:26-34

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Communion

1 Corinthians 15:58

Teaching keywords: Kingdom of God; evangelism and missions; Word of God

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. Go forth, full of the blessings of God's Kingdom, and be a blessing!
1 Corinthians 15:58