

## Wednesday Evening Bible Study

November 6, 2019

The Gospel of Luke

*Kingdom Parables and Principles*

Topics – Luke 13; parable of the mustard seed; parable of the leaven

Text – Luke 13:18 - 35

### Introduction

We are continuing our study in Luke 13 where we last saw Jesus in a discussion with the leader of the synagogue regarding healing on the Sabbath day.

Beginning in v. 18, Jesus teaches his disciples a couple of parables: the parable of the mustard seed, and the parable of the leaven.

#### I. The Parable of the Mustard Seed (vs. 18 – 19)

This parable is also taught in Matthew 13:31 – 32 and Mark 4:31 – 32. Though the historical context of these events are different from the context in Luke. Also, in both of those places, it is the Kingdom of Heaven referred to instead of the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of Heaven and Kingdom of God are sometimes used almost interchangeably, but sometimes they are very distinct. The Kingdom of Heaven can refer to the general rule of God over the affairs of man on earth from creation through the Millennium. It could also refer to the specific rule of Christ over the earth during the Millennium. The Kingdom of God is often a broader phrase referring to God's rule over everything in the universe and specifically references often the new birth. The Kingdom of Heaven is included in the Kingdom of God.

The mustard seed is a very tiny seed, yet it grows very quickly (in one season) into a bush the size of a small tree. They can grow up to fifteen feet high.

Some would argue that these verses are in agreement with the Old Testament prophecies regarding Israel and her Messiah. They would claim that the birds of the fowl here represent the inclusion of the Gentiles:

*"Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent: In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell. And all the trees of the field shall know that I the LORD have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the LORD have spoken and have done it." (Ezekiel 17:22-24)*

Others believe that this fast-growing tree represents abnormal growth, and that the fowls represent evil that lodges in the branches. This interpretation agrees with the symbolism used about birds in Matthew 13:4 and 19:

*"And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: ... When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side." (Matthew 13:4, 19)*

And it also connects it to the next parable regarding leaven.

The mustard seed is also used as an illustration of faith in Matthew 17:20:

*"And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." (Matthew 17:20)*

## **II. The Parable of the Leaven (vs. 20 - 21)**

The interpretation of this parable along with the immediate context of Jesus' being rejected for healing on the Sabbath day inside the synagogue will help us to better understand the last parable. Here a woman is "hiding" leaven in a large quantity of wheat ("meal"), until the whole was leavened.

Leaven is almost universally seen in the Bible as a picture of sin. There could be no leaven in the homes of Israel during the Passover (see Exodus 12:14 – 20).

*"Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. ... Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." (Matthew 16:6, 12)*

*"And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod." (Mark 8:15)*

The idea being given here in both of these parables is that God's Kingdom will give the appearance of great growth, but not all of that growth will be good. While there certainly will be growth and many conversions, there will also be a lot of evil coexisting within the body.

Jesus taught about this also in the parable of the tares:

*"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn." (Matthew 13:24-30)*

## **III The People That Make It Are Few (vs. 22 – 30)**

The first thing that we notice in this section is that Jesus is moving closer to Jerusalem and closer to the time of His crucifixion (v. 22).

The instruction given here by the Lord clearly indicates that the Kingdom of God (including the Kingdom of Heaven) will contain fewer people than expected. In other words, many people claim to be Christians and many even appear to be Christians, but they are not all genuinely saved.

Jesus also teaches here that the way to Heaven is narrow, not broad. Few will be willing to enter in through the strait gate. Most people want to go in through the doorway of religion and good works. But, the only way to Heaven is through the Door – Jesus Christ:

*"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:1-6)*

A third thought here in this passage is that the Kingdom will include many that we might not think should be included. Surely, there will be many from Israel (v. 28). The people that Jesus was speaking to were primarily Jews who thought that the Kingdom was exclusively for them but Jesus makes it clear that many others from the Gentiles will be there (v. 29).

#### **IV The Place and Time of His Own Choosing (vs. 31 – 35).**

As Jesus nears Jerusalem, He is well aware (and even warned) that he would be killed here. He came here to die. However, he weeps over Israel's rejection of Him. His desire is that they would receive Him. His desire is that they would be His chickens and He would be their protector, but they refused Him.

In v. 35, Jesus alludes to the fact that Israel would not again see Him as a nation until the triumphal entry, which will be a short-lived reception. A short time after that they would be crying crucify. The real reception will not come until the Tribulation Period when they realize that they were wrong about their Messiah.

*"I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? ... For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." (Romans 11:11-12, 25-27)*

*"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall*

*mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." (Zechariah 12:10)*

## **Conclusion**

This entire passage reminds us that we need to be sure that we are truly "in Christ," and if we are we will also be "new creatures," with "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

It has to be real. Your salvation experience has to be real. If it is, it will be revealed in your life. Is it real?