



October 29th, 2023 • Matthew 13:31-33

The Teachings of Jesus Christ • Message #3/5

Selected Passages from the Five Discourses in Matthew
Page 819 in the church Bibles • by Pastor Marcus Johnson



Audio versions of Sermons and detailed sermon notes are available on our
website: LakeRegionBibleChurch.org (see “Messages 2023” tab)

The Kingdom of Heaven: Inconspicuous & Triumphant

1. Hear the Parable of the Mustard Seed:

the triumphant kingdom has an inconspicuous beginning (inauguration)

2. Hear the Parable of the Leaven: the triumphant kingdom

permeates our world & transforms our lives thru inconspicuous means

3. Take Jesus’ Parables to Heart

- **Seek biblical faithfulness thru kingdom power**

(not worldly strategies & goals)

- **Trust in & boldly proclaim the gospel**

(as we engage a hostile & curious culture)

- **Be joyful in the Lord & comforted in tribulation**

(with a soul-anchoring hope about our future)

Excursus: Jesus’ Parables in Matthew 13

Selected passages from *Matthew* by Michael Wilkins (NIVAC); Zondervan © 2004

Some Introductory Highlights

The contrasts between Jesus’ disciples and the religious leaders is now established explicitly. Jesus’ disciples obey the Father’s will; the religious leaders do not ... But what of the crowds ... will they follow the lead of Jesus’ disciples and obey the Father’s will to enter the kingdom and become disciples? ... They have had ample opportunity, so now Jesus tests their responsiveness ... At the same time, Jesus also instructs his disciples about the manifestation of the kingdom of heaven. All along many were expecting Jesus to establish the throne of David in Israel, but Jesus continually directs them first to attend to their hearts. Entrance to the kingdom occurs with the establishment of God’s righteousness in the heart of a believer, which results in becoming a disciple of Jesus ... This is a strikingly different manifestation of the kingdom than many had anticipated, even his disciples, so Jesus clarifies what the kingdom is really like at this point in God’s program of salvation history. The specific means of both testing the crowds and instructing the disciples is the use of parables ... Parables have distinctively different purposes for the crowd and for the disciples ... While the analogies or comparisons Jesus uses to make his point come from everyday experiences, they press the listener to search for the intended spiritual meaning. That is why in popular preaching Jesus’ parables are often referred to as “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.” But parables are often deeply, even frustratingly, perplexing, because the story may take an unexpected turn and cause offense to the audience when personal application is made ... For the crowd they hide truth, while for the disciples they communicate truth (472 – 474).

The Parable of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast (or Leaven)

The mustard seed was the smallest seed know in in Palestine at that time ... The proverbial smallness of the mustard seed as a metaphor that describes the kingdom of God would have shocked the crowd. Israel always believed that when God’s kingdom was established on the earth, it would be great; they were not prepared for an insignificant beginning. But through this parable Jesus declares that the kingdom is already present, although only as a tiny manifestation ... The image of a large tree with birds alighting on its branches recalls several Old Testament references to a great kingdom (cf. Ezek. 17:22–24; 31:2–18; Dan 4:9–27) ... With another surprising twist to what Israel had expected with the arrival of the kingdom, Jesus declares that “the kingdom of heaven is like yeast that woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough” ... Scripture uses leaven almost exclusively as a negative metaphor, probably because fermentation implied disintegration and corruption (Ex 12:8, 15–20). But Jesus uses yeast to symbolize the positive, hidden permeation of the kingdom of heaven in this world ... The parables of the mustard seed and yeast work together to reveal the nature of the kingdom of heaven in Jesus’ ministry. The mustard seed emphasizes an inconspicuous beginning of the kingdom of heaven with its growth into external greatness, while the yeast suggests its inconspicuous permeation and transformation. In spite of its small inauspicious beginnings, the kingdom of heaven will pervade the world and eventually produce the prophesied greatness ... Jesus reveals to his disciples the secrets of the kingdom of God, making known that during this age the kingdom will exist in a hidden form. It will be an undercover kingdom, not the overpowering political and militaristic cultural manifestation of God’s rule that many expect (13:31–33). So the parables reveal what it means for Jesus’ disciples to live as kingdom subjects in a world that has not yet experienced the fully consummated kingdom of God. The parables further reveal that Jesus’ disciples are to be demonstrably different from others in this world. The inside out transformation that he articulated in the sermon on the Mount will produce fruit in them that will mark them out clearly as his disciples. (483 – 493)