

## The Growth of the Kingdom

Matthew 13:31-33 || Pastor Paul Hahn || 11 October 2020

*To CARE for one another in truth and in love,  
To GROW together as followers of Jesus,  
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.  
– CG Mission Statement*

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**Icebreaker:** What small and insignificant item do you own that means a lot to you?

**Worship:** John 12:24-26 (*Read aloud 3 times, reflect and listen for God's invitation to you.*)

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**Sermon Summary for Matthew:13:31-33** (*Read the passage before reading the sermon summary.*)

Even now, thousands of years since He walked among us, Jesus continues to show us how magnificent and wonderful His Kingdom is. And He does this through His parables, like the stories of the mustard seed and of the leaven. They reveal what the Kingdom of God will be like as it breaks into this world and spreads outward through His people. Our Savior wants us to understand how growth comes – both in us and through us as His people. Because Jesus wants nothing less than the wonders of the Gospel to ignite our hearts in beautiful ways.

The Kingdom will grow from small to large. This is how God has worked throughout redemptive history: From Adam and Eve to Noah, Abraham, and Moses... God begins His work in small, personal ways: in individuals, in families, in His people. Ultimately, it is one Savior who fulfills all of God's promises. We don't mind this practice of small-to-large in these stories. But we don't like it when it comes to us personally. We want God to act swiftly and grandly in our lives. Yet what we're called to is a posture and willingness to take small incremental steps:: carving out regular time with God's word, making consistent habits of prayer, perhaps giving financially to the life of the church for the first time, and allowing fellow Christians to speak into our lives.

The Kingdom will grow in our lives over time. It takes time for the mustard seed to grow or for the leaven to work itself through dough. Likewise the Kingdom will break into the world across time. Despite our living in an "instant age" and the expectations this produces in us, God loves processes – to see things grown and worked out with patient care. Growth isn't the result of one day's effort. Are we willing for God to work this way in our lives?

The Kingdom will begin hidden, but will be revealed in its due time. The mustard seed will only grow once it's buried in the ground; leaven only does its work once it has disappeared within the dough. Jesus says the same of His ministry, repeatedly declaring, "*My hour has not yet come.*" Then, just before His crucifixion Christ finally says, "*My hour has come. Now is the time for the Son of Man to be glorified*" (John 12:23). Because the way of the Kingdom is the cross, and the only way for the Messiah to redeem the world was to be buried in the ground. We are called to be the leaven, willing to be given over in sacrificial love for the sake of the Kingdom's flourishing. Our greatest moments will therefore largely be hidden – quiet moments where we love and give sacrificially.

The Kingdom will grow with all kinds of people involved. We are never to be a congregation just for ourselves. Because the kingdom is never just for us. We must look outward and learn to be inclusive in all that we do. Yes, there will be places in the Christian life where we can freely "let our hair down." But that is never the dominant chord of Christian community; rather, it is always widening the circle – providing rest for others. Christ not only wants to bring all kinds of people into His Kingdom; He wants to use all kinds of people in growing the Kingdom.

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**Discussion Questions** *(You will not be able to discuss all the questions. Pick the ones you like. Some are personal perspective and application questions for life-transforming discussion.)*

- Why is it so important that we understand that the Kingdom of Heaven grows from small to large?
    - What happens when we miss this dynamic, or forget it?
    - Where might Jesus want you to make a small new beginning with Him?
  - Why must we understand that Jesus grows His kingdom **over time**?
    - Share stories of trusting and waiting on God's process of growth in your life.
  - Why is it crucial to connect with the **hidden** nature of kingdom growth? See John 12:24-26
    - How is your life the leaven hidden in the dough of your family, church, city?
  - Why is it so vital to discover the **diversity of people** involved in kingdom growth? **See Eze. 17:23-24**
    - What might need to change in your own life in light of this?
  - What did you find in these parables or in the sermon most compelling?
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**Prayer:** What prayer can you pray this week to build the Kingdom of God? See also this week's Prayer Guide [HERE](#).

**Engage & Experience:** While we might not be able to see the growth of the kingdom every day, it is growing - both in the world, and in the hearts of believers. What small steps could you take to advance the Kingdom of God both in your own heart and in the world? Pair up in your group to identify those steps and encourage one another throughout the week. It could simply be to begin praying for God to break into another's life the way He broke into yours. That is Kingdom building!