

Matt 13:31-32 - THE SEED OF HUMBLE BEGINNING

Whether you are building your personal Christian faith, starting a family, planting a local church, beginning worthwhile projects, or planning businesses; the parable of Jesus about the mustard seed is a very relevant message that can motivate and encourage us.

Mat 13:31 Jesus told them another parable: "The Kingdom of heaven is like this. A man takes a mustard seed and sows it in his field.

Mat 13:32 It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it grows up, it is the biggest of all plants. It becomes a tree, so that birds come and make their nests in its branches." GNB

The mustard seed that the text mentioned here is different from the mustard herb that we have in our vegetable garden today. Bible scholars describe the biblical mustard seed with more or less 12 feet high when grown and birds actually build their nest on it. But in spite of big potential, its seed is considered proverbially as the smallest in Palestine during the biblical time.

Jesus uses the analogy of mustard seed to teach us the lesson that we should not despise the small beginning. That in fact, Jesus Himself chooses the path of humble start when He came to rescue the fallen mankind and birthed His church in this world. The parable of the mustard seed tells us three important lessons to encourage us to go on and gives us a hope for our future.

I. THE SEED TELL US ABOUT THE CHURCH AND ITS GROWTH

The parable prefigures growth of the Church of God which is the kingdom of God on Earth from an insignificant and smallest beginning

Realizing the fact of history that the greatest things must always begin with the smallest beginnings, William Barclay wrote the following commentary and four observations:

Jesus said that his Kingdom was like the mustard seed and its growth into a tree. The point is crystal clear. The Kingdom of Heaven starts from the smallest beginnings, but no man knows where it will end. In eastern language and in the Old Testament itself one of the commonest pictures of a great empire is the picture of a great tree, with the subject nations depicted as birds finding rest and shelter within its branches (Eze 31:6). This parable tells us that the Kingdom of Heaven begins very small but that in the end many nations will be gathered within it.

(1) An idea which may well change civilization begins with one man. In the British Empire it was William Wilberforce who was responsible for the freeing of the slaves. The idea of that liberation came to him when he read an exposure of the slave trade by Thomas Clarkson...An idea was sown in the mind of one man, and that idea changed life for hundreds of thousands of people. An idea must find a person willing to be possessed by it; but when it finds such a person an unstoppable tide begins to flow.

(2) A witness must begin with one man. Cecil Northcott tells in one of his books that a group of young people from many nations were discussing how the Christian gospel might be spread. They talked of propaganda, of literature, of all the

ways of disseminating the gospel in the twentieth century. Then the girl from Africa spoke. "When we want to take Christianity to one of our villages," she said, "we don't send them books. We take a Christian family and send them to live in the village and they make the village Christian by living there." In a group or society, or school or factory, or shop or office, again and again it is the witness of one individual which brings in Christianity. The one man or woman set on fire for Christ is the person who kindles others.

(3) A reformation begins with one person. One of the great stories of the Christian Church is the story of Telemachus. He was a hermit of the desert, but something told him--the call of God--that he must go to Rome. He went. Rome was nominally Christian, but even in Christian Rome the gladiatorial games went on, in which men fought with each other, and crowds roared with the lust for blood. Telemachus found his way to the games. Eighty thousand people were there to spectate. He was horrified. Were these men slaughtering each other not also children of God? He leaped from his seat, right into the arena, and stood between the gladiators. He was tossed aside. He came back.

The crowd was angry; they began to stone him. Still he struggled back between the gladiators. The prefect's command rang out; a sword flashed in the sunlight, and Telemachus was dead. Suddenly there was a hush; suddenly the crowd realized what had happened; a holy man lay dead. Something happened that day to Rome, for there were never again any gladiatorial games. By his death one man had let loose something that cleansed an empire. Someone must begin a reformation; he need not begin it in a

nation; he may begin it in his home or where he works. If he begins it no man knows where it will end.

(4) But this was one of the most personal parables Jesus ever spoke. Sometimes his disciples must have despaired. Their little band was so small and the world was so wide. How could they ever win and change it. Yet with Jesus an invincible force entered the world. Hugh Martin quotes H. G. Wells as saying, "His is easily the dominant figure in history.... A historian without any theological bias whatever should find that he simply cannot portray the progress of humanity honestly without giving a foremost place to a penniless teacher from Nazareth." In this parable Jesus is saying to his disciples and to his followers today, that there must be no discouragement, that they must serve and witness each in his place, and that each one must be the small beginning from which the Kingdom grows until the kingdoms of the earth finally become the Kingdom of God (end of Barclay commentary)

Reading the above observation from one of the respected theologians, I come to realize how Jesus, the son of the carpenter in Nazareth started the church which has been the foundation of many Christian Churches today.

Jesus picks 12 disciples; most of them were uneducated fisherman, tax collectors and social activist. However, those ordinary people turn the world upside down and made Christianity the largest religion in the world today.

The seed that has been spread by Jesus and passed on to the early church is destined to conquer the world with its message of Love and forgiveness. Jesus said: I will build my

church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Mat 16:18

The Challenge: The responsibility to continue the fire of the Gospel of Christ to this generation is now laid on our shoulder. The resurrected Jesus Christ, our commander in Chief has already given the great command.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." . Mat 28:19-20

Though the mission seems impossible but the assurance of his continued presence gave us the power to carry out the task. We can say with the Apostle Paul in his powerful declaration: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Php 4:13

The Son of God came to Earth, so that the son of men may come to God

When the Son of God wanted to show His love for us, he died on the cross and gave his own life as a ransom for us just to say: This is how much I love you with an everlasting love.

AMEN