

## QUEST FOR CAMELOT "KINGDOM SATURATION" MATTHEW 13:31-35

### This Week's Core Competency

**Hope** – I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ. Hebrews 6:19-20, *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.*

According to *The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs*, a saying we are all familiar with first appeared in a fourteenth-century quote from Chaucer, "As an ook comth of a litel spir, So thorough this letter . . . Encressen gan desire." Perhaps you don't recognize it. In the sixteenth century the same maxim appeared with a more familiar ring: "But Tall Cedars from little graynes shoote high; great Oakes, from slender rootes spread wide." Still don't recognize it? In the eighteenth century the proverb appeared in what are now familiar words, "Large streams from little fountains flow, *Tall oaks from little acorns grow.*" The point of the proverb is, of course, small beginnings can come to huge and lasting ends.

The image behind the adage took a different form in the first century. One commentator explains: "In the ancient world and among the rabbis (cf. *m. Nid.* 5.2; *m. Tohar.* 8:8) the mustard seed was known for its smallness (whether it is white or black mustard that is intended makes little difference). It is also referred to as the smallest of all seeds in Antigonus of Carystus 91 and in Diodorus Siculus 1.35.2 (cf. Matt

***The final goal of the Old Testament prophetic hope is nothing less than the establishment of the kingdom of God.***

– Robert L. Saucy

17:20, where faith as small as a mustard seed is said to be able to move mountains). From this 'smallest' of seeds (it matter not that there are smaller seeds), however, an amazingly large bushlike plant eventually emerges, large enough to accommodate the nests of birds. This fact is so remarkable that it took on a proverbial character" (Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 39a, *Matthew 1-13*, 386). Whether mustard seeds and bushlike trees, or acorns and oak trees, the point of their radical contrast is the same: certain small, seemingly insignificant beginnings lead to huge, overwhelmingly influential ends.

Take Apple, for example. In 1975, the twenty-year-old Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak set up shop in Jobs' parents' garage, dubbed their venture Apple, and began working on the prototype of the Apple I. To generate the \$1,350 in capital they used to start Apple, Jobs sold his Volkswagen microbus, and Wozniak sold his Hewlett-Packard calculator. In 2015 analysts speculated that Apple might be the first trillion-dollar company!

The hope of the believer is the kingdom of heaven, the humble commencement of which—the mustard seed—belies its magnificent consummation—the bushlike tree where birds of the air nest. It was small and unimpressive, overlooked and dismissed as a trifle by many, but one day it will be glorious. The prophet Isaiah gives his readers but a taste of what is to come in that day:

- 1 *A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.*
- 2 *The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—*
- 3 *and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears;*

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4 but with righteousness he will judge the needy,  
 with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.  
 He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;  
 with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.  
 5 Righteousness will be his belt  
 and faithfulness the sash around his waist.  
 6 The wolf will live with the lamb,  
 the leopard will lie down with the goat,  
 the calf and the lion and the yearling together;  
 and a little child will lead them.  
 7 The cow will feed with the bear,  
 their young will lie down together,  
 and the lion will eat straw like the ox.  
 8 The infant will play near the cobra's den,  
 and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.  
 9 They will neither harm nor destroy  
 on all my holy mountain,  
 for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD  
 as the waters cover the sea.  
 10 In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples;  
 the nations will rally to him,  
 and his resting place will be glorious. (11:1-10; cf., 2:1-5; 9:6-7; Eze 37:21-28)

One commentator puts the prophets' prophetic hope in a nutshell: "Scriptures indicate that the final goal of the Old Testament prophetic hope is nothing less than the establishment of the kingdom of God in which both the nations and Israel will live in peace and righteousness under God's rulership mediated through the messianic, Davidic king (cf. Zech 14:9)" (Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism*, 236).

## day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

### Matthew 13:31-35

31 He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. 32 Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."

33 He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."

34 Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable.

35 So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet:  
 "I will open my mouth in parables,  
 I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world."

### Cf. another translation

31 He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. 32 It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

33 He told them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."

34 All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. 35 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet:

"I will open my mouth in parables;  
 I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world." (ESV)

## EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- \* Underline "kingdom of heaven" in vv. 31, 33.
- \* Box "like" indicating comparison in vv. 31, 33.
- \* Bracket "a man" in v. 31.
- \* Circle "smallest" in v. 32.

- \* Draw a line through "your" in v. 32.
- \* Box "yet" indicating contrast in v. 32.
- \* Circle "largest" and "tree" in v. 32.
- \* Box "so that" indicating result in v. 32.

- \* Bracket "birds of the air" in v. 32.
- \* Circle "yeast" in v. 33.

- \* Circle "large amount" in v. 33.
- \* Circle "fulfilled" in v. 35.

## day 2

**EXPLORE** – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. To whom does "them" refer in verse 31?
2. Identify the *simile* in verse 31.
3. The mustard seed is small, but it isn't *actually* the "smallest of all seeds" (ESV). Was Jesus mistaken? Explain.
4. Explain the *contrast* in verse 32.
5. Birds perch in the mustard plant's branches. So what?
6. Identify the *simile* in verse 33.
7. The *contrast* in verse 32 is *explicit*, whereas the *contrast* in verse 33 is *implicit*. Identify and explain the *implicit contrast* in verse 33.
8. Does verse 34 mean that Jesus taught *solely* in parables? Explain.
9. Put how Jesus fulfilled Psalm 78:2 in your own words.
10. **Discussion:** Talk about any distinction you see between the point of the parable of the Mustard Seed and the point of the parable of the Yeast.

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## day 3

## EXAMINE – an explanation of its message to clarify your understanding of the passage.

Jesus tells two pairs of parables pertaining to the kingdom of heaven—the Mustard Seed and the Yeast, and the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl—before concluding his third discourse in Matthew's Gospel with the parable of the Net. The first pair (13:31-35), the parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast, makes essentially the same point. Generally speaking, both deal with the growth of the present form of the kingdom. One commentator explains: "Wherever Jesus tells a pair of closely parallel parables, and he does so several times in the Gospels, without exception these parables make basically the same point, rather than opposite points. So we should almost certainly allow the parable of the mustard seed to govern our interpretation of the parable of the leaven here as well" (Craig L. Blomberg, *Preaching the Parables*, 123-24).

These parables are "simple" in *contrast* to the two "complex" parables Jesus previously told "the crowd" (vv. 2-3, 36; cf., vv. 24, 31 "them"). Both amount to little more than a single simile introduced in the typical way by "like." The first likens the kingdom of heaven to "a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field" (v. 31). The other likens it to "yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour" (v. 33). The first adds by way of interpretive suggestion, "Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches" (v. 32). The other adds, likewise, "until it worked all through the dough" (v. 33).

Ironically, both *comparisons* make the use of *contrast*. The first contrasts the smallness of the mustard seed to the largeness of the bushlike mustard plant. The other contrasts the small amount of yeast needed to permeate the large amount of dough.

On why Jesus chose the mustard seed, one commentator explains: "For him it was not essential to stress the greatness of the future kingdom; few would dispute that. It was more important for him to find a metaphor emphasizing the kingdom's tiny beginning" (D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 8:318). And on the distinction between the two parables, the same commentator suggests: "If there is a distinction between this parable and the last one, it is that the

mustard seed suggests extensive growth and the yeast intensive transformation. The yeast doesn't grow, it permeates; and its inevitable effect, despite the small quantity used, recalls Jesus' words in 5:13. In both parables it is clear that at present the kingdom of heaven operates, not apocalyptically, but quietly and from small beginnings" (319).

One important thing about the kingdom of heaven implied by both parables is its organic development from a small beginning to the full kingdom reality. As another commentator writes: "These parables should not be pressed for implications about the rate of kingdom growth. They do not imply a smooth mathematical progression. They do not rule out apparent 'set backs.' Neither do they contradict the teaching of the wheat and tares. Evil will be present prior to the coming of the Son of Man. But these parables add this to the teaching of the former parable: the beginning of the kingdom phase which precedes the apocalypse will be small, but it is organically related to that kingdom which is to come. It is the eschatological kingdom in an initial form. It will grow and develop during the dispensation before the Son of Man's coming. In the consummation, the eschatological kingdom will be revealed in all its fullness, as predicted by the prophets and developed by Jesus" (Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism*, 253).

Following the parables, Matthew adds that Jesus "did not say anything to them without using a parable"—not that Jesus taught using parables *solely* but that they were a regular part of his teaching. This, as far as Matthew was concerned, "fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet," that is, through Asaph. The passage the apostle quotes is Psalm 78:2. In this instance of fulfillment, Jesus does not do what Asaph *predicted* he would do, rather what Jesus does *epitomizes* what Asaph himself did. Put differently, Asaph's parabolic teaching in Psalm 78 *anticipates* Jesus' parabolic teaching in Matthew 13. One commentator puts it this way: "The teaching of Jesus in parables is accordingly regarded by the evangelist as the fulfillment of OT prophecy and involves the revealing of the accomplishment of God's salvation in history in a way similar to, but more definitive than, what Ps 78:1-2 describes" (Hagner, 390).

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## *The Message of the Passage*

*Regardless of how things might presently appear, the kingdom of heaven is growing in size and increasing in influence until it one day fills the earth.*

### day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the three "living questions" below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

**“Kingdom Saturation”**  
(Use the space below for Sunday’s message notes)

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# notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 31 **parable . . . like** Cf., "And he said, 'With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it?'" (Mk 4:30). The terms "parable" and "like" are complementary in that the first implies a comparison and the second indicates comparison. On "parable," one writer explains: "The Greek word derives from a verb meaning 'set side by side,' that is, compare" (Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew*, Interpretation, 146). The word "like" typically introduces a simile, a figure of speech that uses comparison. According to one expert on figures of speech used in the Bible, simile "is a cold, clear, plain statement as to a *resemblance* between words and things. The whole application of the figure lies in this *Resemblance*, and not in *Representation*, as in *Metonymy*; or in *Implication*, as in *Hypocatastasis*; or, in *Association*, as in *Synecdoche*" (E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech used in the Bible*, 726).

v. 31 **kingdom of heaven** "The third parable of the discourse continues the portrayal of the kingdom of God in connection with the sowing of seed. The vocabulary (catchwords) of 'sowing,' 'seed,' and 'field' provides continuity" (Hagner, 385).

v. 32 **smallest** Cf., 17:20. Lit., "smallest of all seeds" (NIV(c)2011; ESV, NET); translators inserted "your" to indicate that it is not absolutely the smallest. "The mustard seed was proverbial for its smallness (*m. Nid.* 5:2). 'Your' is not in the Greek but captures the correct sense. Jesus is not speaking in absolute terms as a biologist but in the frame of normal experience in Jewish agriculture. Mustard seeds were the smallest seeds commonly planted in Palestinian fields" (Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 220).

v. 32 **largest . . . tree** "Mustard plants usually look more like large bushes than like small trees, but they can grow to ten or twelve feet, enabling birds to roost in their branches ('perch' equals nest or live)" (220). "Several Old Testament passages use a tree with birds flocking to its branches to illustrate a kingdom that people perceive as great (Judg. 9:15; Ps. 104:12; Ezek. 17:22-24; 31:3-14; Dan. 4:7-23). The birds evidently represent those who seek shelter in the kingdom" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Matthew," 2016 ed., 233, www.soniclight.com). "Why did Jesus choose the mustard plant since it did not become as large as some other plants? Evidently He did so because of the small beginning of the mustard plant. The contrast between an unusually small beginning and a large mature plant is the point of this parable. Jesus' ministry began despicably small in the eyes of many Jews. Nevertheless, from this small beginning would come the worldwide kingdom predicted in the Old Testament" (Constable, 233).

v. 32 **birds of the air** "The Greek word *ouranos* may be translated either 'sky' or 'heaven,' depending on the context. The idiomatic expression 'birds of the sky' refers to wild birds as opposed to domesticated fowl" (The NET Bible, 47tn on Mt 13:32). "The words 'and the birds of heaven dwell in its branches' are strongly reminiscent of Dan 4:21, which speaks allegorically of a kingdom whose dominion extends to the ends of the earth and incorporates all peoples. Another possible influence is Ezek. 17:23; 31:6. 'Birds of heaven' was a common metaphor for Gentiles (see 1 Enoch 90:30, 33, 37)" (Hare, 157).

v. 33 **yeast** Or "leaven" (ESV, NKJV). "Some interpreters have understood yeast as a metaphorical reference to evil. However, not all uses of yeast in the Old Testament carry this symbolic meaning (e.g., Lev. 7:13; 23:15-18)" (Constable, 233; see Carson, 319). "There is no indication that Matthew here thinks of the leaven as something evil. What he portrays, rather, is the dynamic power of leaven whereby a small amount, which is imperceptible (note the verb *enekrupsen*, 'hid'), when first mixed in a lump of dough, has an eventual, inevitable, and astonishing effect upon the whole" (Hagner, 389).

v. 33 **large amount** Cf., "probably about 1/2 bushel or 22 liters" (NIV margin). Lit., "three measures" (ESV, NET, NKJV); cf., "sixty pounds" (NIV(c)2011), "three big batches" (CEV), "three pecks" (NASB); "a bushel" (CEV). The exact amount of flour is disputed, variously estimated at approximately 20 (see Carson, 319) to 45 (see Hagner, 390) liters. "This measure was a saton, the Greek name for the Hebrew term 'seah.' Three of these was a very large quantity of flour, since a saton is a little over 16 pounds (7 kg) of dry measure (or 13.13 liters). So this was over 47 lbs (21 kg) of flour total, enough to feed over a hundred people" (The NET Bible, 50sn on Mt 13:33).

v. 35 **fulfilled** Cf., Ps 78:2. "The psalmist Asaph reflected on Israel's history and clarified through parables the meaning of God's salvation-historical events so that the people would learn from their history and not be a stubborn and rebellious people with hearts hard to God's saving work (Ps 78:2, 8). Matthew's standard fulfillment formula (see comments on 1:22; 2:15) says that Jesus is doing a similar service to Israel in his day, revealing in his parables the secrets of the kingdom of heaven that have been hidden since the beginning" (Michael J. Wilkins, *The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew*, 484; see Carson, 320-22).

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## Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Don't you just love sharing good news! Your kids do too! My teenagers still come home beaming when they have made an excellent grade on a test. They can't wait to tell me! It's fun to share in their joy in those moments. What about the joy we get when someone we love enters the Kingdom of God? That is a reason to celebrate! A part of leading our kids to be kingdom-minded is helping them to share their faith with others. If we can help them develop this skill at a young age, it will be easier when they become teenagers and adults. How can you help your kids become kingdom-sharers? (1) Teach them to pray for people who do not have a relationship with Jesus. Prayer is a powerful weapon in the Kingdom. Ask the Holy Spirit to nudge your child when it's time to share. (2) Practice sharing the gospel with your child. There are many tools that can help you with this - power bead bracelets, wordless books, evangucubes, drawing a picture. Let us know how we can help with this! (3) Let them watch you share with others. Modeling is always the best way to teach spiritual principles. (4) Encourage them to just do it! Sometimes we need someone to encourage us to be brave! Kingdom kids want their friends to be in the Kingdom with them!

### What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Matthew 13:31-35

1. What does Jesus compare the kingdom of God to in verse 31?
2. What happens to the small seed when it is planted?
3. What else does Jesus compare the kingdom of heaven to?

### What Do You Think

Both of these examples are of something that started small but grew. How does the kingdom of God grow?

### What R U Going To Do

What is your story about Jesus? Have you trusted Him as your Savior? Have you been baptized? Practice telling the story of how you came to know Him with a friend or family member. Have that person sign your *Scrolls* for an extra token!

### Core Comp

Hope - I can cope with the problems of life and death with the help of Jesus..

### Memory Verse

Psalm 47:8 - *God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne.*

## KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse \_\_\_\_\_, completed *Scrolls* \_\_\_\_\_, brought Bible \_\_\_\_\_, brought a friend \_\_\_\_\_.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_ Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.  
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

# 30 CORE COMPETENCIES

## 10 CORE BELIEFS

### **Trinity** *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Salvation By Grace** *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Authority of the Bible** *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

### **Personal God** *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

### **Identity in Christ** *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

### **Church** *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

### **Humanity** *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

### **Compassion** *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

### **Eternity** *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

### **Stewardship** *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

## 10 CORE PRACTICES

### **Worship** *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

### **Prayer** *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Bible Study** *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Single-mindedness** *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

### **Spiritual Gifts** *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

### **Biblical Community** *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

### **Giving Away My Time** *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Money**

#### *2 Corinthians 8:7*

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Faith** *Ephesians*

#### *6:19-20*

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Life** *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

## 10 CORE VIRTUES

### **Joy** *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

### **Peace** *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

### **Faithfulness** *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

### **Self-Control** *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

### **Humility** *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

### **Love** *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

### **Patience** *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

### **Kindness/Goodness** *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

### **Gentleness** *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

### **Hope** *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

## About the Authors

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**Wendy Hollabaugh** (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is [tbulick@pantego.org](mailto:tbulick@pantego.org).