

THE PARABLES OF THE MUSTARD SEED AND YEAST

Biblical Passages: Luke 13:18-21

No one can drive through the southern United States without seeing the amount of trees covered in vines that are literally choking the life out of the trees. One article referred to it as “the vine that ate the South.” Those kudzu vines were brought into the United States in 1876 as an ornamental vine from Japan. Southerners were encouraged to plant it to keep areas from washing away in heavy rainfall. Southern farmers used it to feed their livestock cheaply. Today, kudzu covers 7 million acres in the South and “is considered to be the most wide-spread invasive species” in the United States.¹ In the Parable of the Mustard Seed, Jesus used an example that was identified with Israel just as much as kudzu is with the South in the U. S. Then, He used a second parable about how yeast rises. Together, both predicted how the church would grow.

Read Luke 13:18-21. Jesus used parables to communicate to people, and His parables were about people. By using normal, common people doing normal, common things, Jesus began to paint a picture of how the church would grow as well as who would be within it. In the Parable of the Mustard Seed, Jesus told of a farmer—a man—who sowed a seed in his field. He was going about his daily work. In the Parable of the Yeast, a baker—a woman who was doing what she did everyday by making the bread—worked leaven into her bread dough. In both stories, what they did became significant. The farmer planted the tiny seed of an invasive species. He could not have been surprised when the seed took over the field. The baker worked yeast into the flour, knowing how the yeast would change the mixture into something that would rise much larger than the flour mixture had been.

How do these pictures visualize the church through history, the church today, and the church tomorrow? Jesus emphasized that the success of the church was and is guaranteed. That guarantee brings believers hope for the future and joy in the present.

CONNECTION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important that we never forget the small, humble beginnings of God’s Kingdom?
2. How does it feel to belong to God’s Kingdom—to His family?
3. What are some reasons that we often stop short of taking part in His story?
4. What risk might we run by not participating in the growth of God’s Kingdom in the world?

1. Virginia Pierce, *Kudzu: The Vine that Ate the South*. South Carolina Digital Newspaper Program. Available at <http://library.sc.edu/blogs/newspaper/2012/08/10/kudzu-the-vine-that-ate-the-south/>.