

To Speak in Parables
Proclamation of the Gospel in the Parables of Jesus

Southwestern Minnesota Synod Assembly
June 2006

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Current Courses

- Upcoming: NT Greek- Summer 2006
- Upcoming: Travel Seminar to Israel, Palestine, and Jordan in January 2007

Presentations and Resources

Please contact me if you need any other previous presentations.

- Links to Useful Online Christian Resources
- Suggested Commentaries Listings
- BibleWorks, Logos, and Other Bible Software
- Postmodern Evangelism
- Southwest Minnesota Synod Presentations (2006.06.10-11)
- Revelation Presentation for NE Penn Synod (2006.04.22)
- Gathering in the East Bible Software // Online Bible Resources (2006.03.18)
- Southwestern PA Synod Lay Training Program (2006.03.11)
- ELCA Conference of Bishops: Understanding Scripture // Lent/2B Notes (2006.03.06)
- Miracle, Magic, Medicine Presentation.pdf (2006.02.28)

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Mark 4.10-13

When he was alone, those who were around him along with the twelve asked him about the parables. And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables; in order that 'they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand; so that they may not turn again and be forgiven.'"

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Are Jesus' parables meant to confuse or to enlighten?

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Mark 4.10-13

And he said to them,
"Do you not understand this parable?
Then how will you understand all the parables?"

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What is a parable?

- Examples?
 - Aesop's Fables
 - Nathan's story to David (2 Samuel 12)
- Definitions?

Parable:

From the Greek word *parabole* which translates the Hebrew *mashal* which means "to be similar, to be comparable." A parable is an extended metaphor, or simile, frequently becoming a brief narrative, generally used in Biblical times for didactic purposes.

(Not to be confused with an allegory.)
from the Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible

A parable is:

- An earthly story with a heavenly meaning
- An earthy story with heavy meanings

William Herzog

A "Traditional" Approach to the Parables

The lost coin	Luke 15:8-10	Joy over penitence
The prodigal son	Luke 15:11-32	Fatherly love to penitent son
The unjust steward	Luke 16:1-8	Preparation for eternity
Rich man & Lazarus	Luke 16:19-31	Recompense of future life
The unjust judge	Luke 18:1-8	Advantage of persevering prayer
Pharisee & publican	Luke 18:9-14	Self-righteousness and humility
The pounds	Luke 19:11-27	Diligence rewarded; sloth punished

Do Jesus' parables have only one, clearly recognizable point, like a 'sermon illustration'?

Or do they, like art, have multiple meanings?

Are Jesus' parables only understandable within a first-century context?

Or are they more like artistic pieces that have timeless meaning?

Are the parables of Jesus intended to:

- Convey information?
- Challenge perception?
- Cause transformation?

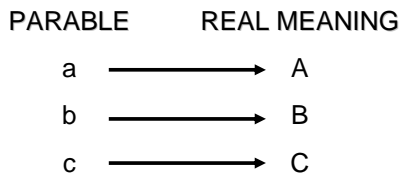
At its simplest the parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought.

C.H. Dodd *Parables of the Kingdom*

With Jesus, the device of parabolic utterance is used not to explain things to people's satisfaction but to call attention to the unsatisfactoriness of all their previous explanations and understandings.

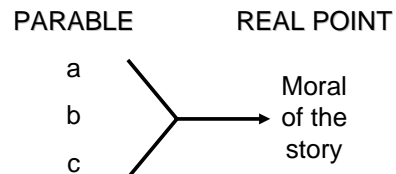
Robert Farrar Capon, *The Parables of the Kingdom*

How do we study the parables?



Parables are more than allegories

How do we study the parables?



Do parables have just one point?

How do we study the parables?

NOT	BUT
What does it really mean?	What is going on here?

How do we study the parables?

NOT	BUT
What is the parable's point?	How is the parable challenging us to experience God's dominion?

This Is for the Birds
The Parable of the Mustard Seed

Mark 4.30-32

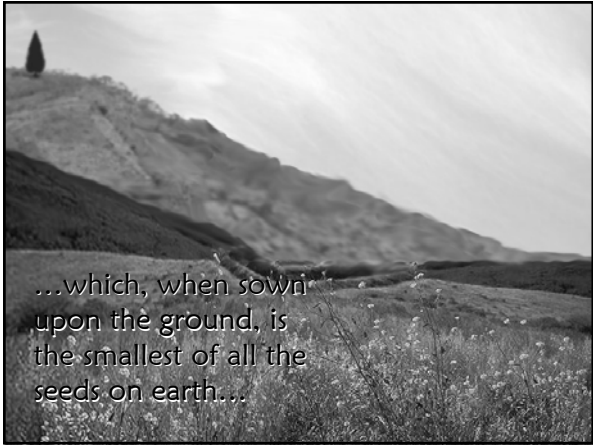
The parable as a point or moral

This parable provides moral instruction:

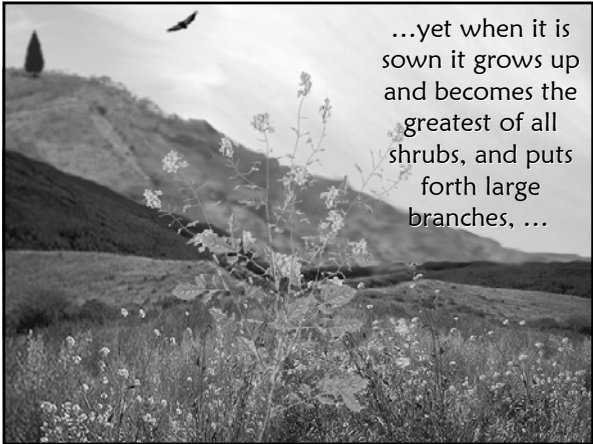


Jesus said,
"With what can we
compare the
Dominion of God,
or what parable will
we use for it?"


It is like a
mustard seed, ...



...which, when sown
upon the ground, is
the smallest of all the
seeds on earth...



...yet when it is
sown it grows up
and becomes the
greatest of all
shrubs, and puts
forth large
branches, ...



...so that the
birds of heaven
can make nests in
its shade."


<p>Matthew 13:31-32</p> <p>The Dominion of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of heaven come and make nests in its branches.</p>	<p>Mark 4:30-32</p> <p>...the Dominion of God, ... is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of heaven can make nests in its shade.</p>	<p>Luke 13:18-19</p> <p>... the Dominion of God ... is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of heaven made nests in its branches.</p>
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Where would a person plant mustard?

JEWISH GARDENING PRACTICES
 No kind of seed may be sown in a garden-bed, but any kind of vegetable may be sown in it. Mustard and small beans are deemed a kind of seed.
Mishnah, Kilaim 3.2

GREEK GARDENING PRACTICES
 There are three seed-times for all things grown in gardens... [In the winter period] is sown beet, lettuce, rocket, monk's rhubarb, mustard, coriander, dill, cress...
 Theophrastus, *Enquiry into Plants VII*




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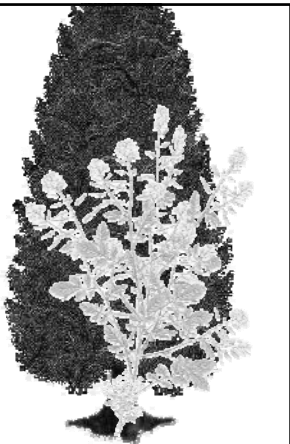
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A mustard "tree"?

Birds make nests in its branches?

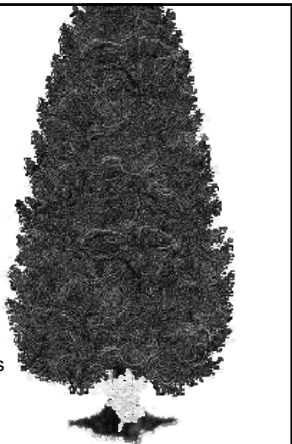


The mighty cedar tree grows to about 100 feet tall.

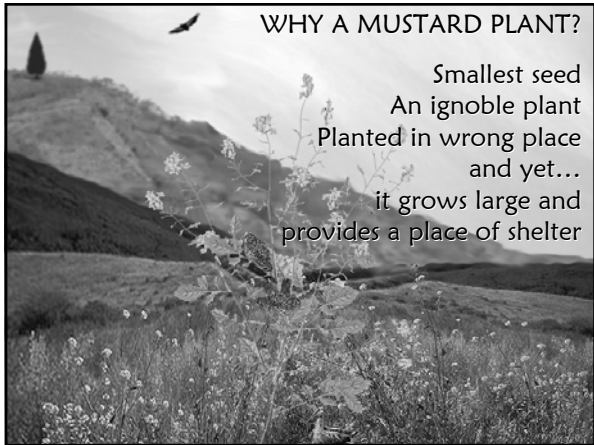


A mustard plant grows to at most 8 feet tall.

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND:
Ezekiel 17:22-23
 Thus says the Lord God: I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of a cedar; I will set it out. I will break off a tender one from the topmost of its young twigs; I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. On the mountain height of Israel I will plant it, in order that it may produce boughs and bear fruit, and become a noble cedar. Under it every kind of bird will live; in the shade of its branches will nest winged creatures of every kind.



WHY A MUSTARD PLANT?



Smallest seed
 An ignoble plant
 Planted in wrong place
 and yet...
 it grows large and
 provides a place of shelter

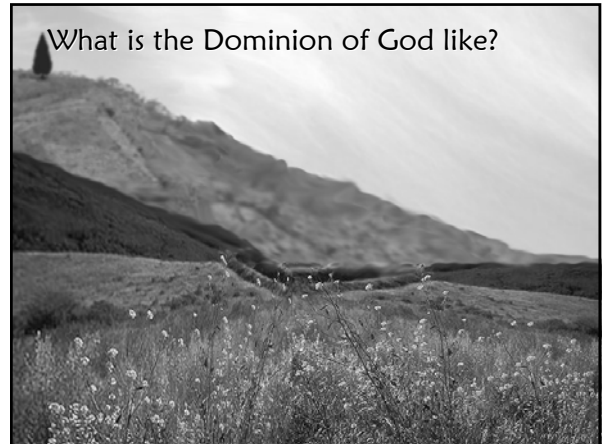
What are the dominions of the world like?



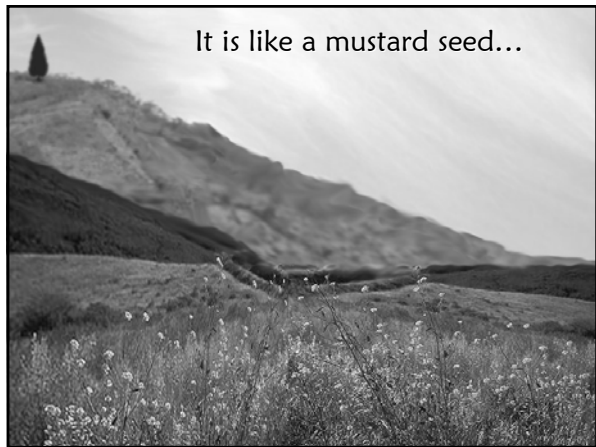
What is the Dominion of God like?



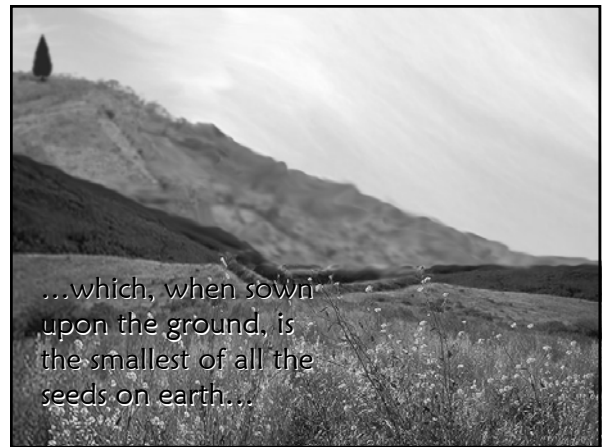
It is like a dandelion planted in a backyard...



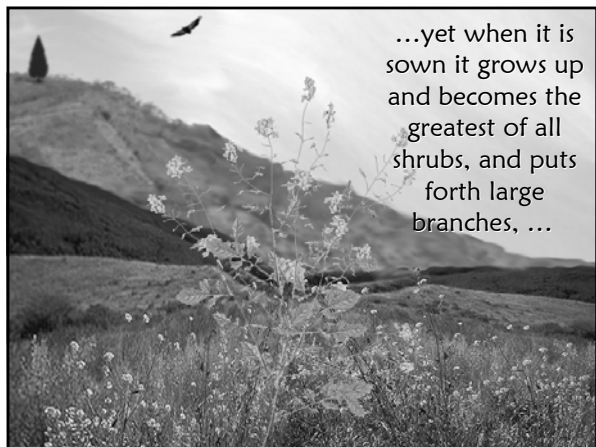
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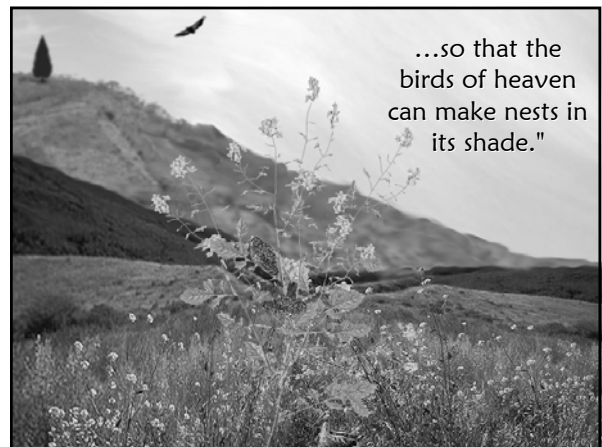
It is like a mustard seed...



...which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth...



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...so that the birds of heaven can make nests in its shade."

