

The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. You may have heard that before. Some of you have heard it many times. But what does it mean? What is a mustard seed kingdom like? The reality is that the Kingdom of God is unlike any kingdom of the world. You cannot see it. We cannot look at a map and find its borders. You cannot check the news to see if it has grown or shrunk. It has no flag and its king is ruling in a place we cannot see.

This is something that Jesus came to teach the Jewish people. They are God's chosen people and His chosen nation. But they needed to understand that the Kingdom of Heaven is not the nation of Israel, it is like a mustard seed.

And we need to be reminded of the strangeness of the kingdom of God. It is unlike anything on earth. And the more we steep ourselves in its truths, the more we can fully inhabit it.

Turn with me to Luke 13. Because each of these stories has something to teach us about the kingdom of God.

**Point 1: The Kingdom requires repentance (v. 1-17).**

There is only one way to be a citizen of the kingdom of God.

It doesn't come from being born in the right place.

It comes from a repentant faith.

Verse 1, **"There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices."**

We don't get all the details.

Some Galileans appear to be killed by Pilate while making their sacrifices.

We don't know why they asked Jesus about this.

Maybe it was a trap.

Maybe they just wanted His opinion on what everyone was talking about.

But it is clear that Jesus does not respond how they expect.

Verse 2, **"And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way?"**

We don't know why they asked, but Jesus does.

It seems that they asked because they think Jesus would condemn them.

They believe that this tragedy has fallen upon the Galilean's because of their sin.

After all bad things only happen to bad people.

The Jews did not like the Galileans.

They didn't hate them like the Samaritans, but they weren't fans of them.

Verse 3, **"No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."**

Jesus avoids all of the philosophical questions.

He does not explain why bad things happen to good people.

He does not even fully confront their bad idea that they must have deserved it.

Instead, Jesus has a completely different lesson.

Jesus says that they need to repent of their sins.

Because their sins are worse than they imagine.

And death is closer than they think.

He flips the story around on them.

Verse 4, **"Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem?"**

This seems to be a different current event.

A tower tragically fell and people died.

These people did not deserve it.

Their sin didn't cause them to make a building fall on them.

They were not any worse sinners than anyone else in Jerusalem.

Yet they died suddenly and unexpectedly.

Verse 5, **"No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."**

Jesus again calls them to repent and to embrace faith.

It is not that repentance is something we do that earns salvation.

It is that repentance reveals that you really do have faith.

If you believe that the Bible is true, then you should obey it.

If you believe that Jesus is God, then you live like it.

Repentance is the natural consequences of living faith.

It is a repentant faith instead of a fruitless faith.

But the people don't seem to have any.

Jesus then tells the crowd a parable to illustrate their need of repentance.

Verse 6, **"And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none."**

He tells the story of a man who owns a vineyard.

And in the middle of it he plants a single fig tree.

This is a little unusual because fig trees don't normally go in a vineyard.

It seems as if the man is paying the fig tree special attention.

Verse 7, **"And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?'"**

Yet despite all of this attention the fig tree is not bearing any fruit.

And it has been 3 years straight.

It actually could be even longer than that.

Leviticus 19:23-25 tells them that they are not to eat the fruit of any tree that they plant for 3 years.

Then the fruit that comes in the fourth year should be dedicated to the Lord.

So realistically he can't have any fruit until the 5th Year anyway.

So it's entirely possible in this parable that he's waited 6 years and yet there still hasn't been any fruit.

Either way it has been too long.

If this tree was going to bear fruit it should have done so by now.

And because it hasn't the master is going to cut it down.  
And he will cast it in the fire.  
And one of the reasons he says he will do this is because it is using up the ground.  
It is not just that it's taking up space in the vineyard.  
It is that fig trees are water suckers.  
They require a ton of water.  
And it is stealing water from the vines to do nothing.  
So why should the master let this thing continue to exist?

Verse 8, **"And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure.'"**

But the vine dresser asked for more grace.  
He says no sir let's give it another year.  
Part of this I think is meant to be insulting to the crowd.  
Jesus is saying maybe the religious leaders need a bunch of manure draped over themselves.

Verse 9, **"Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"**

But if it doesn't help, then cut them down next year.  
Give them this one last chance to repent and bear fruit before it's too late.

1st Jesus is answer some questions to show them they need to repent,  
second Jesus tells a parable to show them that they need to repent and bear fruit,  
and lastly Jesus works a miracle to reveal their need of repentance.

Verse 10, **"Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath."**

Teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath is His normal habit.  
But this will be the last time Jesus does so in the gospel of Luke.

Verse 11, **"And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself."**

There's a woman in the crowd who is disabled.

The disability appears to be caused by a demon.

She is bent over and could not stand up straight for 18 years.

It doesn't seem like she comes because she hopes that Jesus will heal her.

It doesn't seem like she seeks healing at all.

She just comes to listen to Jesus speak.

Verse 12, **"When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your disability."**

Jesus saw her.

It is not just that Jesus noticed her in the crowd.

Is that Jesus looked at her and knew her.

He knew her story.

He knew everything about her.

And Jesus heals her.

Not because of her faith.

Not because of anything that she does.

But because Jesus sees her.

And you notice that Jesus doesn't say be healed.

Jesus says be free.

Verse 13, **"And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God."**

And He puts his hand on her to take off her chains.

And immediately she can stand up straight for the first time in 18 years.

And so she glorifies God.

Verse 14, **"But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day."**

But now the leader of the synagogue is angry.  
He seems to believe that healing counts as work.  
And they're not supposed to do any work on the Sabbath day.  
He rebukes Jesus and says you should have done this on Thursday.  
Or come back and heal her tomorrow.

I think the idea that healing is work has to be a recent idea.  
I'm not so sure that they had a lot of healers doing work before Jesus.  
They don't seem to see this woman like Jesus does.  
They think yeah she's waited 18 years what's another day or two?

Verse 15, **"Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it?"**

Jesus is angry too.  
Jesus calls all of them hypocrites.  
Because they don't say that all work is bad.  
They acknowledge that there are instances where you have to work.  
There are exceptions to the law.  
They know that there are some times they need to work with the cattle.

Verse 16, **"And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?"**

And so Jesus's question is very pointed.  
If they can loosen the bonds of animals, why can't Jesus loosen the bonds that Satan put on a daughter of Abraham.  
Why can God not set one of His people free?

There are a couple things going on here.  
One of which is that Jesus is showing the limitations of legalism.  
You're not getting into the kingdom of God by a very strict following of rules.

Because the strict following of rules can lead you to treating animals better than you do people.

And this kind of legalism misses the whole point of the Gospel.

And they actually miss the entire point of the Sabbath.

You see the Sabbath wasn't implemented just because God rested on the seventh day.

Israel was not commanded to observe the sabbath until Moses.

Until after they were released from slavery.

Deuteronomy 5:15 tells them that the reason they are to rest on the seventh day is because God has loosened their bonds.

God broke the chains that kept them working day after day after day after day with no rest.

Because slaves don't get a day off.

And so they rest on the Sabbath to be reminded that they were once slaves in Egypt but now we're free.

The point of the Sabbath is to remember and honor The God Who loosens bonds.

Jesus says it's not just okay to loosen bonds on the Sabbath you should.

What better way to celebrate the Sabbath?

Verse 17, **"As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him."**

Jesus embarrasses them and shames them. Rightfully so.

Because they need to repent.

Following the rules is not enough to get you into the kingdom of God you need to bear fruit.

You need to treat people as if they're made in God's image.

Because the only way into the kingdom is a repentant and fruitful faith.

Point 2: **The Kingdom grows slowly (v. 18-21).**

You see what Jesus is doing is trying to completely change their minds about what the kingdom of God is.

Verse 18, **"He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it?"**

Jesus is going to give two illustrations that will tell people what they can expect God's kingdom to be like.

Because right now their expectation is that the Messiah is going to come over throw the Romans, restore Israel to power and greatness.

He will make them be like they were under David and Solomon.

They expect that day is going to come violently and soon.

But Jesus wants them to know that the kingdom is going to come a little slower than that.

Verse 19, **"It is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."**

Part of what Jesus wants them to see is that the kingdom is going to start a lot smaller than they think.

But the thing about the kingdom is that it will grow.

It might start very small and unassuming.

Like a tiny seed a child might pick up and pinch between their fingers.

It will start much smaller than the people expect or want.

But it's going to grow slowly but surely.

And the growth will not just be incremental but will be beyond their imagination.

It says the mustard seed will grow into a tree.

That's not how that works.

Mustard seeds grow into flowers or bushes.

But Jesus says the kingdom of God is likely that starts as a tiny Mustard Seed and grows into a tree.

This is not Jesus misunderstanding how plants work.



This is us misunderstanding how the Kingdom works  
It grows into something larger than you thought possible.  
The kingdom of God starts small and then is transformed.

And the tree of the Kingdom becomes something that all the birds of the  
air can come and find a home.  
The kingdom of God is a place that all the people can come into and find  
shade, safety, and rest.

It is reminiscent of the tree in the Book of Daniel.  
The king sees his kingdom as a great tree where all the animals of the  
Earth come to.  
But the tree of Babylon is cut down.  
And every kingdom in this Earth, including our own nation,  
Will one day be cut down.  
They might start big and amazing they won't last.  
But the kingdom of God will.  
As it slowly grows.

Verse 20, **"And again he said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of  
God? 21 It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures  
of flour, until it was all leavened."**

Now this would have surprised them as well.  
Because throughout the scriptures leaven is mostly used to describe  
sinfulness.  
It describes the permeating and corrosive effect of sin and how it spreads  
not just in our hearts and our lives but in our communities.  
But here Jesus uses it positively.  
That is another thing that is so small but as you put it in the dough it is  
what will allow the dough to rise and become bread.  
And the three measures of flower is a lot of flour.  
It is like 50 lbs or 22 kg of flour.  
That's the amount of flour that you use for a great feast for countless  
people.

Because it is not just that the kingdom of God can spread to way more flour than you think.

Is that the kingdom of God is going to spread until there is enough for all the world to come and eat.

That all the world may come in feast not on your bread but on the body and blood of Jesus.

The kingdom of God grows slowly.

It does not come all at once.

It did not come fully in Christ's day.

But it expanded and exploded.

All the tyrants and empires in the world could not stop it.

None of the hypocrites or sinners in its midst could hold it back.

And one day, when Christ returns it will be a fully grown tree we can all sit under.

But for now we have to wait.

But trust and have faith.

Because God's kingdom is growing.

And it may come sooner than you expect.

Point 3: **The Kingdom is coming soon (v. 22-35).**

Verse 22, **"He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. 23 And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?"**

First again notice Jesus is going towards Jerusalem.

That is this whole section till we get to chapter 19 Jesus is heading toward the cross.

We are hurtling towards the end of the story.

And so someone asks him about the kingdom.

But they're not just asking how they can get in but how many are going to get it?

Is everyone welcome in the Kingdom?

Will all of the Jews be saved?

Will only some of them be saved?

Will it only be the most righteous?

Sometimes theologians or we can ask those questions as well.

If God is in control and elects people to salvation how many are saved?

Will it only be a few or will it be a lot?

We can be very interested in this question but Jesus isn't.

**And he said to them, 24 "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able."**

Jesus totally sidesteps the question.

Jesus says you shouldn't be interested in how many are saved  
you should be interested in being saved yourself.

You need to make sure that you are a part of the Kingdom.

You need to strive to enter through the narrow door.

The narrow door means that not everybody is getting into the kingdom of God.

Jesus is already said that you got to repent in order to be a part of the Kingdom.

But Jesus gives them another warning.

He says you need to go in that door because it won't be open forever.

There'll be some to try to enter the kingdom but it will be too late.

Verse 25, **"When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.'"**

One day the Master is going to shut the door.

It has been opened that anyone who wanted could come.

It might be narrow but it's available for any who strive to enter through faith.

But one day that door will slam closed.

And anyone who stands and knocks them is going to be turned away.  
I think the moment when the door closes is when we die.  
Because as long as there's breath in your lungs you have a chance to  
repent and to come into the kingdom of God.  
But once you die it's too late.  
Then the door will be closed.

Verse 26, **"Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' 27 But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!'"**

There will be many who thought they were in the kingdom.  
They got baptized as babies.  
They prayed a prayer once or signed a card.  
Some even worked in churches.  
They preached or gave lots of money.  
But that isn't enough.  
You need to have genuine faith.  
Just spending a little time with Jesus, or hearing Him teach is not enough.  
For them the door will be shut.

Verse 28 **"In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out."**

It again seems like Jesus is talking about hell.  
I wish Jesus just didn't talk about it so much  
But He does because it's real and because the kingdom is coming soon  
and you need to be ready.

And some Jews are going to see that the prophets and their heroes who  
had faith are in the Kingdom while they are not.  
There will be plenty of the Jewish people in the kingdom of God.  
But they won't be there because of what nation they were born into they  
will be there because of their faith.

Verse 29, **"And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. 30 And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."**

The people from all the directions is from every nations.  
From every tribe and tongue and all the gentiles are welcome.  
They will all come to the great wedding Feast of the lamb.

And some of the people that we think are least will be first in the kingdom of God.

The people that we overlook and ignore.  
Because being first in the kingdom of God is about your faith.  
It is not about what we value in this life.

And so as Jesus is talking about how we need to strive to enter into the kingdom of God because the time that that door is going to shut is coming soon news comes to Jesus.

**Verse 31, "At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you."**

The Pharisees actually warned Jesus that Herod wants to kill Him.  
And the Pharisees don't like Jesus they have opposed Him but they don't want to kill Him, at least not yet.  
And so they tell Jesus He needs to run away.  
Whatever you do Jesus definitely don't go to Jerusalem.  
But look how Jesus responds.

**Verse 32, "And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course. 33 Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.'**

Basically Jesus says go tell that fox that I'm busy but I'm on my way.  
Jesus says tell that deceptive creature that right now I'm proclaiming the kingdom of God but I am on my way to Jerusalem.

And he can't kill me until I get there.

Verse 34, **"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!"**

Jesus now laments over Jerusalem.

They are a place that has killed many prophets before them and now they will kill the Messiah.

And Jesus mentions how often that He has cared for them and nursed them and nurtured them and held them like a mother with their children. Like a mother hen with its chicks.

Yet they don't want Jesus's embrace they want to kill Him.

**35 Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"**

And so now Jesus pronounces judgment over Jerusalem it says that they won't see Him until his triumphant entry into the city.

But they're going to miss out on the blessing of the kingdom of God.

Part of which Jesus is doing here is announcing that the time is coming.

People need to make a decision on how they feel about Jesus because He isn't going to be around much longer.

His own death is impending and the kingdom is about to arrive and all of its glory at the resurrection.

And they need to decide whether they are with Jesus or whether they are with Herod.

But this is true of us and our world still today.

People need to decide if they are with Jesus.

Are we followers of Jesus?

Are we Believers in Jesus?

I was striving to enter into the narrow door which is Christ into the kingdom?

Because the only way into the kingdom of God is through Jesus and His death and Resurrection in Jerusalem for our salvation.

#### CONCLUSION:

The kingdom requires repentance.

The kingdom grows slowly.

The kingdom comes soon.

And right now Jesus stands at the door and he knocks.

And if we would open the door and invite him into our hearts and into our lives and he will come and make us new.

Then the kingdom of God will grow and expand not just in the world but in our own lives.

And we can watch as we are transformed from those who are dead in their sins to being alive in Christ.

We will be given new and eternal life.

But you must make your decision soon because the kingdom comes.

And if you have already decided to follow Jesus make sure that you're really following him.

Make sure that your obedience is bearing fruit.

Make sure that you have genuine faith and not just intellectual assent.

Answer the door before it closes forever.