

“The Sleeping Giant”

(Luke 13:18-19)

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I. Introduction

A. The influence of one life

1. H. G. Wells and the influence of Jesus

Jesus 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.

2. The influence of his disciples
 - a. Changed the world
 - b. It's like they awakened a “*sleeping giant*”
3. Today, more than 1 billion people call themselves Christians
 - a. Fastest growing religion in the world
4. One relationship at a time
5. 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.
 - a. They talked of propaganda, of literature, of all the ways of disseminating the gospel in the twentieth century.
 - b. Then the girl from Africa spoke. “*When we want to take Christianity to one of our villages, 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.*”
6. What influence are you having on your village?

B. Today, two short parables about influence

II. Overview

A. Jesus used parables to picture life in our times

B. The parables in Matthew 13

1. *The Sower and the Seeds*

- a. Most would reject the offer of salvation

2. *The Wheat and the Tares (weeds)*

- a. The evil ones would be so blended with the godly that they couldn't be yanked out
- b. Will be separated by "reaper angels" at the end of this age
- c. The church will face some tough resistance
- d. The final two parables are parables of encouragement

3. *The Mustard Seed*

4. *The Yeast*

III. Text....Luke 13:18-19

A. We are a part of the "Kingdom of God" (Luke 13:18)

(18) Then Jesus asked, "What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to?"

- 1. Several meanings for "The Kingdom"
 - a. God's reign over all of creation
 - b. The Earthly Kingdom
 - 1. Yet to come
 - 2. Commonly called the Millennium
 - c. Spiritual Kingdom

1. Righteous
 - a. Believers in Christ
2. Commonly called the church age
 - a. Born on the day of Pentecost
 - b. After the Cross
2. The people of “the church” are part of the kingdom
3. The church is not:
 - a. A building
 - b. A denomination
4. The church refers to all believers...not just at Chapel Pointe
5. You are the church
6. Together...we are the church
 - a. Part of a really large family
 - b. The face of the church is changing
7. Jesus compared the church to two common items
 - a. Next week....Yeast
 1. Next week, “When parents lose control”
 2. Then, “Evolution and other proofs for the existence of God”
 - b. But for today....the church is compared to a mustard seed

B. The Church would start small but grow large (v. 19)

(18) Then Jesus asked, “What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? (19) It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air perched in the branches.

1. The mustard seed

- a. For your hot dogs
- b. Smallest of all their seeds

1 Matthew 13:31-34

(31) Jesus 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 the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches.

- 2. The smallest seed used in that part of the world
- 3. Used by Jews to express smallness
- c. Yet would turn into a plant which rivaled the trees for size
 - 1. Commonly grew 12 to 15 feet
 - 2. Can look like a tree

2. Key thoughts

- a. The size of a seed doesn't determine the size of the plant
 - 1. It's what's inside the seed
- b. God is in our seed
 - 1. Matthew 16:18

(18) And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

2. How the church grew

- a. The 120 awaited Pentecost
 - 1. Explain Pentecost
- b. But after the coming of God the Holy Spirit...
- c. The seed turned into a tree
 - 1. Power

3. The first church is our model for church growth
 - a. The church in its pure state
 - b. The mystery form of the Kingdom on it's first "birthday"
4. Let's learn from the first church right after Pentecost

C. What it takes to grow a mustard seed (Acts 2:41-47)

1. Share the message of salvation with the unsaved (v. 41)

(41) Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

- a. The church is meant to grow
 1. The mustard plant (rapid)
 2. The Church of Jerusalem (3,000 the first day)
- b. Growth can come from a number of ways
 1. Proclaiming the message of salvation
 2. Living a life of salvation....relational
- c. It is most effectively shared relationally
 1. D.L. Moody
 - a. Spoke to 100,000,000
 - b. If he needed 10,000 converts to get into Heaven—
 - c. Would take his chances one-on-one
 2. Christianity is caught like the common cold
 - a. From being around carriers
- d. Each member of the church is a carrier
- e. Who have you targeted?
 1. Family, friends, neighbors co-workers

2. Get involved in their lives

2. Become a devoted student of God's Word (v. 42)

(42) They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

- a. "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching"
 - 1. "devoted" is an intense word
- b. We are to devote ourselves to the message
 - 1. The disappearance of the "message" in many churches
- c. The importance of exposing people to the Word of God
 - 1. Luke 4:32

(32) They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority.

- d. My primary job description
 - 1. Acts 6:4

(4) But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

- e. When preachers get "distracted"...sheep get hungry
 - 1. The sheep will search for another shepherd
 - c. They're hungry!
 - 2. Or they'll stay and start chewing on each other

3. Participate in Christian fellowship (v. 42)

(42) They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

- a. Fellowship/community
- b. Hebrews 10:24-25

(24) And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. (25) Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

- c. Our impersonal world
 - 1. Facebook, email, text messages, tweets
 - 2. Automated
 - a. ATM's
 - b. Gasoline pumps
 - c. Checkout lines at supermarkets
 - d. Somebody here needs you
 - e. For encouragement and accountability

4. Be devoted to prayer (v. 42)

(42) They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

- a. Jesus promised HE would build His church
 - 1. Prayer unleashes His power
- b. "Prayer is the slender nerve that moves the mighty muscle of omnipotence"
- c. Note—these are *individual actions*
 - 1. The Body is composed of individuals
- d. You are the church

5. Seek to experience both the presence and the power of God (v. 43)

(43) Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.

- a. I want a church that is filled with awe
- b. Awe comes to those who "step out in faith"

1. If you want to experience God
2. Attempt what only God can achieve
- c. Awe comes to those who trust God during times of trouble
- d. Awe comes to the church that never gets comfortable
 1. God favors the bold

“Dream no small dreams for they stir not the heart of God”

2. I want to be filled with awe at what God is doing
- e. We have been truly blessed
 1. ...but there is more!
 2. Will only come when we take uncomfortable steps of faith
- f. Matthew 17:20

(20) Jesus replied....I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, move from here to there” and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.

- g. Do you want to move mountains?
- h. Here’s what it will cost

6. Be willing to sacrifice all for the cause of Christ (vs. 44-45)

(44) All the believers were together and had everything in common. (45) Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.

- a. It cost them everything!
- b. Joshua 3:5

(5) Joshua told the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.”

- c. Consecration of your:
 1. Time

2. Talents

3. Treasures

d. Great churches are comprised of individuals who are sacrificial givers of their time...and more

7. Rejoice in the Lord in all circumstances (vs. 46-47)

(46) Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, (47) praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved

- a. "Continuing daily with one accord in the temple" (v. 46)
- b. "And they added to their number daily those who were being saved"
- c. Note the joy they had
- d. And how well received they were by all people
- e. And how filled with joy they were

IV. Summary

A. Small seeds in some unlikely places

1. "Cradles of Eminence" and severe challenges
2. Seeds of greatness planted in some unlikely spots
 - ***Cripple him, and you have a Sir Walter Scott.***
 - ***Lock him in a prison cell, and you have a John Bunyan.***
 - ***Bury him in the snows of Valley Forge, and you have a George Washington.***
 - ***Raise him in abject poverty, and you have an Abraham Lincoln.***
 - ***Subject him to bitter religious prejudice, and you have a Disraeli.***
 - ***Afflict him with asthma as a child, and you have a Theodore Roosevelt.***
 - ***Stab him with rheumatic pains until he can't sleep without an opiate, and you have a Steinmetz.***

- *Put him in a grease pit of a locomotive roundhouse and you have a Walter P. Chrysler.*
- *Make him second fiddle in an obscure South American orchestra, and you have a Toscanini.*
- *At birth, deny a child the ability to see, hear and speak, and you have a Helen Keller.*

3. The small seed in you
 - a. Faith as small as a mustard seed
 - b. The power of God in that small seed
 - c. Like a sleeping giant

B. The characteristics of the first church

1. Shared the hope of salvation with the lost
2. They hungered to learn more of God's Word
3. They gathered together for fellowship
4. They devoted themselves to prayer
5. They allowed God to work wonders in their midst
6. They were willing to sacrifice all they had for the cause
7. They were filled with joy

C. The group of 120 at Pentecost must have looked like a mustard seed

1. Compared to the world population
2. The church was like a sleeping giant
 - a. But then then came Pentecost
 - b. And the giant awoke
 1. Full of power

3. The result—Acts 2:47

Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

D. You are the church...We are the church