



"IT IS LIKE A GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED"

MARK 4:30-34

The larger biblical narrative: great things from humble beginnings;

PSALM 118:22-23

²² The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. ²³ This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

ISAIAH 1:8-9

⁸ And the daughter of Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard, like a lodge in a cucumber field, like a besieged city. ⁹ If the LORD of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we should have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah.

ZECHARIAH 4:10

¹⁰ *For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice, and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. "These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range through the whole earth."*

EZEKIEL 17:22-24

²² Thus says the Lord GOD: "I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out. I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. ²³ On the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bear branches and produce fruit and become a noble cedar. And under it will dwell every kind of bird; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest. ²⁴ And all the trees of the field shall know that I am the LORD; I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it."

The overarching Old Testament narrative: a Messiah who must come from a people repeatedly on the verge of extinction;

The Kingdom's humble and seemingly fragile beginnings;

MATTHEW 11:2-3

² Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?"

LUKE 13:23

²³ And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?"

LUKE 12:32

³² "Fear not, *little flock*, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:26

²⁶ For consider your calling, brothers: *not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.*

JOHN 6:66

⁶⁶ After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

ACTS 28:22

²² But we desire to hear from you what your views are, for with regard to this sect we know that *everywhere it is spoken against.*"

Now that Messiah had arrived, expectations had dramatically increased;

ACTS 1:6

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

LUKE 24:21

²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened.

The paradox of Jesus’ ministry: immense popularity, but fragile loyalty;

Jesus is the mustard seed, and we are the mustard seed

JOHN 12:24–26

²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, *unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.* ²⁵ Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

LUKE 9:23

²³ And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

Do not be discouraged, the Kingdom in this Age is entirely spiritual, and that is by God’s design

1. The advancement of the Kingdom in this Age can only be seen by faith

HEBREWS 2:8–9

⁸ ...putting everything in subjection under his feet.” Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. *At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.* ⁹ But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

1 CORINTHIANS 16:9

⁹ for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

2 KINGS 6:17

Then Elisha prayed and said, “O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see.” So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

2. Those who mistake the advancement of the Kingdom to be in physical terms stand in need of correction

ACTS 1:6–7

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷ He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.

PSALM 20:7

⁷ Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.

ISAIAH 31:1

¹ *Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the LORD!*

3. God declares that His power is manifested in weakness, and He has not changed

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9

⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

4. The Church has never received the fullness of the promises in this life

HEBREWS 10:38–11:1

³⁸ ...but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." ³⁹ But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. ¹ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

HEBREWS 11:13–14

¹³ *These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.* ¹⁴ For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.

5. The supernatural growth of the Kingdom will be fully realized on the Day that this Age comes to an end

PHILIPPIANS 2:9–11

⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that *at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,* ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

ISAIAH 9:7

⁷ *Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end,* on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

ISAIAH 49:6

⁶ he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, *that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.*"

REVELATION 5:9–12

⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." ¹¹ *Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands,* ¹² saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"