

Series: Parables
Title: Least to Greatest
Text: Matthew 13: 31-32
Date: October 24, 2010
Place: SGBC, New Jersey

It is obvious from what the Lord teaches these parables that if Satan were able to corrupt our minds from the simplicity that is in Christ we would have much to be discouraged over: 3 out of the 4 hearers did not receive the word sown; the devil sowed tares right amongst the children of the Lord's planting. As the Lord sowed good seed the devil went about sowing discord.

How did Satan corrupt Eve's mind in the garden? He cast doubt upon God and his Word. How did doubts and contentions arise in the Corinthian church? The Galatian church? Some criticized Paul and the brethren, casting doubt upon Power and Wisdom of Christ to save.

Every time Paul preached the gospel two things happened: those who had been called by grace rejoiced in their Savior; others were offended--they exalted their form of godliness but denied the Power of God. Satan sowed discord through those who criticized Paul and the brethren.

Application: Brethren, we must never say a word which would cause any to doubt the sincerity of any brother or sister here who professes to believe on Christ. Nor give our ear to hear any who attempt to criticize any brethren here. It will only result in doubt.

Proposal: But in these parables our Lord assures us, that by his sowing, his kingdom shall continue and shall grow: not by might, nor by power but by His Spirit. Our Lord shall add to his kingdom and make his children grow being **filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God (Php 1:11).**

Do you need that assurance? If there is one thing I have learned in the past 3 years it is that I need this constant reminder that the Lord is of Power and Wisdom to keep all his children no matter what! That is what the Lord declares to us in the parable of the mustard seed.

Matthew 13: 31: Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: 32: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

DIVISIONS: I. CHRIST; II. THE CHURCH AND KINGDOM OF GOD; III. EACH CHILD OF GOD

I. CHRIST IS MUSTARD THE SEED.

Genesis 3: 15 declares he is THE SEED of woman. Galatians 3: 16 declares the promises of God were made to Christ THE SEED of Abraham. The Lord says in our text:

Matthew 13: 31: The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:

1. He took---Hebrews 2:16: "For verily he took not on [him the nature of] angels; but he took on [him] the seed of Abraham.
2. He sowed---John 12: 24: Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

Matthew 13: 32: Which indeed is the least of all seeds

God's thoughts are not our thoughts and his ways are not our ways. Those who think themselves something when they are nothing are called "cedars of Lebanon" "oaks of Bashan". But that is not at all how Christ Jesus the King, THE SEED, came into this earth.

A. The King came through the womb of a virgin.

Psalm 139:15: My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

B. God chopped down the mighty tree and his Son came as a seed, a tender plant, a babe in a manger.

Isaiah 53:2: For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, [there is] no beauty that we should desire him.

There was nothing about the way Christ came forth in this world to make men desire him: not the place of his birth, not family, not education--he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, [there is] no beauty that we should desire him. We truly esteemed him as the "least of all seeds"

Matthew 13: 32: but when it is grown,

Luke 2:52: And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

Matthew 13: 32: but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

The Lord Jesus Christ is THE GREATEST among all the plants of his field. The Holy One, the Faithful One. He is the one in whom all his children lodge--dwell--as birds lodge in a tree.

John 15:5: I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Christ is the Seed--the Life--seated at God's right hand--the Lord our Righteousness--HE IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN (Nicodemus--except ye be born again ye can not see the kingdom of God.)

II. THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN--THE CHURCH.

Matthew 13: 31: The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: 32: Which indeed is the least of all seeds:

A. The church began from very small beginnings--so small that it came without observation.

Luke 17: 20: And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: 21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

The King and his children are the kingdom of God. The church is the children of God. The church of God are those born of the Spirit, to whom God has made his everlasting covenant so we call it a "new testament"

church. The kingdom of God was in their midst, had been since the beginning and carnal men never had any idea.

1. The new testament church began in the old testament.

Acts 7:38: This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:

Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David were all the church of God. God's born again children are the kingdom of heaven. But this carnal world has always regarded the kingdom of heaven as nothing, persecuted, wandered from place to place--the least of all the seeds.

We usually think of the early church, the apostles and the first disciples called by Christ. They, too, were regarded by this world as nothing. Persecuted, called a "sect", everywhere spoken against--**ESTEEMED AS THE LEAST OF ALL SEEDS**

Yet, the Lord delivered the new testament church even in the days of the old testament church. He sent them from nation to nation and no man did them harm because of his everlasting covenant to save them. Even with the apostles he did so.

Isaiah 13: 32:...but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

B. In spite of all the attempts of Satan and evil men, throughout time, the Lord has grown his kingdom.

According to his promise the LORD has kept his church as the apple of his eye. All those we just talked about, are the spirits of just men made perfect to whom you and I have come. They "received the lively oracles to give unto us:" The work of the Gospel, the spread of God's Church and Kingdom is gradual, but he has grown it consistently--**And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.** In the end of this world, we shall behold that church and kingdom of God hold a number which no man can number. What a glorious promise to encourage us!

III. EVERY BELIEVER INDIVIDUALLY

Eternal life is by the Seed being sown within us--Christ in you the hope of glory. We begin as babes. And children grow. We grow up to be men.

A. The Lord compared faith to a grain of mustard seed, we grow in faith.

Believers are complete in Christ--it is not the measure of our faith that makes us complete--it is Christ in whom we are Complete. So it is that growth in grace is not growth in self-sufficiency or away from Christ--but growing up into Christ-- more dependent upon him.

Ephesians 4:15: But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

2 Peter 3: 18: But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The word "of" means both "by" and "about": growth is "by" our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ--by the unmerited favor God gives us in Christ--by grace. Knowledge is taught us "by" him. Our Lord and Savior himself teaches us through the Holy Spirit, through his gospel, through working all things together in providence. And growth in grace and knowledge is learning more "of" (about) God's grace in Christ, more

about "knowledge" of how Jesus Christ is Lord and is all our salvation. Growth in grace and knowledge is growing up into him in all things

B. This growth will cause us not to think more of ourselves--but less of ourselves and more of Him!

John 3:30: He must increase, but I must decrease.

Nothing constrains a believer to give himself diligently to mind the glory of God and the good of his brethren--like knowing more of Christ's mind. His longsuffering toward me, makes me want to suffer long with others and to wait on the return of the Lord. That is what Peter was speaking about: 2 Peter 3: 17: Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. 18: But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. His making himself of no reputation makes me want to stop defending glory I think I deserve and simply serve others. (Php 2) Beholding Christ makes us grow up as men and grow down in humility.

1 Co 14:20: Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.

Luke 9: 48:...for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.

Using those he has grown to be least is how he grows his kingdom to be the greatest.

Here this point: just as our Lord walked this earth, no man doing him harm until his hour was come, just as he called and maintained and grew his church, so he maintains and grows every individual child in his body.

Growth in the kingdom of heaven is all by the Power and Wisdom of God our Father through his Son Jesus Christ. Growth in grace is as much by the free, irresistible grace of God as the beginning of life which came by his irresistible grace. He shall grow his kingdom.

So let this be an encouragement to us--despise not the day of small things.

Amen!