

who you may be in and through Christ Jesus, the Saviour. These two parables teach the work God has begun in His people will also by His grace and Spirit be fully done. In the new world, God's people will be without spot or wrinkle, perfectly whole not only in Christ, but actually themselves too, yes through Christ and all His saving transforming power.

Let us be prayers then, yes, but secondly let us notice what is also surely promoted with these twin parables is the calling to sow the gospel seed and pass it on to others. The only hope for this cursed world and for fallen, still unsaved, sinners is just the gospel of Jesus Christ. How easy it is to say this but who will say the Christian church corporately and individually lives and acts sufficiently in accordance with this gospel truth? May these twin parables of the mustard seed and leaven encourage us ceaselessly and prayerfully and enthusiastically to reach out with the Word of life, as God gives us opportunity. We may think the tiny mustard seed about God's Word and kingdom in Christ Jesus -what can it accomplish? But let us leave that to God, having these parables as real incentives and encouragements that the sowing of the little seed may in God's hands accomplish great things, exceeding abundantly above all that you could ask or think!

These twin parables teach, in summary, God gives us every reason as confessing Christians still now caught up in many struggles and discouragements even, yet to go forward and onward with uplifted head and a song in our hearts and with great optimism for no matter what things may seem like, God's church and kingdom, His Word and gospel triumphant shall be! If you are a Christian, do not be downcast then but plod on, and persevere in the way of the gospel, ever looking unto Jesus, the Author and finisher of our faith. These twin parables give reason to say with Paul in I Corinthians 15:58, *Therefore my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

Twin parables giving truth like two sides of a coin. Only this is gospel truth from Jesus Christ Himself, more precious and encouraging than all the gold in this world, when you consider what He pictures in these parables and what He proclaims, and what He promotes. Spirit of the living God, bless these twin parables for all who heard it, making all by grace through faith true and living citizens of the kingdom of heaven in and through Jesus Christ the Saviour of sinners and King of kings. Amen.

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**BANNER OF TRUTH RADIO BROADCAST**

*Radio Ministry of the FREE REFORMED CHURCHES of North America*

*Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)*



JESUS' POWERFUL GOSPEL ENCOURAGEMENT [2]

Jesus' powerful gospel encouragement is the theme of last week and this week's gospel message looking still at His two short parables about the mustard seed and leaven found in Matthew 13:31-33. Let me again first read the parable to you from the Scripture. *"Another parable put He [Jesus] 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: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. Another parable spake He unto them; the kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."*

Are you looking for encouragement concerning the Christian life and the cause of the gospel? You find it, as we already discovered last week in these, what you might call twin parables of Jesus. They are very similar and yet each one gives additional details for the encouragement of believers. You could say the two parables are like the two sides of one coin. Only the truths Jesus teaches us here are infinitely more precious than the most costly coin, indeed, more precious than all the coins in the world put together!

In studying these two parables we are considering the following:

1. What is pictured here by Jesus?
2. What is proclaimed here by Jesus?
3. What is promoted here by Jesus?

We saw last time what is pictured by Jesus with these two parables is that His gospel cause, though it begins small, yet it will by His doing, through His grace and power, by His Word and Spirit, become preeminent according to His good pleasure. Continuing now in our second main point about what is proclaimed in these two parables, what Jesus also makes plain in these two small parables is surely the triumph of His own Person and work as the God-sent Spirit anointed Saviour of sinners!

Jesus, when telling these parables, was still on the way to the cross to pay the punishment for sin on His people's behalf. But Jesus knew already so successful and beneficial for sinners would be all His saving work, and so certainly would be accomplished all God the Father's design and will with Jesus' once for all sacrifice, and so powerful the Spirit's planting of the

gospel seed, that not one of His sheep will be lost, not one condemned sinner who cries for mercy in Christ Jesus would be left unsaved, but all God's Triune cause with creation and providence and salvation would be perfectly and completely accomplished. Jesus once said in John 12:24, *Most assuredly, I say to you, except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides [remains] alone: but if it die, it brings forth much fruit.* Jesus Himself would be that grain of wheat Who would die but Who through His once for all sacrifice on sinners' behalf would yield a rich harvest...so great even that a multitude will be saved, which no man can number.

Jesus' parables here testify of the sure preciousness and power of His blood to save sinners. He knows even before His crucifixion and resurrection that all that He came for and all that He is about as Saviour of sinners will be absolutely and minutely and totally successful. Do you see this too? When Jesus began His ministry, He went about *preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel.* [Mark 1:14&15] Do you repent of sin and believe the only gospel of Jesus Christ? So great is His person and work that absolute total success is guaranteed concerning all His saving work, even before He actually accomplished it all! How these two parables honour and magnify Christ and whole work of God Triune as most reliable and most wonderful, and most needful too.

Yes, for what else is implied in the telling of these parables? Not only is the sure success of Jesus' Word and work and kingdom underscored, regardless of it's simple and small and often hidden beginnings, but also what is implied is the sure defeat and destruction of all man-made kingdoms, regardless of the resistance and defiance given against Christ and His cause. If you won't listen to and follow after the Lord and His Word, then you continue in sin and misery, and whatever kingdoms you might still build, in the end if not much before already, they will utterly fail and crumble. Here the story of King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4 is relevant. That proud king was building his own kingdom and not recognizing God. He has this dream about a huge tree that became so tall and spread so wide and sheltered so many, but then suddenly it gets cut down, and Nebuchadnezzar gets driven out of his palace and lives with the animals in the fields - brought to nothing. The Lord speaks likewise in Ezekiel 32 about the proud Egyptians and Assyrians which He compares to a mighty tree *delivered to death, to the depths of the earth*" Only God's kingdom shall prevail, God's Word stresses over and over again, and it earnestly calls us all to be true children of His kingdom with the seed of His Word in our hearts and the leaven of His Word transforming our lives in the gospel way. The message of these two parables is that if we would be wise, if we would be truly saved, you and I need to have God's Word planted in our hearts, and we need to live by that Word truly and increasingly. Isn't this also what true Christians are all about? Is it

what you yourself are about too, not only in church but in your personal life, and family life?

How these twin parables proclaim too that God would have the whole world come under the gospel influence. It is His revealed will that the mustard seed of the gospel and the leaven of the gospel spread more and more. God proclaims He does not desire the death of the wicked but that all would turn from sin and believe on Him as revealed in Christ Jesus and His gospel Word. God will have the whole of the dough leavened and He will have the birds of the air find lodging in the mustard tree. The meaning is that the Lord will have His Word and dominion find more and more reception and His kingdom will come in the hearts of men from every tongue and tribe and nation, and His gospel cause triumphant will be! This is the gospel proclamation and invitation also of these twin parables, namely to call all to come to confess their sins and sinfulness and come to Jesus the Saviour for salvation rich and free. None who come to Him shall be put to shame, and one day it will be evident to all, Christ shall have dominion over land and sea, earth's remotest regions shall His empire be! In spite of what things may seem like also in our present age, these parables teach God's people to go forward and onward holding high the gospel cause, for it cannot fail, and must prevail. Is this your conviction and comfort as well?

Asking that question brings me yet to our third question, about what is being promoted here with these twin parables?

Surely you see with me, don't you, one thing that is being promoted is prayer to God to bless His gospel seed in a mighty way also in our times. Let us pray much for the Holy Spirit to work with His Word with leaven-like power in the hearts and lives of all who hear and through the hearts and lives of all who do hear, so that more and more, also in our times that seed of the Word may take root and bear fruit and transform lives and cultures to God and His praise. In Psalm 80, we hear the psalmist praying regarding the state of God's church and kingdom in his day because of how far it had fallen from former times, *Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause Thy face to shine upon us, and we shall be saved.* Do you know this prayer too considering the weak state of the Christian church in general today and considering the diminishing influence it seems of all godly truths in our times? Let these parables also guide you and me in personal prayer for ourselves and our loved ones when the fruit and power of the gospel seems so weak and small still in your own life. Let these parables serve as pleading grounds for God's ongoing, deepening, cleansing, and sanctifying work. Even the holiest Christian has but a small beginning of that new obedience that God calls us to, and never should we be content with any measure of obedience that is less than perfect and complete. Don't be discouraged when it is a lifelong battle and struggle with many shortcomings still, but keep going to God with who you are in yourself and asking Him to make you