

Parables of the Kingdom of God according to Mark

The Mustard Seed (MK 4: 30-34)

30 He said, "To what shall we compare the Kingdom of God, or what parable can we use for it?"

Commentaries:

According to Getty-Sullivan, the mustard seed represents the smallness; the potential for growth and strength...Jesus uses this as a symbol of faith.

According to the Navarre Bible, the main meaning has to do with the contrast between the great and the small...it portrays a very small beginning and a great final product. (NB, 95)

According to Binz, the mustard plant expresses humility just as the reign of God is meek and unassuming. (Binz, 64)

31 It is like a mustard seed that, when it is sown in the ground, is the smallest of all seeds on the earth.

Commentaries:

According to the Navarre Bible, the seed of the Kingdom of God on earth is something very tiny to begin with but will grow to be a big tree...In the early years of the Church, the small initial group of disciples grew and spread throughout the centuries to become a great multitude. (NB, 95)

32 But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade.

Commentaries:

According to Getty-Sullivan, the seed Jesus plants among his lowly disciples will spread and grow by the power of God. (G-S, 36)

According to the Little Rock Scripture Study, the universality of the kingdom of God is noted in this parable.(LRSS, 110)

According to Healy, the mustard seed points to the future worldwide reach of the kingdom of God...This growth is due to God's hidden power...Jesus spoke with great assurance of the success of the kingdom, urging his disciples to persevere with hope and patience. (Healy, 92)

33 With many such parables he spoke the word to them as they were able to understand it.

34 Without the parables he did not speak to them, but to his own disciples he explained

everything in private.

Commentaries:

According to Healy, “a person’s understanding of the kingdom grows as one reflects on the parables and embraces their implications, enlarging one’s capacity to “hear” ”and to hear means to accept with a willing heart. (Healy, 92) The disciples were those who were present with the apostles. They listened to Jesus’ teachings. (Healy, 93)

SOURCES: Parables of the Kingdom by Mary Ann Getty-Sullivan
The Navarre Bible, St Mark
Mark, Jesus, the Suffering Servant, Part I by Stephen J. Binz
Little Rock Scripture Study, The Four Gospels
The Gospel of Mark by Mary Healy