



The Gospel According to Luke
Wk. 70 “From The Smallest Beginnings”
By Pastor Bill Alderson

Luke 13:18-21 ESV

The Mustard Seed and the Leaven

¹⁸ He said therefore, “What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? ¹⁹ It is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches.”

²⁰ And again he said, “To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? ²¹ It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened.”

Opening Illustration:

Last week, Jody preached about the woman with the disabling spirit, and he spoke about having a glass half empty vs. glass half full mentality.

*If we all want to see our perceptions change about the Kingdom, how it works, **to have our downward gaze turned upward**, to have our **religious misconceptions righted**, to experience the Lord of the Sabbath doing the miraculous work then please decide to do one thing for yourself. **Commit to this body of believers and spend as much time with you as you can!** How else will you learn the stories about one another and see the how lives are changed?*

Jody’s words reminded me of a story I had heard about a young man named Patrick.

(I’m reading here from a biography written by Jack Voelkel)

Patrick was a teenager when Irish pirates kidnapped him from the western coast of England early in the morning. Patrick and his friends had gone to the beach to play before their families awoke to the business of the new



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day. It didn't take much for the pirates to overpower the young lads and haul them off to uncertain futures.

*It was the end of the **4th Century**. Patrick was born in 385 in Roman Britannia in the modern-day town of Dumbarton, Scotland. Patrick's father Calpurnius, was a political official and a deacon and his grandfather Potitus, was a Celtic priest. Patrick himself was raised in the Christian faith, but he did not take it seriously and was careless in its practice.*

At landfall on Irish soil, the pirates quickly sold their young captives. Milchu, a cruel and surly master, purchased Patrick to tend his sheep and swine. Patrick's warm and comfortable bed was exchanged for endless nights in the cold open air. "From that day on," he would later recount, "I was always cold, and always hungry."

As lonely days on the windswept hills stretched into weeks and months, Patrick's thoughts turned towards home. How much he had taken for granted! In his desperation, he began to fill his days and nights with prayer.

At first he prayed only for material things and for his deliverance from slavery. Little by little, he began to consider the condition of his own heart. He later described his encounter with God in these words:

"The Lord opened to me the sense of my unbelief that I might remember my sins and that I might return with my own heart to the Lord my God...The love of God and the fear of him surrounded me more and more—and faith grew and the Spirit was roused. (Cahill)"

Patrick would come to be known as the "Apostle of Ireland." He planted churches, the first one likely at a place called Saul, in Northern Ireland, a bit inland from the coast and just below Belfast.

Over his lifetime, Patrick planted some two hundred churches. He put great emphasis on spiritual growth and his converts were not only trained to know and love God but also be concerned for those who needed to hear the



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Gospel. The foundation of his discipleship was the Bible and he understood the Church to be a missionary community.

SO before you make any plans for St. Patrick’s day coming up, might I suggest that you consider wearing orange. Orange? Here’s why. After 1798 the color of green was closely associated with Roman Catholicism and orange with Protestantism—after William of Orange, the Protestant king. The holiday is certainly not to be used as means for excessive partying and celebration. But wearing orange and trying to tell people who St. Patrick really was might be a better way to celebrate.

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- *In the parable that we’re studying today, Jesus is showing us the truth of the kingdom. In both these pictures, is something small grows to something large.*
 - Today we have two threads of thought, but one complete story – the mustard and the leaven
 - The Mustard seed – smallest of seeds and leaven – the smallest foundation of baking – even though there’s two metaphors, they convey one truth, which is
 - **God often takes the *smallest possible beginnings* to make BIG THINGS**
 - *God is always working on changing our perspectives*
 - 2,000 years ago, God began his kingdom with 11 men.
 - The Shepard was Struck and the sheep scattered. They were huddled and scared.



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- Yet through the book of Acts we see how they were emboldened by the Gospel, how Holy Spirit worked among them, and how God grew his kingdom using these men and women.
- And today, 2000 years later, here we are, still talking about this man Jesus who changed our lives.
- Rest assured, The Kingdom is advancing – *It began with a small seed and it expanded.* The gospel is still advancing daily.
- So this beg’s the question, ***what is the Kingdom?***
- The easy answer would be to say that a kingdom is any territory over which a king reigns.
- And since God is the Creator of all things, the reach of His realm must be the whole world.
- And therefore, the Kingdom of God is wherever God reigns, and since He reigns everywhere, the kingdom of God is everywhere.
- But as we study the New Testament, there’s something deeper that we come to see:
 - We see this when John the Baptist comes out of the wilderness with his urgent announcement, “Repent, for the kingdom of God ***is at hand.***”
 - We see it again when Jesus appears on the scene with the ***same pronouncement.***
- If the kingdom of God consists of all of the universe over which God reigns, why would anyone announce that the kingdom of God was near or about to come to pass?



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- We see here that John the Baptist and Jesus meant *something more* about this concept of the kingdom of God.
- At the heart of this theme is the idea of God’s messianic kingdom.
- **Theologian R.C. Sproul put it this way:**
“It is a kingdom that will be ruled by God’s **appointed Messiah**, who will be not just the **Redeemer of His people**, but their **King**.”
- So when John speaks of the kingdom, he’s speaking of this kingdom of the Messiah.
- In the Gospels we see Jesus, the King, preaching the kingdom
- And we continue to see the Disciples preach the Kingdom
- Here at Highlands, preaching the Kingdom is part of our core values.
- **SLIDE: Highlanders Seek, Sacrifice & Steward**
 - We seek. We seek the kingdom.
- **Highlanders Seek:**
The action of seeking the Kingdom is something that is desired by God and is rewarded. We seek to know more of Jesus’ Gospel through devotion to studying God’s Word, Speaking it to others, and Showing it to the world. The action of seeking leads to the development of Faith.
- By seeking the Kingdom, we call men and women to be translated from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God’s beloved sons and daughters.



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- If you have not yet confessed Christ as Lord, please know that there is room in His Kingdom for all kinds of people, of all nations. And he seeks for you to be a part of that.
- Verse: Mathew 6:31-32
³¹Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.
- Verse: Mathew 6:33
³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

1. We Seek The Kingdom By Studying God's Word

- Turn in your bibles to Colossians 3, we're going to be in this chapter for a while as we dig into Seeking the kingdom.
- As we look at Colossians, bear in mind that Paul wrote the 7 letters to the 7 churches for various reasons. Some as rebuke, some as encouragement. In the case of Colossians, we see praises of the spiritual growth of the recipients because of their love for all the elect in Christ. The books calls them to grow in wisdom and knowledge that their love might be principled love and not sentimentality. It's in that spirit that I dig into Colossians today.
- **Verse: Colossians 3:1-4**
¹If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.



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- Let's think about our Parable of the Mustard Seed and ask, where is Jesus in this story?
- Jesus is the unseen figure who gives the seed.
- The holy spirit is providing the nutrients for it to grow.
- And who are we? we are called to be attentive to the tree's growth. Seeking leads to faith. By faith the kingdom grows.
- Last week Jody said,
*"Perhaps today, you are stuck in your downward/downtrodden gaze **BUT could it be**, that you have been allowed to be there so that when Jesus delivers you by His mighty hand you **too can give God glory!?** Maybe this is the way that Jesus is enabling you to **bear the fruit of your repentance**, He is working out that last chance HE gave you"*
- To do this, as Paul writes in Colossians, we have to set our minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.
- To do this we must regularly be in the word, basking in it's nurturing and enriched soil.
- To do this we must forsake the ways of the world that draw us away from the Gospel.
- And to this, we must encourage one-another, in community, in the study of the word through shared times of study, through conversations, through testimonies, and yes, sometimes through healthy debate.
- By storing up God's word in our hearts, we're able to easily do this next point:



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2. We Seek The Kingdom By Speaking God’s Word To Others

○ Verse: Colossians 3:5-11

⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ***⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ In these you too once walked,*** when you were living in them. ***⁸ But now you must put them all away:*** anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ***⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.***

- *Jody and I have a confession to make – all churches are dysfunctional*
- *I’ve said many times that the church is a Hospital for sinners.*
- *Maybe you came from a bad church experience or the last place you lived was a bad experience*
- *And now you’re here, sitting with us today.*
- *And you may be thinking “Where do I go next”*
- *How do you know the kingdom when you find it?*
- *Well, what we see depicted here is a picture here of the church when it is emboldened by the Gospel, set alive by the words of Christ!*
- *The church should be a thriving, reproduceable thing.*
- *And looking at the parable, why do birds make their nest in the tree?*



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- **Well, why do birds make nests?**
- If you're building a nest in a tree, it's because you plan on having babies. You're planning on growing, on reproducing.
- **My question for us – are we sitting on empty nests?**
- From a practical standpoint, one look around this room says no, we take "be fruitful and multiply" seriously here at highlands....
- But spiritually, are we prepared to deliver the Gospel to those around us, to speak truth in love to one another, and to bear one another burdens?
- I say yes, **YES WE ARE**. Through Jesus, all things are possible! Through the Gospel you are equipped in ways that only God may be able to fully perceive, so trust in him in this.
- Trust in God that you are equipped. Have faith,

3. We Seek The Kingdom By Showing It To Others

- **Verse: Colossians 3:12-17**
¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in



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you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

- Have you heard of the concept of Friendship Bread?
- It’s a beautiful concept – you create a a starter pack
- So you’re small piece can theoretically go into many, many loafs of bread, cakes, or other baked goods.
- Maybe 100’s or 1000’s of batches could come from what started as one bag of stinky dough.
- How many here have participated in this process?
- And how many have left a bag forgotten, untended, until it could no longer be used.
- Think of all the cycles of breadmaking that ended on your counter or on top of your refrigerator.
- The idea is that by sharing bread, we remember what we all have in common, which can bring us together in difficult times.
- At Highlands, we have an emphasis on church planting. A key question we have to ask ourselves is this:
- Are we going to be an unused bag of dough, or are we going to be a delicious loaf of Chocolate Bread (Jody’s Favorite, brownie and cake, best of both worlds)?



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- Are we going to sit here like a tree that never grows branches strong enough to hold a nest, or are we going to be so laden with nests that our offspring are spread far and wide across this land?
- Or are we sending our birds out to scatter the seeds of the Gospel everywhere we can send them? And to build to nests in other trees?
- As we close today, let’s remember **Who we are** in the Kingdom because of the actions of our beloved King, Jesus:
 - Verse: John 15:12-17
*¹² “This is my commandment, **that you love one another as I have loved you.**¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; **but I have called you friends,** for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. ¹⁷ These things I command you, so that you will love one another.*
- We are **beloved sons and daughters**, adopted through Jesus
- We are **friends of Jesus** – **chosen** and **appointed**.
- We **are equipped** with the fruit of the spirit to do the **work of the kingdom**.

COMMUNION

BENEDICTION