

The Unstoppable Kingdom

KINGDOM COME #3 - Pastor Gary Combs - August 30, 2026 - Matthew 13:31-35

INTRO: Good morning church! We're in part three of our 5-part series called KINGDOM COME: How Jesus Revealed It in Parables. All five sermons are from the parables of Jesus found in Matthew 13. The series title comes from Jesus teaching on prayer in Matthew 6:

Matthew 6:9-10 (KJV) Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy **kingdom come**, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Every time we pray, "Thy kingdom come," we are praying for the rule and reign of God to come more fully into this world and into our lives.

But Jesus spoke about the kingdom in ways that created a surprising tension. He said the kingdom was "at hand," or had drawn near. He said it had "come upon" them. He said it was "in their midst." Yet He also taught His disciples to keep praying, "Your kingdom come."

So the kingdom was near. It was present. It was already breaking into the world through the King. And yet, in another sense, it was still coming.

The great surprise was not whether God's kingdom would come, but how it would come.

Many expected something immediate and spectacular. Jesus described something beginning like a tiny mustard seed. They expected something obvious and public. Jesus described something working quietly and obscurely, like leaven in a lump of dough. They expected the kingdom to arrive in overwhelming power all at once. Jesus revealed a kingdom that would begin small, work unseen, advance gradually, and yet ultimately extend its influence to the world. Its beginning would not reveal the greatness of its ending

Need: That creates a challenge for us because we are still tempted to judge Christ's kingdom by what we can presently see. We tend to trust what is big, visible, immediate, and measurable. So when the gospel seems small in comparison to the powers of this world, when the culture seems increasingly resistant to Christ, or when the work of God appears to be slow and hidden, we can begin to wonder whether His kingdom is really advancing.

Trans: But Jesus warned us not to worry about small beginnings and little influence. The kingdom may begin like a mustard seed and work like leaven, but what God has purposed through His Son cannot be stopped.

BODY: In Matthew 13:31–35, Jesus taught two parables revealing the surprising manner in which the kingdom of heaven enters and advances in the world. We can trust that Christ's kingdom is unstoppable. How can we trust that Christ's kingdom is unstoppable? The text gives three reasons we can trust that Christ's kingdom is unstoppable.

Read text: Matthew 13:31-35 (ESV) 31 He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. 32 It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." 33 He told them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened." 34 All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. 35 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world."

WE CAN TRUST THAT CHRIST'S KINGDOM IS UNSTOPPABLE...

1. Because its small beginnings cannot limit its ultimate growth.

EXP: (31-32) Jesus compared the kingdom to a mustard seed, proverbial in His day for its tiny size. This is a small to great metaphor describing how the kingdom that began so inconspicuously in Israel would ultimately spread among the nations.

"Another parable" (31 - 5x) (ἄλλην παραβολήν, *allēn parabolēn*) - to throw alongside. A metaphor or simile. drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought." — C. H. Dodd

"Kingdom of Heaven" (31) βασιλεία, *basileia*) - a kingdom. "Of heaven" is a characteristic of Matthew. It's "kingdom of God" in Mark 4:30-32 (Mustard Seed) and Luke 13:18-21 (Mustard Seed & Leaven).

"Grain of mustard seed" (31) (σίναπι, *sinapi*) - mustard, the name of a plant which in the ME grows from a very small seed and attains to the height of a tree, 20-30 feet tall.

"Smallest of seeds" (32) (μικρός, *mikros*) - least, less, little, small. Where we get the word micro.

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"Larger than all" (32) (μέγας, *megas*) - great(-est), high, large, loud, mighty. From micro to mega.

"Tree" (32) (δένδρον, *dendron*) - likely that Jesus pointed to a nearby mustard tree as He taught.

"Birds" (32) (πετεινόν, *peteinon*) - birds. Possibly the Gentile nations of the earth here as seen in Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 31:6 (ESV) All the birds of the heavens made their nests in its boughs; under its branches all the beasts of the field gave birth to their young, and under its shadow lived all great nations.

"Nests" (32) (κατασκηνόω, *kataskēnoō*) - to pitch one's tent, to fix one's abode, to dwell, nest.

ARG: This is how God often works. He delights in beginning with what looks weak or insignificant so that the greatness of the outcome clearly belongs to Him. As when Zechariah rebuilt the Temple:

Zechariah 4:10 (NLT) Do not despise these small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin, to see the plumb line in Zerubbabel's hand.

Or as Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream of God's future kingdom:

Daniel 2:35 (ESV) But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

ILL: David and Goliath. The small, the youngest, the runt of the family defeats the giant.

APP: So we must be careful not to despise what looks small when Christ is at work. We can become discouraged when a gospel conversation seems to accomplish little, when a ministry begins with only a handful of people, when a church does not look impressive by the world's standards, or when years of faithful sowing seem to produce only modest results. But Jesus tells us, don't measure kingdom potential by present appearance. Small beginnings are no obstacle to a sovereign God.

2. Because its hidden working cannot prevent its rising influence.

EXP: (33) Jesus shifted from the field to the kitchen. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven..."

"Leaven" (33) (ζύμη, *zumē*) - Leaven is a substance like yeast that makes dough rise. Metaphorically, something small in quantity, yet thoroughly pervades a thing by its influence. Usually a describing a negative influence in the NT. Yet here and in Luke 13:20-21 is its only positive use. As Paul said:

Galatians 5:9 (ESV) A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

"Woman ... hid" (33) (ἐγκρύπτω, *egkruptō*) - to conceal in something; to mingle one thing with another. This is not sneakiness but rather describes how a tiny thing is worked in and affects the whole. "'Hid' is not the natural verb here, and must be designed to emphasize the secret, inconspicuous way the kingdom of heaven begins to take effect." — R.T. France

"Three measures" (33) (σάτον, *satōn*) - roughly 47–50 pounds of flour. The Greek *satōn* corresponds to the Hebrew *seah*, and three seahs make an *ephah*. Enough bread for over 100 people.

"Flour" (33) (ἄλευρον, *aleuron*) - wheat flour or meal. Many have asked why three? I am fascinated by Ellicott's view: "The Jew, the Greek, the Barbarian, as representing the whole race of mankind, or body, soul, and spirit, as the three parts of man's nature."

"All leavened" (33) (ζυμόω, *zumoō*) - to leaven, to mix leaven with dough so as to make it ferment.

ARG: Our inability to see God at work is not evidence that God is not at work.

Ecclesiastes 11:5 (NLT) Just as you cannot understand the path of the wind or the mystery of a tiny baby growing in its mother's womb, so you cannot understand the activity of God, who does all things.

ILL: Think about bread dough after yeast has been mixed into it. You cannot point to the yeast anymore. It has disappeared into the dough. Set the dough aside, and for a while it may appear that nothing is happening. But then the dough begins to rise. What was invisible eventually becomes undeniable. The yeast did not need to be seen in order to be working.

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APP: Don't become discouraged simply because you cannot yet see the results of Christ's work. We pray for a child who seems far from God. We share the gospel with a friend who shows little response. We teach Scripture week after week. We invest in people and wonder whether anything is changing. Jesus reminds us that the kingdom can be working long before its effects become visible. So we keep praying. We keep sharing. We keep teaching. We keep serving. And we trust Christ with what we cannot see. Hidden does not mean inactive. What Christ is quietly doing today may become unmistakably visible tomorrow.

3. Because its unfolding plan is proceeding just as God promised.

EXP: (34-35) Matthew stepped back from the two parables and explained why Jesus was teaching this way: "This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet" (35). Jesus was saying, in effect, "This is happening exactly according to God's plan."

"He said nothing to them without a parable" (34) - Jesus had reason to teach on that particular day only with parables. Apparently this was a crowd that He knew needed to be sifted.

"To fulfill... the prophet" (35) - The prophet is the psalmist Asaph, quoting Psa. 78:2. That means even Jesus' use of parables was part of God's promised purpose. The kingdom's unexpected form was not evidence that God's plan had failed. It was evidence that God's plan was being fulfilled.

"Utter what has been hidden" (35) (κρύπτω, *kryptō*) - where we get cryptic. In the Psalms, the word is (הִדְבָּר, *hîdâ*) meaning riddle (dark obscure utterance), perplexing saying.

"Foundation of the world" (35) (καταβολή, *katabolē*) - a founding (laying down a foundation), a conception

ARG: What surprises us never surprises God. What looks unexpected may be exactly what He planned.

Isaiah 46:9-10 (ESV) ...I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,'

ILL: A jigsaw puzzle. Have you ever tried to assemble a puzzle without the picture on the box? When you are holding one piece, its strange shape and color may make little sense. You might even wonder where it could possibly belong. But looking at the picture on the box you see where the whole puzzle is going.

APP: We often become anxious when God's work does not unfold according to our expectations. But our confidence is not based on whether understand God's plan. Our confidence rests in the God who promised it and the King who is accomplishing it.

CONCLUSION: Here is what we have not yet said this morning. The pattern in these two parables is not just a description of the kingdom. **It is a portrait of the King.**

He came small. Not in a palace, but in Bethlehem. Raised in Nazareth, a town so unimpressive that Nathanael asked, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

He worked hidden. Thirty years in obscurity before He stepped into public ministry and announced that the kingdom of God had come near.

And He was promised. Verse 35 says these things had been hidden "since the foundation of the world." Jesus was not God's response to an unexpected mess. **Sending Jesus was God's plan from before the beginning.**

Then came the cross. A man dying outside Jerusalem. His followers scattered. His body laid in a borrowed tomb. It looked like the smallest, most hidden ending imaginable.

And on the third day, God raised Jesus from the dead. Christ went into the ground alone and came out as the firstfruits of a harvest that is still coming in.

Church, we are part of that harvest. Two thousand years and thousands of miles from Galilee, here we are, Gentiles who have found shelter in the branches of Christ's kingdom. The mustard seed reached us.

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And it is not finished.

So when we pray, “Thy kingdom come,” we are not praying a wish. We are praying according to a plan established before the foundation of the world, secured at the cross, proven by an empty tomb, and moving toward its promised fulfillment.

That leaves us with two responses.

Enter the Kingdom. Turn from your sin and trust the crucified and risen King.

Invest in the Kingdom. Keep praying. Keep sharing. Keep serving. Keep giving. Don’t measure Christ’s work only by what you can presently see.

Because His kingdom may begin small. It may work hidden.

But it is unstoppable.

His kingdom is unstoppable because our King is unstoppable.

Let’s pray.