

# Puzzling Parables

## *The Miraculous Mustard Seed*

Part 8 – November 6, 2016



Welcome to where we're learning to grow beyond our limitations.

*How 'bout them Cubs!*

I'm not a Cubs or Indians fan; but, wow.



How do you not get caught up in *that*?

Down 3-1. Facing elimination. And then, coming back to win the World Series after *108 years!*



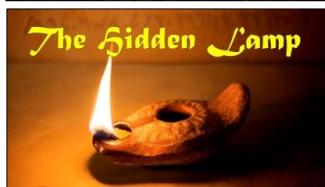
Grown men were openly weeping, describing how long they've waited with unwavering faith that this moment would come.



Massive crowds gathered and rejoiced. *Remind you of anything? What's your faith look like?*



**Does it believe in the improbable;** like, the Cubs going to the World Series? **How about the seeming impossible;** like, being down 3-1; tied; rain delay; extra innings; and, ultimately winning?



Back in Capernaum, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus is stacking com'parable upon com'parable to offer insight into **the nature of His Kingdom**, both, **His royal authority as God**, and **His realm of rule: Heaven above and humbled hearts below.**



**He sows the Word, the Truth, the Way;** and, **hearts that receive it, and retain it, and persevere through nail biting rain delays will ultimately produce an abundant harvest.**

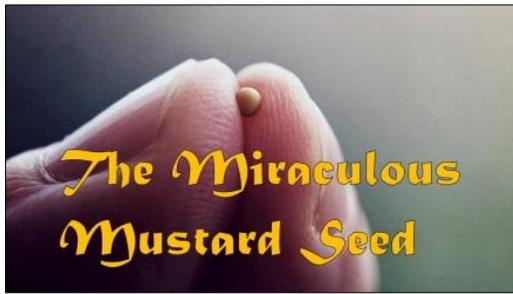


But, **we must consider carefully how we listen, because weeds are among the wheat, perverting the Way, the Truth, and the Life.**

Yet, **if we help spread the Word, and trust Him to work beneath the surface, some of the weeds will turn into wheat!**

And, we'll join in raising the sickle at the harvest.

But, **our faith will be tested along the Way.**



He now adds a story about **the smallest seed, that not only does the improbable, but the impossible: the parable of "The Miraculous Mustard Seed"**.

And, **we can be certain that His Kingdom is certain.**

We'll read the story from **Matthew, in purple**, with additional info from **Mark, in blue**, and **Luke, in green**.

Then He told them another parable: Again he said, "What shall we say the **kingdom of God** [His authority] is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? "The **kingdom of heaven** [His realm] is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. which a man took and planted in his **garden** in his **field**. [Luke says garden, Matthew says field] Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the **largest of garden plants** [seems improbable, but it's true] and **becomes a tree**, and became a tree, [now, there's a surprising development, because it's a shrub] with **such big** [megas: massive] **branches** [The mustard Plant?!] so that the birds of the air can come and perch in its branches." in its shade." and the birds of the air perched in its branches." – Mat 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19 NIV



Talk about humble beginnings, ending in not only the improbable, but a seemingly impossible miraculous triumph!

**This mustard seed doesn't just reach its improbable potential; it exceeds all earthly expectations and limitations, to become a great tree of shade and rest for all the birds that choose to nest in its branches.**



Sadly, I've read many commentaries that basically apologize for Jesus stretching the truth of what a mustard plant can do.

Here's a friendly atheist posing with mustard plants in Israel, declaring this *botanical gaffe* as a *mistake articulated by Jesus*.<sup>1</sup>



**People! It's a parable. He could've said it grew to the moon, if that would've made His com'parable point.**

*Think about it ...* He tells us to consider carefully how we listen, and that *only those* who enter in will understand; and, then He says *this*.

**So, what tree do you suppose He's comparing it to?**

**We don't get to suppose;** (2 Pet 1:20) **we're supposed to seek and find.**

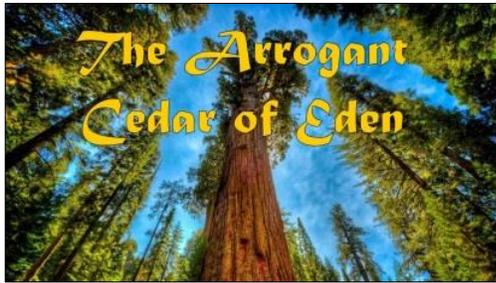
<sup>1</sup> <http://freethinker.co.uk/2014/05/07/mighty-misconceptions-from-little-seeds-do-grow/>

So, let's enter in and look for a com'parable. Interestingly, Jesus began this parable by saying:

... What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or **what** [or: which (poios)] **parable** [parabolē: comparable] shall we **use to describe** [paraballō: compare] it?

He seems to use **Ezekiel's parable** about the greatest garden plant in the greatest of the gardens: *The Arrogant Cedar of Eden*. (Ezek 31)

It's aimed at man's arrogance, and tells how the cedar had to be cut down and cast out.



It towered higher than all the trees of the **field**; [Ezekiel says field like Matthew] its boughs increased and **its branches grew long**, spreading because of **abundant waters**. **All the birds of the air nested in its boughs ... in its shade ...** I made it beautiful with **abundant branches**, the envy of all the trees of Eden in the **garden** of God. [Ezekiel says garden like Luke] – Ezekiel 31:5-9 NIV

But alas, its pride caused it to be “cut down” and “cast aside” and “destined for death” “with those who go down to the pit”.

So, **what went wrong?** What *always* goes wrong?

**Vanity. Envy. Conceit. Arrogance. Superiority. Self-importance. Self-reliance.**

That's what deprives the song birds of a place to rest and nest.

So, now **Christ comes to restore His Garden**. But, **His Kingdom comes with a polar opposite approach: humbly, modestly, meekly, lovingly, graciously, with an attitude of servitude to all.**

Model that, and you can be certain, those birds'll be chirpin'!

He makes springs pour water into the ravines ... The **birds of the air nest** by the **waters**; they sing among the **branches**. ... the earth is satisfied by the **fruit** of his work.  
– Psalm 104:10-13 NIV

You see, **humility is the key to His Kingdom and our restoration.**

**What's the opposite of arrogance? Forgiveness. Kindness. Mercy.**

“Yah, yah; that won't work on the vultures in *my* life.”

Not if you only trust what you see on the topside.

**What's your faith look like?**

**Does it settle for believing in the improbable;** like, a tiny seed becoming a large mustard plant?

**That's all the further many believers take their faith.** It keeps it locked in a religious box that never pushes me past my comfort zone or exceeds anyone's expectations.

But, **I want you to look past the plant and see the tree that can be.**

You're part of a family here who actually *believe* that God's Word is the *only* Way, the *only* Truth, and the *only* Life.

**So you're down 3-1. Don't harden your heart. Put your full faith in the King of the seemingly impossible: tiny mustard seeds becoming cedar trees, and wicked weeds becoming wheat!**

When Jesus warns His disciples to stumble *no one*; and instead, forgive *everyone*, at least seven times a day, they cry out:

... "Increase our faith." So the Lord said, "If you have **faith as a mustard seed**, [**Jesus' Kingdom**] you can say to **this mulberry tree**, [**of unforgiveness**] 'Be pulled up **by the roots** and be **planted** [**as in, "transplanted"**] in the sea,' and it would obey you. – Luke 17:5b-6 NKJ

And, when they asked why they couldn't take authority over the demonic spirit that kept throwing a boy in the fire, Jesus said:

"Because of your **unbelief**; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as **a mustard seed**, [**the King and His Kingdom**] you will say to **this mountain**, [**of demonic opposition and oppression**] 'Move from here to there,' and it will move." – Matthew 17:20 NKJ

**When you have true kingdom faith, as opposed to unbelief, you can uproot any unforgiveness, and overpower every enemy, because you can see the Tree that'll be, and the song birds a'singin'.**

**It isn't the size of your faith, but the object.**

**Don't put your faith in your faith.** Later, Peter is the first of the disciples to finally proclaim:

*"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* (Mat 16:16)

**When you get that, the seeming impossible is quite reasonable.**

Because, our **Mustard Seed King**, the **Seed of Abraham** (Gal 3:16), the **Seed of Isaac** (Gen 21:12), the **Seed of Jacob** (Gen 28:14), the **Seed of David** (Ps 89:3-4), and the **Seed of man** (Gen 3:15) that falls to the ground and dies to bring life (John 12:23-24), has become the **Tree of Life**.

**So, let's rest in His limbs, nest in His shadow, and sing His praise.**