

PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

Four Stories Jesus Told — and What They Demand of Us Today

The Sower and the Soils • The Wheat and the Weeds
The Mustard Seed • The Yeast and the Meal

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Table of Contents

Introduction: What Is a Parable?.....	3
1. The Parable of the Sower and the Soils.....	4
2. The Parable of the Weeds Among the Wheat.....	7
3. The Parable of the Mustard Seed.....	10
4. The Parable of the Yeast and the Meal.....	12

Introduction: What Is a Parable?

To my great regret, most Christians tend to think of the parables as tame little stories that Jesus told. The opposite is true: they are powerful, convicting gospel messages. A parable discloses truth exactly in the degree to which a person can receive it. It hides the truth from those who would abuse it, and imparts it to those who would obey it. A parable is meant to do two things at once — it reveals truth to the receptive heart and conceals it from the unreceptive one. This ability to comprehend spiritual truth is itself a gracious gift of God.

Parables are explosions of biblical truth. Jesus threw them at His opponents and used them to console His followers. As Matthew 13:13 records:

“Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.”

The truth of God is understood spiritually, not merely intellectually. Jesus spoke in parables — earthly stories with a heavenly meaning. The first great quality of a parable is that it makes truth concrete, turning an abstract idea into a picture the mind can hold. The very term implies the fuller form of a narrative, embracing facts that are natural and probable in themselves.

My advice is simple: let God do the talking through His own word. In the four parables that follow, the truth taught is consistent and progressive. In the Parable of the Sower, we see the rejection of the Divine word. In the Parable of the Weeds, an opposition to the Divine work. In the Parable of the Mustard Seed, a distortion of the Divine design. In the Parable of the Yeast and the Meal, a corruption of the Divine agency.

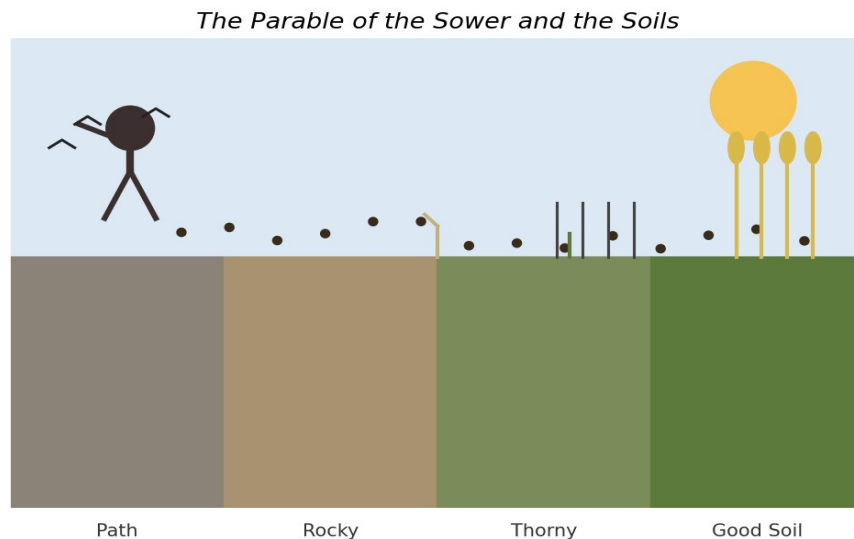
Why Parables?

Each of these four parables builds on the one before it, tracing how the kingdom of God is received, opposed, expanded, and at times corrupted in this present age. Read together, they form a single, sobering, and hopeful picture of what it means to live as a citizen of that kingdom in the corrupted world.

1. The Parable of the Sower and the Soils

Matthew 13:3-8

A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop — a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.



The same seed, the same Sower — four very different soils.

This parable teaches us about the kingdom of God — not the glorified state of the future life, but the present, existing spiritual community whose hearts and lives are subject to Him. Its three constituent elements are the sower, the seed, and the soil.

The Sower has good sense in selecting the seed, the season, and the sphere for sowing. The Seed is, pre-eminently, the Gospel itself. The word of God is the seed, and Christ came as the Word of God — He Himself is the seed.

It is the Soil, however, that draws our attention. The seed sown in all four soils is identical; what differs is the state of the heart that receives it.

The first hearer has a closed mind. This hard-surfaced soul is destitute of spiritual perception. The surface is so hard that the seed cannot pass through, and the birds — agencies of the wicked one — snatch it away. The truth takes no hold; the hard crust of thoughtlessness hinders reception.

The second hearer has an emotional mind. The seed is received but never takes root. These are enthusiastic people who are only superficial. When choked by life's worries, they fall away. They lack character.

The third hearer has a wandering mind. The seed takes root but bears no fruit; it is in, but choked. This typifies the pre-occupied person. The truth takes hold, but that hold is disputed by money, jobs, anxiety, and relationships, which become a competing focus — their thorns.

Finally, the hearer with an understanding mind receives seed that takes deep root. The word of God has entered the whole soul, filling mind, heart, conscience, and will. This soil portrays the one who hears, understands, and receives the Word — and then lets the Word accomplish its result in his life.

A man's reception of God's Word is determined by the condition of his heart. Salvation is more than a superficial prosperity and a joyful hearing of the gospel.

Living It Out Today

The path soil shows up whenever a heart has hardened through cynicism or constant exposure without reflection — scrolling past a sermon clip or a hard truth in a group chat, nodding, and moving on in the same three seconds. The birds are not just literal; they are the next notification, the next distraction, anything that snatches the word away before it can settle.

The rocky soil looks like the believer who is all-in after a powerful worship night, a conference, or a mission trip, and then quietly fades within weeks once the emotional high passes and ordinary life — a hard boss, a difficult marriage, a rough semester — applies real pressure. Spiritual depth is not built in a single emotional peak; it is built in the unglamorous repetition of prayer, Scripture, and obedience long after the feeling has gone.

The thorny soil is arguably the most common soil in a modern, prosperous life: a calendar so full of work, debt repayment, parenting logistics, and

scrolling that the Word is technically present but never has room to grow. Ambition and anxiety, and the low hum of constant connectivity, are the thorns of this generation, just as real and just as choking as the thorns of the first century.

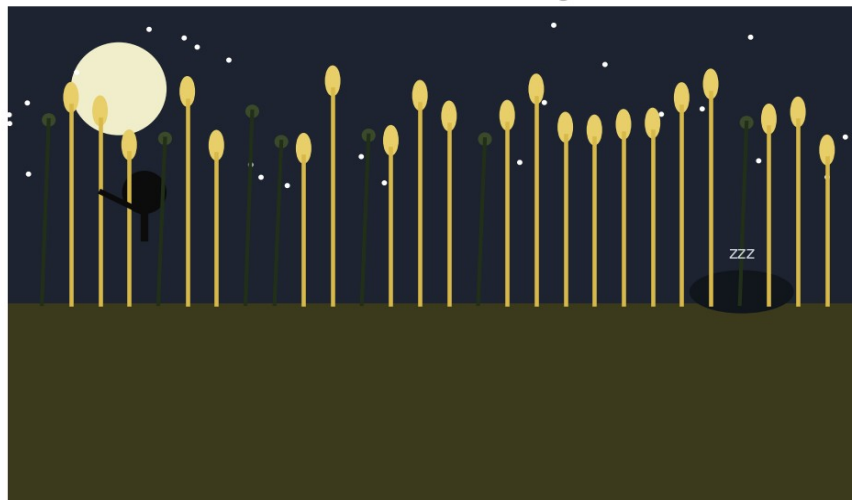
The good soil is not a passive trait but a practiced one: a believer who keeps unhurried time in Scripture, journals what is read, submits it to honest friends or a small group, and lets it reshape actual decisions — financial management, how situations can be handled, how a day is structured. The harvest the parable promises is not guaranteed by talent or charisma; it is the ordinary fruit of a heart that has been deliberately, patiently cultivated.

2. The Parable of the Weeds Among the Wheat

Matthew 13:24-30

The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' 'An enemy did this,' he replied. The servants asked, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' 'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'

The Parable of the Weeds Among the Wheat



Sown in darkness, the weeds grow up beside the wheat — until the harvest sorts them.

This parable presents the problem of evil. The mingling of evil with good is a condition confronting us in every grade of society — at home and in the church. In this parable we find the field, two sowers, two products, and two harvests.

The field yields both wheat and tares; we cannot deny that within the realm of professing Christians there are both tares and wheat. The field is the

sphere of human habitation in which the enemy both snatches away good seed and sows his own.

The two sowers are utterly different in character and purpose. The first is Jesus Christ, proclaimer of the Gospel, who made man upright in His own likeness. The other is the enemy, the wicked one, the devil. His cunning is seen in sowing tares while the servants slept; his cowardly nature chose darkness for his diabolical work.

The two products follow: the Son of Man sows wheat in His field; the enemy sows tares among the wheat, sowing the wicked among the good. The tares are not a noxious plant — they are people of the wicked one. The wheat are the children of God.

Finally, the harvest. The reapers will be able to distinguish wheat from tares. The tares are bound in bundles to be burned; the wheat is gathered into the barn. The destruction of the tares takes place at the end of this age — they symbolize every lost soul, burned in the fire. The wheat is gathered into the divine barn; there will be no tares in that barn, just as there will be no wheat in the furnace of fire.

When will this gathering take place? At the return of Jesus, when He will gather out all His wheat from the field of this world.

Living It Out Today

This parable speaks directly into a culture of instant judgment. Online, the impulse to expose, cancel, or permanently brand someone the moment their flaws surface is the modern equivalent of grabbing a hoe and ripping up the field ourselves. Jesus' instruction is not passivity toward sin but patience about final judgment — He alone knows the line between wheat and weed in another person's heart, and premature uprooting damages the wheat growing right next to it.

In churches and workplaces, this looks like resisting the urge to purge every imperfect or difficult person from a community the moment their flaws become visible, while still calling sin what it is. It also means living with the discomfort of mixed company — a small group, a staff team, a family — where genuine faith and counterfeit faith sit side by side for a

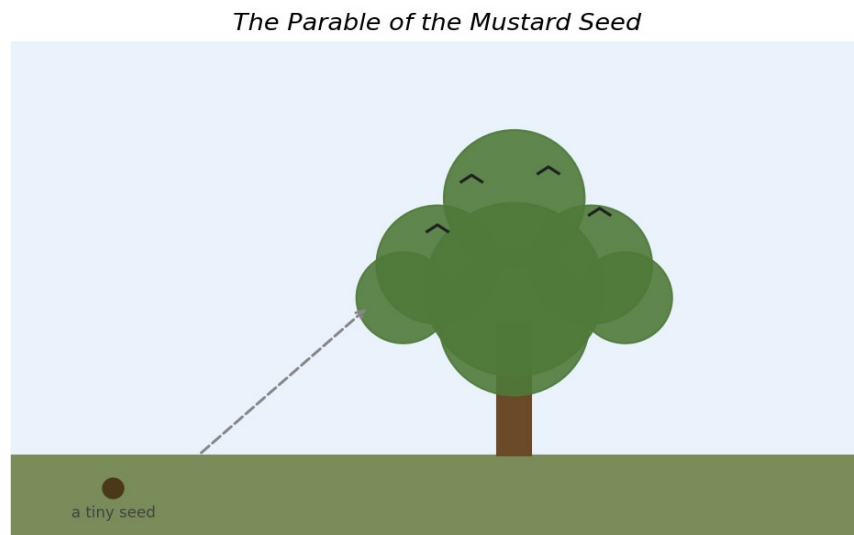
season, and trusting that God, not our spreadsheet of who deserves to stay, will do the final sorting.

There is a personal application too: the curated, filtered version of ourselves we present on social media can function like a tare planted in the dark — a public image of wheat covering a private life that has not yet been transformed. The call of this parable is to let the light in now, rather than waiting for a harvest that exposes everything anyway.

3. The Parable of the Mustard Seed

Matthew 13:31–32

He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”



The smallest of seeds becomes the largest of garden plants.

This parable reveals the inherent, self-developing power of the kingdom of heaven — a seed containing within itself the principle of expansion. The idea of the kingdom’s growth is expressed as moving from the smallest beginning to ultimate universality. Its three elements are the seed, the great tree, and the birds of the air.

The Seed: a mustard plant does not naturally grow into a tree, but botanists note the Arabic “khardah” species of mustard, whose minuteness made it a byword for small beginnings. The seed is hot and fiery in vigour, giving its best virtue only when bruised. The genuine Christian society — the church — appeared as the first-fruits of the word of God, called by Jesus a “little flock” in Luke 12:32, small in appearance.

The Great Tree: a herb becoming a tree implies an expansion entirely foreign to its nature. In a matter of months the khardah can grow into a

tree-like shrub ten to twelve feet high with wide branches. It symbolizes loftiness — the expansion of the kingdom of God, not merely the rapid spread of the gospel or the growth of Christianity as an institution. A godless world does not offer congenial soil for that expansion; recall that in the Parable of the Sower, the seed takes root in only a fourth of the field. The continuing work of the enemy, sown among the wheat, forbids unchecked growth. The mustard seed does not teach the expansion of Christianity as an institution in place of the kingdom of God.

The Birds of the Air: here the birds are not identified in a good sense. They represent the many men and nations brought beneath the shelter of this protecting structure — under Christendom, not necessarily Christianity. Christianity is an organism and a true church; Christendom is an organisation, and at times a false one.

Living It Out Today

The mustard seed is a reminder that the kingdom rarely announces itself with size. A single small group Bible study, an unnoticed act of mercy, a quiet ministry started by one or two people with no platform and no budget — these are the ordinary, unglamorous beginnings through which God has historically grown something far larger than its founders imagined. The temptation in a generation obsessed with virality and scale is to dismiss the small as insignificant; this parable insists that smallness is not a flaw in the kingdom's design but the normal shape of it.

At the same time, the parable's warning about the birds is worth sitting with. As any movement, church, or ministry grows large and visible, it inevitably attracts mixed company — people drawn to its influence, platform, or resources rather than its actual mission. Megachurches, popular podcasts, and well-funded nonprofits all face this same dynamic: growth is not proof of purity, and bigger branches mean more nests, not all of them built by friends. Faithfulness today means staying planted in the small, obedient beginning even as — or especially as — the tree gets large.

4. The Parable of the Yeast and the Meal

Luke 13:20-21

Again he asked, “What shall I compare the kingdom of God to? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

The Parable of the Yeast and the Meal



A little leaven, hidden, works its way through the whole.

Jesus uses this story as an object lesson for the kingdom of heaven. A woman takes yeast and mixes it into dough; eventually, the whole of the dough is leavened. What does it mean?

The women of Palestine in Jesus' day knew well the deceptive power of a small batch of leaven — one little bit hidden in a bushel of flour will work its way through the entire batch. In Galatians 5:7-9, the apostle Paul is concerned with precisely this diffusive, spreading quality, but applied to false doctrine.

This parable's three component parts are the yeast, the woman, and the meal. If the meal is the world and the leaven is the Gospel, the whole design is miscarried — because leaven in Scripture is consistently negative. Genesis 19:3 records its first occurrence in negative form; Exodus 34:25 speaks of yeast as sin; Galatians 5:7-9 speaks of yeast as false doctrine, just as it functions here.

And the woman? She hid the leaven in the meal — secretly hiding and scattering the false doctrine. In the parable, she acts dishonestly and deceitfully.

Finally, the meal itself may be looked upon as the church. When yeast is mixed with meal it causes the dough to swell, becoming puffed up. This is the opposite of what the Gospel does when it truly enters a human heart: the convicted sinner is humbled and abased, not inflated.

In simple terms, the Parable of the Yeast represents degeneracy in power, breaking in upon the divinely ordered fellowship and corrupting it through the influence of apostasy.

Living It Out Today

Few parables describe the algorithm-driven information environment of this generation more precisely than this one. False teaching today rarely arrives announced; it is mixed in quietly — a half-true claim in a viral post, a charismatic podcast host blending genuine insight with subtle distortion, a prosperity-gospel framing slipped into an otherwise solid sermon. It does not need to convince everyone at once; like yeast, it only needs to be present, and it works through the whole batch given enough time.

This calls for active discernment rather than passive consumption: testing what is heard against Scripture itself, asking who benefits from a teaching being believed, and being especially wary of messages that flatter, inflate, or puff up rather than humble. The same caution applies inside the church, where cultural compromise — on money, sexuality, ambition, or comfort — rarely walks in through the front door with a banner. It is mixed in a little at a time, in language that sounds reasonable, until a community looks up and realizes its whole shape has changed. Guarding the meal means paying attention to what is being quietly mixed in, long before it has worked all the way through.