

Online Bible Study  
Summer Shorts, Number Two  
Luke 13:18-21

**18. He [Jesus] said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what should I compare it?"**

**19. It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."**

**20. And again he said, "To what should I compare the kingdom of God?"**

**21. It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."** [The Greek says literally that she "hid" the yeast in three measures of flour]

*God, the world's troubles look so gigantic, and what I can do to help anyone seems so small and inadequate. I'm not great, powerful, or famous. I don't influence many people. Even the gospel itself doesn't seem to change much or many in this world. A lot of people talk about Jesus, but the hatred, greed, and selfishness continue – sometimes even in his name.*

A mustard seed is small, but the bush into which it grows is big enough to serve as a tree, housing birds. A very small lump of yeast works its way through enough flour for several loaves, and they all rise as they bake. The amount of yeast is so small it's hidden in the dough, but it does its job for all to see in the end.

Who measures the effect of a prayer, an act of kindness, a word of encouragement or forgiveness? Who can predict an adult's influence upon a child? What happens when a person expecting rejection or disgust receives, instead, respect and understanding? How does God's grace spread from one life to another?

Paul exhorts us not to pay people back with harm for harm they have done to us but, rather, to "overcome" evil with good. Does kindness really overcome evil? Sometimes it's as hard to see kindness overcoming cruelty or spitefulness as it is to see yeast working its way through dough. But see how answering meanness with further meanness increases evil. Just interrupting the cycle by choosing not to reciprocate must be worth something.

Maybe a better question than we yet asked is, "What can God do with a small act of grace that reflects God's own grace toward us? I am not in charge of the growth but can only plant the seed or add the yeast.

Or I can lament that I am not great, powerful, or famous and that my life has not changed the world. Or I could, maybe, forget the whole question of what my life does for others and just live for myself. But having heard the call to Jesus and caught a glimpse of what he means by the kingdom of God, I can't do that. Whom am I kidding? Once hope is planted, it grows and spreads. Who can go back to saying, "It doesn't matter," or, "There's only me"? No, forward is the only way to go.