

The Parables of the Mustard Seed & Leavened Bread- Matthew 13

THE POINT

Focus:

God works in spreading and strengthening his Kingdom through his powerful and mysterious ways.

Application:

We see the growth of the Kingdom of God as a natural result of God's supernatural work in the world.

Last Week: The Parable of the Sower

HEART CONNECTION (10-15 MINUTES)

Option #1 (if you have access to a church kitchen!):

- Supplies for your favorite yeast bread recipe (this one would work well: <http://atreatsaffair.com/foolproof-30-minute-dinner-rolls-recipe/>)
- Foil in 6"x6" squares
- Permanent Marker
- Baking pans

Content: Work with the children to mix up bread dough. Let them watch how the yeast works, and talk about how yeast is what makes the bread rise. Give each child a small square of foil labeled with their name to bake their own piece of bread on. Leave the bread to bake while you read the story, and have an

Option #2 (if you have access to a screen to play a video):

- Rain for Roots "Leaven Bread" Video linked here: <https://vimeo.com/132852894> or on Youtube here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YSkJ84Hsbc>

Content:

Begin with talking about the steps for making bread as a class.

- Do you know anyone who bakes bread?
- Have you ever baked bread?
- What makes bread dough rise and so it's fluffy?

Then introduce the video clip- watch it twice, once to see how bread is made, and once to sing-along.

Option #3 (if you only have the classroom space):

- Bowl
- Yeast
- Warm water
- Sugar
- Baked Bread (w/gluten-free option, if needed)

Content: This option is best for church settings where you want to explore how yeast works without the hassle of baking. With the kids watching, pour the water and sugar into a bowl. Add the yeast and watch the mixture bubble. (Note: yeast won't react without sugar for it to "eat"!). Talk about how when yeast bubbles inside of bread dough, it makes the dough rise so the bread gets fluffy. Bread dough without yeast is thin like a cracker or hard.

Serve pre-baked bread slices or biscuits before transitioning to the story.

STORY CONNECTION (6-8 MINUTES)

MATERIALS:

- Parable Roll (instructions available for free on www.worshipwithchildren.com).

This is the same group of resources that we used last week for the Parable of the Sower. During their quiet reflection time, children may use their Parable Roll to retell this week or last week's story by themselves or with a friend. Have them leave it at church, though, because they will use it for the rest of the month!

Have the children sit in a circle for the story This helps include children who might feel shy, and it helps each child feel equally engaged. It reassures children that they are seen and welcome in the community.

Note: This is often misunderstood to be a mustard tree, which is not native to the ancient Israelite landscape. Instead, the mustard seed grows annually and rapidly into a garden plant (approx. 9 feet tall). This replaces the common misperception of the Kingdom of God as a plant that grows slowly over time to one that grew rapidly (similar to rising yeast in bread).

These lessons continue to use the same Parable Rolls. Each of the stories takes a little imagination, but the simple felt shapes help keep the focus on the contents of the story instead of the accuracy of the imagery.

Matthew 13:31-35

Jesus told the crowd another story.

Unroll your parable roll. Have the kids follow along with their own parable "kit".

He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed. Someone took the seed and planted it in a field. It is the smallest of all seeds. But when it grows, it is the largest of all garden plants. It becomes a tree. Birds come and rest in its branches."

*Roll out the green felt to be the field. Place one wooden bead on the field to be the seed.
Above it, place the green hexagon to be the growing plant (see note above about the plant versus tree).
Place the birds in the green plant hexagon.*

Jesus told them still another story. "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast," he said. "A woman mixed it into 60 pounds of flour. The yeast worked its way all through the dough."

*Fold up the brown felt into quarters.
Pretend to sprinkle yeast on it, and open it up slowly, showing how yeast makes a loaf of bread grow.*

Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd using stories. He did not say anything to them without telling a story. So the words spoken by the prophet came true. He had said,

*"I will open my mouth and tell stories.
I will speak about things that were hidden since the world was made."
(Psalm 78:2)*

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WONDER CONNECTION (3-5 MINUTES)

MATERIALS: None.

I wonder how fast or slow the plants grow and dough rises.

I wonder what it's like to watch the Kingdom of God grow.

I wonder how I've seen the Kingdom of God grow in my own community.

What do you wonder?

SPIRIT CONNECTION (7-10 MINUTES)

MATERIALS: Coloring supplies: paper, crayons, pencils, hard drawing surfaces (floor, clipboard, or a table).

Take a few minutes to talk quietly with the Lord while you draw, write, or just think inside your heard. Talk with God about the story today. This is a quiet time for you to spend with the Lord, not with your neighbor or anyone else.