

LUKE 13:18-35

How would you set out to describe something to another person? Say you were travelling somewhere and your host or new acquaintance wanted to know what New Zealand was like?

What would you say if they asked you, have seen the statues near the falls of Rauris or the mountains of Mordor?

Would we describe New Zealand as the extended back drop to a Peter Jackson trilogy?

What's it like?

Do you describe the contours of the land, the sharpness of the air and the amount of green? Or just say it is a little pinprick at the bottom of the world of no great importance.

Much like describing a Dunedin winter snowfall to an Aucklander, who has visions of weeks of snow and cold in their head!

What is it like?

The Kingdom of God!

What is the kingdom of God like?

To what can we compare it to?

Where is it?

Who will be there and who will not?

Do we get image in our heads of Angels floating on clouds, strumming harps with beatific faces, wearing togas!

However the description that Jesus gives in answer to this question varies from that of a physical place such as our city what then is it like?

Is the kingdom a victorious, unstoppable army setting the world to right, bringing to justice all evil doers banishing unrighteousness in a heaving blaze of celestial glory power and might?!

What is it like?

Do we have to go somewhere, or is it coming here, what is it and how do we know, who can come?

It sounds majestic, powerful, awesome, and wonderful! The thought of The Kingdom of God! It is God's kingdom right, so it must be huge! It must be Fantastic! It must wonderful! Right? It is God we are talking about! It must be overwhelming!

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

(Mt 13:31–32; Mk 4:30–32)

¹⁸ He 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.'

The Parable of the Yeast

(Mt 13:33)

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^{a1} three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.'

The Narrow Door

(Mt 7:13–14)

²² Jesus^b went through one town and village after another, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. ²³ Someone asked him, 'Lord, will only a few be saved?' He said to them, ²⁴ 'Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able. ²⁵ When once the owner of the house has got up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then in reply he will say to you, 'I do not know where you come from.' ²⁶ Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' ²⁷ But he will say, 'I do not know where you come from; go away from me, all you evildoers!' ²⁸ There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrown out. ²⁹ Then people will come from east and west, from north and south, and will eat in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ Indeed, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.'

The Lament over Jerusalem

(Mt 23:37–39)

³¹ At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, 'Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.' ³² He said to them, 'Go and tell that fox for me,^c 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. ³³ Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.' ³⁴ Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵ See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when^d you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.' ' 2

What is the kingdom of God like?

To what do I compare it?

It is like a little seed, a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden, and it grew and became a tree and birds made nests in its branches.

a Gk *hid in*

b Gk *He*

c Gk lacks *for me*

d Other ancient authorities lack *the time comes when*

2 *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Lk 13:18–35). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Really!

The kingdom of God like a little seed?

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^a three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.'³

Yeast! Seed! That is what the kingdom of God is like?

What happened to the armies, to the power, to the majesty to the 'you know' big wonderful God stuff?

The kingdom of God is like, it is not but it is like a seed, it is like a measure of yeast. It begins small it begins insignificantly, it doesn't break in like a flood, doesn't overpower like the charge of cavalry or the landing of massive armies, it does not overwhelm, like an earthquake with fire in the heavens and churning in the earth, it begins as a seed, a measure of yeast it comes as a little baby, it begins small.

Do not despise the day of small beginnings!

'Who dares despise the day of small things, since the seven eyes of the LORD that range throughout the earth will rejoice when they see the chosen capstone in the hand of Zerubbabel?'

Lao Tzu. 'The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.'

Ideas of flight, big ideas, but small attempts here and there slowly building slowly gaining momentum until the first stuttering meters of powered flight was achieved. The first flights barely the length of most large airliners.

Now what do we see, thousands of aircraft in the air at any one time, criss-crossing the sky. Satellites orbiting the planet endlessly giving us instant feeds and information.

Keyhole surgeries, video led surgery, advances in medical care that we take as a given in our country all started in small ways, with ideas, with changes by people who had no idea where they would end up.

What is it like, this kingdom of God?

It begins like a seed, a small measure of yeast, that grows until it is all consuming, till it changes so that it provides nourishment, shade, protection and life to all, it grows from baby born in an animal stall in a small troublesome province of a great mighty empire, through 12 men, until it radically changes the face of that empire, till it continues long after that empires greatest achievements lie in crumbling ruins.

What is it like, it is healing of body yes but more a healing of soul heart and mind and it is life.

It has never been snuffed out, despite the best efforts of nations and empires in the past, and present, the kingdom grows. It grows in the heart of nations that are virulently anti-Christian, whether humanist or religious! It grows where there are small acts of kindness in the handing of water to a thirsty person, to the large transformations of communities and yes even nations! Encounters that bring transformation in peoples' hearts, bringing repentance, and responding to the grace, mercy and love of God.

a *Gk hid in*

3 *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Lk 13:20–21). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

What is this kingdom like?

There is restoration of life, healing as in the woman who had been ill or in bondage to Satan for 18 years who has been liberated! The Kingdom of God has come.

It comes in its totality, when it is allowed to grow.

Remember that these are similitudes, the kingdom of God is like this it is not exactly a seed, nor is it yeast, it is like these, things the pictures cannot be pushed too far! They give us hope when we get despondent in our weakness, or our seemingly lack of seeing the powerful, the impressive.

A quote attributed to Mother Theresa the catholic nun who spent most of her life in the slums of Kolkata

‘Never worry about numbers. Help **one person at a time** and always start with the **person** nearest you.’

Do not despise the day of small things, for such make the kingdom of God.

Which is why in many ways it is not an easy road not an easy kingdom in one sense to belong to. It seems to me that we love to see the spectacular, the impressive the awesome, large numbers, lots of response, and all of that, which can and does happen, at times.

Narrow is the door, and winding is the road that leads to life.

‘Strive to enter through the narrow door, for many will try and not be able to.

’ Indeed, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.’⁴

We are not to presume on the grace of God, when the kingdom enters into our lives we are born again, we leave the old life and enter the new. There is no way of being in the kingdom and living as strangers to God his people promises and requirements.

It would be the same as being married and living as if you were single! See how long that would last, most likely you would indeed fine yourself single!

Our Lord, Jesus Christ mercy and grace extend till the time set forth when the door will be closed, and entry barred.

As is written in another place, ‘do not delay today is the day of salvation’.

The Kingdom of God is not like our kingdoms, our empires, our little fiefdoms, the kingdom of God begins small, but will one day encompass all, one day it will call to account.

Until then mercy grace and love are extended to those who will receive, and find life.

Do not despise the day of small things.

4 *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Lk 13:30). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

