

February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
Pinecrest Baptist Church  
a.m.

Sermon Series: Standing on Kingdom Ground  
Sermon #5 Title: Counterfeit Churches  
Sermon #5 Text: (Matthew 13:31-32)

As we make our way through the Parables of the Kingdom we are learning about Standing on Kingdom Ground! Making sure that you are standing firm under the realm of God.

- These parables teach us about the Where and How God rules men, from the First Coming of Jesus until the Second Coming of Jesus.

- Jesus began with the parable of the Sower, explaining how the Kingdom of God is introduced into the world, and how it expands. 1 of 4 soils will receive the Word.

- Then He taught about the Wheat and the Tares. When the enemy could not uproot the Wheat, He decided to delude the crop with false wheat. Imitation Christianity.

Where the enemy did Imitate, he now contaminates...

Without question, this parable, in my opinion, when rightly understood, illustrates one of the least popular ideas among Christians today.

- It is unpopular, it is divisive, and in some cases for some people downright offensive...

While the tares represented counterfeit Christians, - we are going to see that the parable of the mustard seed represents "counterfeit churches."

I told you last week that everything the New Testament lays down, the old enemy lays down a counterfeit next to it.

- He has a False Gospel
- He has a False Jesus
- He has a False Holy Spirit
- He has a False Doctrine
- He has a False Return

- Here, we see that where there are the Lord's churches, there will also be "False churches."

*I. The Plan for the Kingdom* - "a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, (garden – Luke 13:19)

\*Note – Now this is not hard to understand. The picture is simple, a man wanted to grow a mustard in his garden!

- now let's get the right picture...

- Here in Matthew 13, he plants this seed in his "field"
  - general, and generic word "agros". – It is part of the word "agriculture", and it generally means a farm, farmland, or estate; and it also has the meaning of being "in the country."
- Luke 13:19, he plants this seed in his "garden"
  - specific word, "kay-pos" and it has an exclusive meaning – garden.

\*Note – Here is the picture that we might say Jesus uses – The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who planted a mustard seed in his garden on his farm...

- What is the plan in the picture? – To produce Mustard!

- What then does Mustard picture in relationship to the Kingdom?

(Here's where we bring in the rest of the Bible, and the Lord's teaching to understand... - Where else does Mustard show up? - As the most basic element of the Kingdom, "powerful faith."

What does "sowing mustard seed" do for the kingdom?

**A. To Sow the Seed of Faith** – "a grain of mustard seed"

1.) The Bible tells us twice about the immense power in "mustard seed faith."

a.) Matthew 17:20 – When the disciples could not exercise a demon, the Bible says "And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

Again

b.) Luke 17:5-6 – "And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you."

\*Note – All of that being said, When Jesus spoke of the mustard seed in other places, He always referenced it to "faith."

- Now as the Man in the parable desired "mustard", the Planter of the Kingdom, desires "faith." – He desires for the seed of faith, to produce more and more seeds of faith...

- I heard an older preacher say one time, - "Any fool can count the seeds in an apple, but only God can count the apples in a seed."

- The mustard seed was planted in order to produce more mustard seeds.

- The Kingdom of heaven is planted in order to produce Faith!

\*Note – This is not some kind of generic feel good faith that politicians speak of...

- this is the Kind of Faith that is pleasing to God!

- it is specific faith

- it is the belief in the God of the Bible

- it is believing the God of the Bible

- it is entrusting yourself to Him, and taking Him at His Word!

\*Note – Real, mustard seed faith, is faith that intentionally, willfully, humbly, and actually lives by the Word of the Lord.

- "Without faith it is impossible to please Him." – Hebrews 11:6

- "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar" – 1<sup>st</sup> John 5:10

- "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." – Hebrews 3:13

\*Note – Now that being said, here's the plan for the plant – to produce mustard seed. Here's the plan for the Kingdom – to sow the seeds of faith, in order to expect seed yielding shrubs!

**B. To Show the Work of Faith** –

1.) What comes out of a mustard seed? – A plant that produces more and more seeds.  
a.) the plant, or shrub that is to come up, is a picture of the “church that Jesus built.”

- how is that?
- Who is charged with spreading the faith? – Who is charged with making disciples?
- the Lord’s churches!

\*Note – We need look no further than the commission given to the first church in the book of Acts – Acts 1:8 – “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

- The first church received the power of the Holy Spirit, and was intended to be the witnesses that spread the faith throughout the world.
- The Lord’s Assembly, the Local, visible church, is to be the seed producing shrub!
- more seeds of faith are to come out of this plant.

1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3:15 tells us that “the house of God, which is the church of God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

- Now here’s the point. – As the seed pictures faith, the shrub is the structure that nurtures and produces that faith, and in the New Testament that is the “local church.”

### ***C. To Grow the Strength of Faith***

\*Note – Now let’s talk about “mustard.” – The Lord could have used any number of plants or herbs or crops to picture what He wanted to be seen here, but He chose, “mustard.”

- 1.) There are three kinds of “mustard seed”
- a.) Black
  - b.) Brown
  - c.) Yellow

\*Note – It is the “black” seed that is the predominant seed in the Middle East.

- The Black mustard seed is the Most Pungent of all the mustard seeds. – It has the greatest amount of “burn” as a spice. – It Greatly Flavors and awakens the senses. – A little goes a long way!

\*Note – Now friend, note this... When Jesus speaks of Faith as the Grain of Mustard seed, He is not speaking about the “degree” of faith that it takes to save, and to work, He is saying that it is “the fact” of faith that saves. Real saving faith may be “small” but it is Powerful, and it is Fiery, and it Awakens the senses!

- But note this about Mustard – It isn’t just used to make your hot dogs taste better.... Mustard seed was, and is, an intrinsic part of medicines and healing ointments.

- Some of you more seasoned people may have endured, “mustard plasters” in your younger days for congestion, and respiratory issues.

- The mustard seed is used as a healing agent in:
- “cold symptoms”
  - “digestive problems”
  - “inflammation”
  - “aching joints”
  - “respiratory issues”

\*Note – Furthermore – “Researchers who spearheaded a study published in the March 2016 issue of *Molecules* revealed that sinigrin, a glucosinolate in mustard seeds, possesses “anti-cancer, antibacterial, antifungal, antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, [and] wound healing properties.

\*Note – Now here’s the full picture – the Faith that the Mustard seed represents, is not just a spice of life, but it is a healing agent, it has medicinal value, as well as awakens the senses to life.

- Real Genuine Faith, taking God at His Word – will awaken your senses, as well as introduce healing to your soul... - And it is the Lord’s structure of His local church that He builds, that is to be the place that propagates these seeds of faith!

- Now that’s the plan.

*II. The Progress of the Kingdom* – “when it is grown it becometh greatest among the herbs ...”

\*note – Now here is the progress... The smallest seed, becomes the greatest herb. (*the word greatest there speaks of size.*)

- It is a good strong plant! The seed people tell us that these plants in the middle east can grow to 5 ½ to six feet tall, at maturity.

- Now in this picture that Jesus has given, this man has planted a seed, and He first pictures it as reaching maturity.

- “But when it is grown,” – the picture of maturity...

\*Note – As the kingdom progresses, there are certain things that happen easy to see in the parable...

#### ***A. The Word is Working***

1.) The “seed” here gets “grown” into it’s shrub, or into it’s maturity.

a.) Now here’s the idea – the seed of faith is planted, and the result is another plant filled with other seeds.

b.) Here’s the picture...

(1) As Mustard Seed produces Mustard plants – “Saving Faith, ultimately produces Maturing churches.”

\*Note – What is God’s plan for every man? – The pattern and plan is described for us in Acts 2:41 – “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”

Here’s the idea – A man gets saved, follows the Lord in Baptism, then is added to the assembly!

\*Note – The New Testament knows nothing of a “churchless Christian.”

Here’s the point – Salvations of men, lead to baptisms of men, which lead to assemblies of men, who in turn produce more, and more seeds.

This mustard seed in the garden, does exactly what the saving Word does to the lost! – Ultimately, churches result in the saving of the Lost!

\*Note – Now know this... We never, no never, no never, let the lost tell us how to grow the kingdom! We never let the world tell us how a church is to be grown! – We never get our cues from the Lost, we always take our cues from the Lord, it is not the culture, but the scripture that teaches us all we need to know.

(Here is a problem – there is always someone who thinks they have a better idea, or somehow they can improve on the plan of God. – Oh, preacher, more people would be saved if we did things different... No they won't. – Jesus said if they will not hear Moses and the Prophets, they won't believe though one rose from the dead.)

\*Note – Hear this... We want everyone to be saved. But Jesus would not do anything to get people saved. He would not sin to get them saved. He did not deviate from the Father's instructions in order to save them. He would not do it "their way" in order for them to be saved.

\*Note – Here's the point – The Word Works! IT does not work the way the WORLD WORKS, but it does work the way the Lord works!

**B. The Work is Worthy** – "it becomes greatest among the herbs."

1.) This is the quality of a well-planted, and well-grown mustard seed.

a.) It is "greatest" among the herbs.  
(1) – Lach-anon – the word means, "vegetables."

\*Note – The word for "greatest" here is Midezone – and it is speaking of "abundance" or "more", and is often used to describe degrees of anything. – It is related to the word "megas" – where we get our word "mega" from.

\*Note – *most likely it is speaking of the sense that this mustard plant is the most abundant, of all the vegetables, and garden plants.*

2.) Each plant from a Mustard plant can produce 20 to 40 pods, with the black mustard plant producing up to 20 seeds per pod.

- one could get up to 800 seeds per plant.

- Now that's a pretty good return for one seed going into the ground! –

- Here's the picture or the point – This seed gives a greater yield, than all the other garden seeds. –

3.) The Lord's shrub, the Lord's faith producing church, gives a greater yield, than any other activity...

- Why – Because it's actual yield is actually what He intends.

When this man planted this seed, he wasn't looking for watermelon. When he planted this seed he wasn't looking for cotton. When he planted this seed, he wasn't looking for "mustard seed" look a likes. – He was looking for mustard seeds. – There is no greater avenue of cultivating the Kingdom, than the House of God, which is the Church of God, the pillar and ground of truth!

\*Note – (One more thing... the mustard plant is an annual, not a perennial... meaning it is to keep being planted, and keep on being planted.)

But the story isn't over! – Here comes the "perversion" of the kingdom.

*III. The Perversion the Kingdom* – “...and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.”

\*Note – Now here is where everything takes a strange turn.

**A. It Morphs After Maturity**

1.) “it becometh” – it was already grown

a.) the idea here is that begins to exist as something different from the original.

- A mustard tree carries the name of the mustard plant, but it is not the same as the mustard plant.

- Vegetable Plants, do not become Oak Like Trees!

- There is such a thing as a Mustard Tree. – It grows to over 20 feet tall. – But it does not come from a “mustard plant” it has a completely different makeup.

- But let’s note the language...

1.) He plants a “lachanon” – herb

2.) After maturity has come, it “becometh” or comes to exist as a “Dendron” – a tree, most likely like an oak tree, according to Dr. Strong.

- Herbs planted in gardens do not become “oak like trees”.

- This is a picture of a plant becoming something abnormal!  
- it becomes something NOT intended by the farmer.

This pictures a “false church” a “false assembly” – It may also picture a “fallen assembly.” – It makes the shrub into a tree – it makes the church into something the New Testament does not recognize.

\*Note – There is no need for it to become something else. What God will do, man will often redo, or overdo.

We live in a world where people are continually trying to “reinvent the Lord’s church.” – It needs no improvement. The people in it, often do, but it’s plan, it’s purpose, it’s structure, and even its demonstrated methods, need no improvement.

**B. It Makes Room for the Enemy** – “it becometh a tree so that the birds of the air come and lodge in it.”

1.) What are the birds? – they are the seed stealers...

a.) vs 4 – the fowls devour the seed

b.) vs 19 – the fowls are “the wicked”

\*note – This perversion provides shade for the devil... They are in a “faith producing” thing! They have the cover of the term “mustard” – faith, faith producing plants, O, and they have made it something that even the satanic can feel at home in.

2.) Revelation 17 describes “spiritual Babylon” the false church system that poisons the world with false doctrine, false teaching, false faith, false everything. And then in chapter 18 – the false church, and churches, finally fall into judgment. – Listen to verse 2 – “*And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.*”

\*Note – Here’s one more thing I know . . . Men do not draw birds to their gardens, they run them off.

- These birds in the garden, are Babylon’s birds. This tree is not the plant, the planter planted!

- Where there will be Mustard Plants, there will also be Mustard Trees!

In fact in Revelation 2:9, and 3:9 – Jesus said to the church at Smyrna, and Philadelphia, He knows who are of the “synagogue of Satan.”

- That term “synagogue” in Revelation has the same meaning as our word “Church” – they both mean the “assembly” or the “congregation.”

(There are “assemblies” that look like they are Christian, but Jesus says, “They are Not! – and outwardly they “blend well” with the rest of Christianity)

- The parable brings us to the reality that

- 1.) Just as all soils, will not receive the gospel
- 2.) Just as all things “Christian” are not “Christian” – from the wheat and the tares...
- 3.) Not all “Churches” are actual “churches”

Conclusion: - What does all of this mean to us!

#1 – It is a Warning – believers had better be serious and discerners about Churches, and their spiritual Life.

#2 – It is an Indictment – for not guarding against false growth.

(what do I mean – Don’t complain about the zeal of false churches, if you haven’t done more to evangelize.)

#3 – It is a Comfort – Jesus said this would happen. False churches do not diminish true ones in any way.

- there are still, and always will be New Testament ordered and instructed churches of the Lord Jesus.

- Ephesians 3:21 – “Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.”

Learn the Parable of the Mustard Seed!

