

# Ordinary is Not Insignificant (13:31-33)

*31 He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. 32 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.” 33 He told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds[a] of flour until it worked all through the dough.”*

## Intro

What’s good church fam? How we doing? My name is Marcus and I’m one of the pastors here at City Church. If I haven’t met you yet I would love to do so sometime after the gathering today. If you are new here, just to catch you up, we are going through the book of Matthew and we are just over a year in; on and off. And we are currently sifting through Jesus’ parables, or short stories, about the Kingdom of Heaven. And the reason he spoke in parables was because he knew that whether people would receive his message or not, it wasn’t ultimately determined by how direct or clear he is, it was based on the condition of their hearts. **So people responding to the good news of the kingdom depended entirely on whether they had the ability to *hear* or not.**

In many ways like today, if you were following after Jesus, there was some leg work mentally work that went into it. Even the disciples, at times, didn’t know what Jesus was saying when he spoke in parables. They would be like “Hey Jesus, pssts. So about that parable...” And then Jesus would hook them up with an explanation. So if you were interested enough, you would try to dive below the surface of the parable and see what you could glean from it. Now if you were coming around but you were not truly interested, then Jesus’ parables would probably turn you away. I mean let’s be real, if you were to show up, and Jesus started telling a short story about seeds or fish, you would probably be like, well that was weird. And you’d probably walk away. In many ways this parable that we are about to read probably turned people away.

Now, Kent covered a couple parables last week, but he skipped over a couple short ones in the middle of his passage. Today we’re gonna cover those. There are two of them—one about a seed, and one about yeast and bread—and they both get at a very similar idea that I think is vitally important to how you and I think about life in the kingdom of Heaven.

[So v.31] *“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. 32 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.”*

So Jesus tells them a parable and says the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed. Have you ever seen a mustard before? Well you're in luck. Because I have one here right now. And let me say, it's pretty tiny. I was thinking I could post a picture on the screen for everyone but I decided to take it a step further. With my very limited budget of \$2 I was able to get everyone a mustard seed (that's \$2 total, not per person); so go ahead and look underneath your chair and see if you can locate the mustard seed we placed there. Now as an aside I'm sorry I didn't put any upstairs because I figured you didn't want to touch the carpet and for our online fam, it would just be weird for me to have done that in your home.

So Jesus says the Kingdom of Heaven is like this tiny, almost invisible, seed which someone plants in his field. This is the Kingdom of Heaven. Somebody turn to your neighbor and say this is the Kingdom of Heaven. Did that feel weird or confusing at all? Now just think about how people back in the day would have felt. They would have been utterly confused. Because they were expecting a conqueror to come through and wipe their enemies out and not someone who said the Kingdom of Heaven was like this puny mustard seed.

They would've expected him to say that the kingdom of heaven was like an army of chariots that shows up on the scene and terrifies the enemy into retreat. Or that the kingdom of heaven is like an invading army that invades the land and vanquishes the enemy. The kingdom of heaven is like a thunderstorm on the sea that arrives suddenly and aggressively and fills you with wonder and awe and terror. That's what they would've expected Jesus to say.

Instead, Jesus says, the kingdom of heaven is like the tiniest of seeds that over the course of months and years, eventually grows into a tree. Do you hear the difference.

Let me put it to you like this. Have you ever watched a plant grow? Like put a seed in the ground, got a cozy blanket, popped some popcorn, and pulled up a chair and then just stare at it until you see progress? Yah probably not. And the reason is first and foremost it would be boring, but more importantly because you literally can't see it. Even the fastest growing plants wouldn't be worth watching that way. Because the nature of plant growth is that it is so slow and so gradual that you literally can't perceive it with the naked eye as it happens. You can go look at it today, and then go look at it again next week and observe that it has grown, but if you pull up a chair and watch it, you will see nothing at all. That's how it works.

Jesus says that's how the kingdom of Heaven works. That's how it progresses. It starts with a seed so tiny that you can't even see, and then it continues that way for quite some

time. And then maybe eventually, you see shoots poking out of the ground, and then a little later maybe some leaves, you see it flower some, and then a little later it turns into a bush and finally into a tree.

So that's the first picture Jesus gives us for the kingdom of Heaven. Here's the second one:

*The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.”*

Welcome to Jesus' TED talk, The Kingdom of Heaven is not only like a mustard seed but it's also like yeast. Very inspiring right? Either way he says it's "like yeast that a woman took and mixed..." Now we are reading from the NIV this morning but if you look at other translations, what does it replace with mixed? Anyone? Hid, right. It's "like yeast that a woman took and hid..." into about sixty pounds of flour. And it says 'hid' because that's basically what you do with yeast. You only need a little bit of yeast to work through a lot of flour.

Have you guys ever seen sixty pounds of flour? Please don't look under your chair. I couldn't afford everyone flour. But we do still happen to have some for this visual. Bring it out y'all [have flour bags brought out, one by one, make jokes about them as they do].

Okay, so that right there is sixty pounds of flour. Which is a lot. Now do you guys know how much yeast would go into sixty pounds of flour? Okay, bring out the yeast guys [one person comes walking out with a small mason jar, people will laugh at how small it is]. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you the Kingdom of Heaven.

Okay, do you guys see how opposite this would have been from everything people around Jesus were expecting. That's basically nothing. It seems so small, so ordinary, so insignificant. But make no mistake about it, the end result of this much bread baked without this yeast versus with it is unbelievable. And that's what Jesus is trying to get at.

So the Kingdom of Heaven is like this [show the mustard seed and the yeast together]. Small and hidden. Again this would have been confusing to the audience because of all the Old Testament stories painting something completely different and also because when someone established a Kingdom it usually was not meant to be hidden or small.

I mean even in today's terms, can you imagine the President being sworn in but it's actually just a simple 1 minute thing because let's be honest it really could all be boiled down to a minute or two. But can you imagine no pomp and circumstance around the

inauguration? That doesn't even make sense right? In many ways it would be unAmerican to not do it big. Because to us, it seems like anything worth doing needs to be made a big deal out of right. In many ways it's built into the American ethos. When we want something established or shown off, we go about it in the bigger, better, flashier, type of way. That's how you get noticed. That's how you become an influencer, that's how we get raises, or how we stay relevant. And we see it in tons of different ways.

Apple can't just have a simple announcement where they say, "hey guys, we've got a new phone and this is it [show my phone] sorry it's not under your chair but you can purchase it for the low low price of a lot...and the end scene" no, no, no, it's gotta be a huge groundbreaking event where the next evolution of mobile devices is introduced. For those who are into sports and into the drafts, I remember back in the day the draft when it wasn't much of anything. It was very low key. It used to be this non-assuming thing and eventually it morphed into this grandiose couple days thing where every pick is analyzed to the 'nth degree. If you're in college, you never want to throw an ordinary party right? You want to throw the best party you can throw in hopes that it brings you some type of glorious purpose, where people talk about it for weeks.

So our culture doesn't really do the small, unnoticed, ordinary thing right? And sadly neither do Christians or our churches. We see this with how we treat our personal spiritual growth. The more ordinary our time with Jesus the more we feel like it's not worth it. We generally aren't content with just sitting in the Scriptures and being reminded of something about Jesus. Instead, we need him to show up, point us to just the passage we needed to hear, and blow our minds with power and conviction and purpose through it every time.

Our prayer times are similar. Prayer can't just be you silently praying by yourself week in and week out, it has to be a mind-blowing encounter with the living God where you hear his audible voice telling you precisely what you need to hear and answering each prayer you pray.

When we attend a church service, it can't just be an ordinary church service—it has to be life-changing. It has to be the best one we've ever gone to. It can't just be some average musicians that led us in worship, it needs to be the loudest, most talented, worship band that plays the songs better than the recording. It can't just be that the pastor up front preached an ordinary sermon where he said true things that helped you become more like Jesus—it has to be that they preached the most engaging, hilarious, convicting, mind-blowing sermon you've ever heard. Also I apologize for those looking for that because this isn't that.

I see this in myself with what I expect from people that I'm discipling and pouring into.. If there's something that I notice someone could grow in, I want to be able to have one conversation with them where I drop some knowledge on their laps, and then the next time I see them, they've implemented it and have completely changed as a human being because of it. When in reality that is very rarely how human or spiritual growth works. But when it doesn't work that way, I get frustrated because growth in that person didn't happen significantly and suddenly and dramatically.

We do this with our LifeGroups and other communities as well. We expect to show up to our LifeGroup and immediately have a connection or expect a connection of some sort in a matter of weeks. We expect to meet people in our LifeGroups, and have them become the most meaningful, best friendships we have had in a matter of weeks. We expect them to say and do things that completely changes our lives with quickness. We desire this over an ordinary community, where it takes time and effort, in many ways a lot of effort, to become friends. To connect with someone where Jesus truly is the only connection is tough. To actually put in the time to learn how to love each other well. This isn't what we want.

I see it when it comes to our participation in God's mission, we feel like to make a significant impact, we need to go to a remote village in a third-world country and tell every single person there about Jesus. Meanwhile there are people at our job or in our classes right now that don't know Jesus, and we're not saying anything to them. Because that feels too ordinary. We feel like to really be involved in ministry, we need to get a full-time job in ministry. Meanwhile we've got a LifeGroup full of people that need ministering to, and we're not doing anything about it...because that feels too ordinary.

Do you see any of this in you? We so often want big, we want impact, we want splashy. And Jesus isn't necessarily opposed to any of those things—after all, we are talking about the God who parted the Red Sea. He does big and flashy sometimes. He's not opposed to any of that. But he also doesn't require it. Some of us need to hear this in the room right now. He also doesn't require it. He's just as comfortable with mustard seed-level growth. Where it takes seemingly forever, but that seemingly forever is consistent growth. He's just as comfortable with yeast-in-sixty-pounds of flour type impact. In the places where you feel like you are drowning in a sea of mundane, God actually has you there changing the very fabric of the world around you. And if these parables tell us anything, it's that he might just prefer doing things that way.

I mean, think about how Jesus came into the world. Jesus could have made far more of a splash if he wanted to, but instead he was born into the world. We've said this before I'm sure, but for Jesus to be born into this world is a weird thing right? The creator of the

universe was born into this world. How lowly can one stoop right? And he wasn't just born in this world, he was born in a backwoods town in a stable. With all the accessories of animals and their poop. And yet it plays into this small and hidden stuff that Jesus talks about here. He never traveled more than 100 miles from his hometown. He could have overthrown the current Kingdom of Rome and "established" his rule and reign, and made everyone acknowledge him. but instead he worked like you and me. He was just some blue-collar dude working in his hometown. Again, not how we generally imagine what a King or creator should be. When he transitioned into ministry work, he could have gotten the best and the brightest like all the other priests did in his day in age, but instead he asked fishermen, tax collectors, women who were mistreated and forgotten because they lived in a patriarchal society, and others who were seen as low class who would have been seen as not up to par and Jesus began discipling them. And then he got those same people to go out into the world and disciple others in this type of way. He got the most ordinary people on earth to do the most significant thing on earth.

Pastor and Christian thinker, [Skye Jethani](#) says it this way:

*"It isn't that he expected each person to "change the world" through remarkable accomplishments. Rather, Jesus expected his undistinguished followers to be the source of the world's most essential ingredients. Likewise, in a dark and deteriorating world, there is nothing more wonderful than simple people living as Jesus taught."*

We might put it this way: in the kingdom of Jesus, [Ordinary is Not Insignificant](#). I want you to see and feel how the Kingdom of Heaven is here right now. In your everyday life. Sometimes life may seem like it's on a loop, or it's mundane, or whatever but it doesn't mean that that time is wasted or insignificant. Because in the kingdom of Jesus, ordinary is not insignificant.

And here's how I know that: the gospel frees us up to be ordinary.

[Romans 10:4](#) says this:

*Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*

So this passage talks about those who would try in their own effort to be righteous, or justified by their efforts. It would be like anytime we say, I have to do this or that in order to be okay with my life. Or this is the thing that makes my life have meaning. My life has to look like this or that. I need to have a college degree to prove myself. I have to get

married otherwise my life will be not what I want. It's believing that our salvation or our worth comes from our works. And the bigger and better the work is the more we feel closer to God.

So when those desires to be more than ordinary creep in, this is sort of what we are doing. I've got to try harder. I have to get better. I need to prove my righteousness. If that's you, hear me say this fam, one of the biggest lies I would say that the Enemy gets the church to believe is that in order to be a Christian, a true follower, is that you have to be extravagant or extraordinary. But the Bible would say differently. Let's read that verse again. Some of us need to let this sort of wash over us. Let's go ahead and put Romans back up and read it together [[Romans 10:4](#)]:

*Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*

Christ is the culmination of the law. And because of that he gives us his righteousness if we follow after him. So now there is no more I have to try harder, I have to do more, this has to be more extravagant to matter, need to be bigger, there is only how do I follow Christ consistently. He has removed the need to be extravagant because he did the extravagant thing by dying for our sins.

There is freedom in being ordinary. There is freedom in reading your Bible every single day and changing into God's image gradually. There is freedom in praying without ceasing and not having to expect God to be a genie and cater to your every wish. There is freedom in growing together as a community and letting those friendships grow over years with all the conflict that comes with it. There is freedom to be ordinary at an ordinary job, making an ordinary amount of money, and being faithful to building with your ordinary coworkers who the Lord has placed you around. There is purpose in the daily, weekly, and monthly normal of your life. **Hear me say this: If we are ever going to join all of our lives to God's mission, we need to reclaim all of the ordinary parts of our lives as a part of that mission. We will have to reject the notion that something has to be extravagant or extraordinary for things to matter or be significant. We will need to view the ordinary-ness of our lives as Jesus said the Kingdom of Heaven would be like. Because the Kingdom of Heaven doesn't start out as a tree or as baked bread. The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed and like yeast in sixty pounds of flour. It's normal, it's small, and hidden, and v ordinary, but man is it significant. The mission that Jesus kicked off is something you get to participate in everyday. It has always been God's intention to choose normal, everyday people, and to show off his amazing power and glory through them. The good news is He's not looking for the most impressive person because he already is that person.**

As the people of God, this is our aim. So, when you think about the ordinary of your life, how do you think about it? Is it just regular and routine? Are you just going through the motions without much intention or purpose?

I remember talking to a guy in my LifeGroup about this very thing a little while back. We've had similar paths in that he is an artist and wants to do that as his job, but if you know anything about creative people in general, starting out in this world requires a lot of patience with being poor. So he has your classic 9-to-5 job, working at the delicious Chick Fil A while he works towards being a full-time artist. And for him he has been wrestling with working at his current job because he feels like it's not where he wants to be and not where he's meant to be ultimately. And I told him I was in a similar situation working for Chick Fil A (oddly enough) back in the day and all I could see the job as, was a means to me leaving. It truly was a clock in, clock out situation. I thought God had something bigger and better for me planned and the sooner I got out and found said thing the more I could live up to this purpose. And I wrestled with this for a while, and it wasn't until I clearly heard from the Spirit that I was missing the entire point. That this 9-to-5 wasn't a stepping stone and neither was it pointless or purposeless, that actually the people around me were human beings with stories and souls that mattered to the Father. That if only I could see the people around me as that, that my view of this job would change dramatically. And once I did, my job was infused with purpose. It became less about me and more about the people around me and them knowing who Jesus was in how I interacted with them, in how I spoke about Christ, in how I treated our customers with simple consistent interaction. This was the moment that started to change how I viewed work. Now did I see impact right away or ever, to be honest not really. I saw glimpses, but actual impact I never saw, but I know for a fact I was being on mission and was having mustard seed level impact on the people around me. I know that for a fact because I know God had me there for a reason.

Here's where I'm driving to, if you think your 9-to-5 is pointless this morning, I believe the Spirit is speaking through me to say that ordinary is not insignificant fam. Not when it's infused with kingdom purpose. For those that are not doing what they want to be doing, I need you to see that your ordinary is not insignificant. Some of us need to pray for eyes to see what kingdom potential is around you. Pray for your heart to be softened to this reality. Because the Kingdom of Heaven is here fam.

In my experience, the vast majority of us waste our ordinary... we give no thought to the reality that God may want to be doing something significant through our lives... that our jobs aren't just our jobs... our neighborhoods aren't just our neighborhoods... the people



we know... the places we go...our hobbies, our habits, our everything are all of it are a part of God's grand plan to save the world.

So let me just hit briefly on some practical ways to tap into seeing life in this way. How do we not give into the lie that ordinary is insignificant? I have two practical tips that actually are similar; first:

### Keep A Journal of "Wins"

I think being able to keep a physical or digital journal of your prayers, notes from sermons and your Bible time, and any praises or wins you've seen can be super helpful to help you see how much impact your ordinary is actually having. Because just like a mustard seed, life happens over time and you won't necessarily see impact immediately and if that's the case, in order to not get discouraged, being able to keep track of these things and look back can be super encouraging.

So I know many of you guys keep a journal of prayers and stuff, which I think it so great, but I would also say that being able to track how the Lord is accomplishing them is just as equally great because it allows you to remember to praise his name after each. This is sort of what I mean by wins. I can't tell you how many times this has encouraged me to see how the Lord has worked in the small and ordinary.

Think of it as your personal pot with multiple mustard seeds that are growing and you're logging the growth.

The second point is:

### Notice & Celebrate the Wins Each Other's "Wins"

I don't know about you but often times I can't see how the Lord is working in my life. Or I tend to critique myself way more and way more often than I should. I think part of that is this desire for more and better and part of it is because I want to be more and better. I tend to downplay how the Lord is working by only seeing the missteps or mistakes I've made. Not sure if anyone in the room can attest to that at all. So being able to allow others to speak into your life and vice versa, showing you where the Lord is working is huge.

I think this can look like a number of things, if you keep a journal and all of that, being able to track praise worthy moments and then texting or calling your friend or family member and telling them how the Lord is working in them or through them can be such

an encouraging thing for them and for you. And I think the reverse is true. Oftentimes I will say or do things that I forget and it's not til someone brings it back up that I'm reminded of it. And when they say the Lord has worked it's so encouraging to and an opportunity to praise the Spirit for working.

Now I'm not sure about you but I also tend to dismiss wins, I'm like oh it's nothing, I mean I guess I've grown a little or something. I downgrade it because I think it's arrogant to celebrate wins, but hear me say, it's not arrogant to say where God is working. It's not arrogant to accept where God is working. So if you are the type of person who dismisses wins, allow people to encourage you. There have been times where my wife Melanie and I will do this, hey just let me encourage you. Don't dismiss this. The Lord is working. Growth oftentimes isn't flashy but it can be slow and sometimes the slowness of it is discouraging so allow others to speak encouragement to you and do the same for them.

So for you, what ordinary practices do you need to step into? Ordinary time in the Bible, ordinary means to get to know your neighbors, maybe repentance is a part - because God promises he uses that stuff. Is it reading the Bible with your kids... ordinary confession... is it just you need to turn off the TV and eat dinner together... do you need to block off time to be with your LG on a more consistent basis. To be able to remind them of God's promises. Because God uses it to spread his Kingdom. Do you need to keep a journal to keep track, whether digital or physical. Do you need to speak into others' lives more than you're doing currently? Or allow others to speak into your life?

Let's pray to the Spirit for clarity in this and ask him to show us where we are off or where we can give him praise for being ordinary in some areas.