

MAIN LESSON, ACTIVITY & DISCUSSION

Ages 6-10 | Read Aloud | Scripture Centered | Christ Centered

LESSON OVERVIEW

Week #: 40

Date: October 4, 2026

Lesson Title: Jesus Teaches About God's Kingdom

Primary Scripture: Matthew 13:1-23, 31-33, 44-46

Bible Timeline Placement: During the earthly ministry of Jesus

Big Idea: Jesus is the King, and His Kingdom is worth more than anything else.

MEMORY VERSE

"Whoever has ears, let them hear." Matthew 13:9

Jesus was talking about more than hearing sounds with our ears. He was inviting people to listen carefully, receive God's truth, and believe what He was telling them.

MAIN LESSON NARRATIVE

Picture yourself standing beside a large lake while people keep arriving from every direction because they have heard about Jesus. Some have watched Him heal people, others have heard Him teach about God in a way they have never heard before, and some have probably come simply because they are curious and want to see for themselves who this Jesus really is.

The crowd grows so large that Jesus gets into a boat and sits down while the people remain along the shore. I have wondered what that must have looked like, with the crowd stretching along the edge of the water while Jesus sat a little way out from them, close enough to be heard but far enough away that everyone could see Him.

When Jesus begins to speak, He does not begin with a difficult word or a long explanation. He begins with something the people understand very well.

A farmer.

Jesus says, "A farmer went out to sow his seed." Matthew 13:3

People in that crowd knew exactly what He meant because farming was part of ordinary life around them. A farmer would walk across his field scattering seed over the ground, knowing that some would land where it could grow and some would not.

Jesus says that some seed fell along a hard path where birds came and ate it. Other seed fell on rocky ground where there was only a thin layer of soil, and although those plants came up quickly, they could not grow deep roots. When the heat of the sun came, the plants dried up.

Other seed fell among thorns, and while those plants also began to grow, the thorns crowded around them until they had no room to become healthy and strong. Then some seed fell into good soil, where it grew and eventually produced far more than the little seed the farmer had first scattered.

When Jesus finished describing the field, He said something that probably made some people stop and wonder what He meant.

"Whoever has ears, let them hear." Matthew 13:9

That is our memory verse for this week, so let us say it together.

"Whoever has ears, let them hear." Matthew 13:9

Every person standing beside that lake already had ears, of course, so Jesus was talking about something deeper than whether sound could reach them.

Most of us know there is a difference between hearing someone and really listening. Maybe your mom explained where something belonged while your mind was thinking about something else, and a few minutes later you could not remember what she said. Maybe your teacher gave directions while you were wondering what was for lunch, and even though the words reached your ears, they never really settled into your mind.

Jesus was talking about something deeper still because the way we listen to God matters.

Later, when He explained the parable to His disciples, Jesus told them that the seed represented the message about God's Kingdom. The seed itself was not the problem because God's truth is good. The different kinds of soil showed the different ways people respond when they hear what God says.

Some people hear God's Word but do not truly receive it. Some seem excited for a little while, but when following Jesus becomes difficult, they turn away. Others hear God's truth, but worries, money, possessions, and the desire for other things begin crowding around it until those things seem more important than God.

Then there are people who hear God's Word, receive it, and begin showing through their lives that God is truly at work in them.

I want to be careful here because I do not think Jesus told this parable so children would become frightened and spend the rest of the morning wondering what kind of dirt they might be. Jesus was inviting the people listening to Him to consider whether they were truly receiving what God was saying.

That is an important difference.

The crowd beside the lake was hearing exactly the same Teacher and exactly the same truth, yet the people were not all responding in the same way. Some believed Jesus and wanted to learn more, while others remained unsure, and some had already decided that they did not want what He was saying.

The truth had not changed. The hearts listening to it were different.

That can still happen today because two people can hear the same Bible passage and respond in very different ways. One may quietly think, "God, help me understand what You are saying," while another may decide, "I do not care what God says because I want my own way."

This is why the words of Jesus matter so much when He says, "Whoever has ears, let them hear."
Matthew 13:9

There is something comforting in that invitation because Jesus does not tell us to make ourselves perfect before we come near Him. He invites us to listen, trust Him, and receive what He says, while God Himself helps us understand the truth.

The Holy Spirit works in people so they can understand the truth about Jesus, and when someone trusts Jesus, the Holy Spirit lives within that believer and begins changing that person's life from the inside.

The Holy Spirit is not simply a feeling or an invisible force. Scripture teaches that God is one God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father is God, Jesus the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, yet there is only one God.

That can be difficult for us to understand completely, and I think it is all right to admit that because God is greater than our minds. We do not have to invent pictures or comparisons to make God easier to explain. We can simply believe what He has revealed about Himself in His Word.

And here beside the lake, God the Son is teaching the people about God's Kingdom.

The word “kingdom” matters, so it is worth slowing down long enough to understand what Jesus means. A kingdom is a place and people under the rule of a king, which means that when Jesus talks about God’s Kingdom, He is talking about God’s good rule and authority.

Sometimes people hear the words “Kingdom of heaven” and think Jesus is only talking about the place believers go after they die. Heaven is certainly part of the Christian hope, and those who belong to Jesus will be with Him forever, but Jesus is teaching something larger than that.

The Kingdom is about the King, and Jesus is that King.

That means He is not simply a teacher sitting in a boat giving information about somebody else’s kingdom. The King Himself has come near, and once we understand that, everything Jesus says about the Kingdom becomes much more personal.

Then Jesus gives the crowd another picture by talking about a mustard seed.

He says, “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field.”
Matthew 13:31

A mustard seed is very small, and if you held one in your hand, you probably would not look at it and imagine that something impressive was about to happen. You might barely notice it at all.

Yet Jesus says that this tiny seed grows, and what begins small becomes much larger than it first appeared.

That is the part Jesus wants the people to notice.

God can begin something in a way that looks small to us while He already knows exactly what He is doing.

Think about the people who first followed Jesus. There were not enormous crowds of Christians spread across the world, and there were not powerful armies or famous leaders standing beside Him. Jesus called a small group of ordinary people, including fishermen and a man who had once collected taxes.

If we had seen them walking down a road together, I am not sure any of us would have guessed how far the good news about Jesus would one day travel.

Something can look small without being unimportant.

That truth can help us when we think about our own lives because faithfulness often begins in quiet ways. Maybe you pray for someone and nothing seems to change right away. Maybe you choose to sit beside the child who usually sits alone, tell the truth when a lie would be easier, apologize because you know you were wrong, or begin reading a few verses of Scripture with your family.

None of those things may feel large or impressive, but we should not decide their value only by what we can see right now. We obey Jesus because He is good, and we trust Him with what He chooses to do through that obedience.

There is also an interesting question people sometimes ask about this parable. They point out that Jesus described the mustard seed as extremely small even though there are other seeds in the world that are smaller.

Does that mean Jesus made a mistake?

No, because we have to pay attention to what kind of teaching Jesus is giving and what He is trying to communicate. He is not giving the crowd a scientific list of every seed on earth. He is speaking to ordinary people who knew mustard seeds as a familiar example of something very small, and He is using that familiar picture to show the difference between a small beginning and a much larger result.

This is one reason we do not have to become frightened when someone asks a hard question about the Bible. Honest questions are not dangerous, and God does not need us to pretend we know more than we do.

We can ask, "What does the Bible actually say?" Then we can ask, "What do we really know?" And sometimes we also have to admit, "There are things we are only guessing about."

There will be moments when the most truthful answer is simply, "I do not know because the Bible does not tell us," and saying that is not weak faith. It is honesty, and honesty belongs with faith because we never need to make something up in order to defend God's Word.

In this parable, however, Jesus has made His main point clear. Something may look small to us while God's purpose is much greater than what we can presently see.

Then Jesus changes the picture again, and this time He talks about treasure.

He says, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field." Matthew 13:44

Imagine discovering something so valuable that everything else you own suddenly looks small beside it. Jesus then speaks about a merchant searching for beautiful pearls, and when that merchant finds one pearl of enormous value, he immediately recognizes that he has found something worth more than everything else he possesses.

Both pictures are helping us understand the value of God's Kingdom.

We should be careful here because Jesus is not teaching that we can buy our way into God's Kingdom. Nobody has enough money for that, and no amount of good behavior could purchase forgiveness either.

You could gather every dollar you have ever received, empty every piggy bank you can find, and sell everything you own, yet none of it could pay for even one sin.

Jesus is talking about value, not price.

He wants us to understand that when we truly see who He is, everything else has to be measured beside Him, and nothing compares with Jesus.

That brings us to the reason we need this King so badly.

God is holy and good, which means there is nothing evil, dishonest, selfish, or sinful in Him. We were made by God and for God, yet every one of us has sinned.

Sin is what happens when we go against God's good ways through what we think, say, or do. We lie, become selfish, hurt people, disobey, and sometimes choose our own way even when we already know what God says is right.

I suspect all of us know something about that because I certainly do.

We cannot repair the problem of sin by promising ourselves that we will behave better tomorrow. Good choices matter, but good behavior cannot erase the guilt of what we have already done.

We need someone to save us, and this is where the King becomes our greatest hope.

Jesus is God the Son, and He became truly human while never ceasing to be God. He lived among people like us and experienced real hunger, tiredness, sadness, pain, and temptation, yet He never sinned.

Jesus lived the life we have not lived, and then He willingly went to the cross, not because He had done something wrong, but because we had.

First Peter 3:18 says, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God."

That verse tells us why the cross matters. Jesus, the righteous One who had never sinned, gave Himself for sinners like us so that we could be brought back to God.

Jesus truly died and was buried, but death did not hold Him because on the third day He rose from the grave. The King who gave His life for sinners is alive, and because He rose, our hope is not resting on a teacher who lived long ago but on the living Savior who defeated death.

This means we do not become part of God's Kingdom because our family goes to church, because we know more Bible answers than somebody else, or because we managed to make ourselves good enough.

We are saved when we turn from sin and trust Jesus.

Turning from sin means we stop defending our sin as though we have the right to decide for ourselves what is good and evil, and we turn toward God instead. Trusting Jesus means we depend on what He has done for us instead of pretending that we can rescue ourselves.

When Jesus saves us, He forgives us and gives us new life, and the Holy Spirit begins working within us.

That brings us all the way back to the farmer's field because something living begins to grow when God gives life.

When someone belongs to Jesus, change begins appearing over time. A person who lied may begin learning to tell the truth, someone who always wanted their own way may begin learning to care about others, and someone who refused to admit being wrong may begin learning how to say, "I was wrong. Will you forgive me?"

Those changes do not cause Jesus to save us. They begin to appear because He has saved us and is working in us.

Sometimes that growth is slow, and I think we should be honest about that because children and adults can both become discouraged when we notice that we still struggle with some of the same things.

Christians do not suddenly become perfect when they trust Jesus. We still need God's forgiveness, we still need His help, and we still have much to learn, but Jesus does not stop being faithful while He is changing us.

Maybe there are worries crowding your heart right now, and Jesus talks about worries in this parable because He knows what human hearts are like.

Children worry too.

You may worry about school, someone you love, arguments happening at home, being left out by friends, or prayers that do not seem to be answered the way you hoped.

Those are real worries, and following Jesus does not mean pretending painful things do not hurt.

It means we have a King we can trust while they hurt.

Jesus never promised that everyone who follows Him will always be healthy, popular, wealthy, safe from disappointment, or free from suffering. The Bible does not teach that kind of promise.

What Jesus gives us is better than pretending nothing bad will happen because He gives us Himself. He is alive, He stays with His people, He saves sinners, and He will return.

God's Kingdom is already at work because the King has come, but we are still waiting for the day when His Kingdom will be seen in all its fullness.

That is why the world still hurts. People still sin, bodies still become sick, people we love still die, and there are still frightening things we do not understand.

Yet none of those things will have the final word because Jesus will.

One day Christ will return and make all things right, which is why Christian hope is not the promise that everything we want will happen. Christian hope is the promise that Jesus Christ has died for us, risen

from the dead, reigns as King, remains with His people, and will come again.

Perhaps now we can understand more clearly why Jesus compared His Kingdom with treasure.

If Jesus really is who He says He is, then knowing Him is worth more than anything this world can place in our hands. Money, popularity, possessions, attention, and getting our own way may feel very important for a little while, but none of those things can forgive sin, give eternal life, or defeat death.

Jesus can.

So when we look back across everything Jesus taught beside the lake, we can see that the different parables were helping the crowd understand the same King from several directions.

The seed scattered across the field reminds us to truly hear God's Word. The mustard seed reminds us that God's work may begin in ways that appear small while His purposes are far greater than what we can see. The treasure and the pearl remind us that knowing Christ and belonging to His Kingdom are worth more than anything else we could possess.

And through all of those pictures, the most important Person was sitting in the boat.

Jesus was the King teaching about His Kingdom, and the same King who spoke to that crowd would later give His life on the cross for sinners and rise from the dead.

That is why our Big Idea is simple enough to remember but large enough to spend a lifetime understanding:

Jesus is the King, and His Kingdom is worth more than anything else.

If someone asks you this week what you learned from the parables Jesus taught beside the lake, you can tell them that Jesus is the King and His Kingdom is worth more than anything else.

And perhaps we can carry His own words with us too:

"Whoever has ears, let them hear." Matthew 13:9

We can listen to His Word, bring Him our honest questions, confess our sin instead of hiding it, and trust Him when we understand what He is doing as well as when we do not.

The One speaking from that boat was not only a wise teacher.

He is our Savior and our risen King, and He is worth everything.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS WITH SUGGESTED ANSWERS

1. What did the seed represent in the Parable of the Sower? Suggested answer: The seed represented the message about God's Kingdom, which is God's truth being shared with people.
2. Why did the different kinds of soil matter? Suggested answer: They showed that people can hear the same truth from God but respond to it in different ways.
3. What did Jesus mean when He said, "Whoever has ears, let them hear"? Suggested answer: He meant that we should do more than hear sounds. We should listen carefully to God's truth, receive it, and believe Him.
4. What is God's Kingdom? Suggested answer: God's Kingdom means God's rule as King. Jesus is the King.
5. Why did Jesus talk about a tiny mustard seed? Suggested answer: He wanted people to understand that God's Kingdom could have a small beginning but grow far beyond what people expected.
6. Did Jesus make a science mistake when He called the mustard seed very small? Suggested answer: No. Jesus was using an example His listeners knew well. Mustard seeds were famous in their world for being tiny. He was teaching about the difference between a small beginning and large growth, not giving a list of every seed in the world.

7. What did the treasure and the valuable pearl teach us? Suggested answer: They showed that God's Kingdom is worth more than anything else we could have.

8. Can we buy our way into God's Kingdom? Suggested answer: No. Salvation is God's gift. Jesus died for our sins and rose again, and we are forgiven when we turn from sin and trust Him.

9. Who is the hero of this lesson? Suggested answer: Jesus. He is the King and the Savior who rescues us from sin.

10. What should we remember when life is painful even though Jesus is King? Suggested answer: Following Jesus does not mean nothing painful will happen. Jesus is still King, He is with His people, He rose from the dead, and He will return and make everything right.

Optional deeper question: Why do you think some people heard Jesus but still refused to believe Him? Suggested answer: Hearing truth does not automatically mean someone will receive it. People can resist God because they want their own way. We should ask God to help us hear Him with humble hearts.

Optional deeper question: What kind of fruit might we see when Jesus is changing someone? Suggested answer: We may see growing honesty, kindness, forgiveness, obedience, patience, love, and willingness to admit when we are wrong. These things do not save us. They are signs of God's work in us.

HANDS ON ACTIVITY - TINY BEGINNING, BIG TRUTH

Purpose: Help children remember that God's Kingdom can begin in ways that seem small and that Jesus is the King we can trust.

Supplies: Mustard seeds if easily available, or another very small seed; small paper cups; a small amount of potting soil; water; small pieces of paper; pencils or crayons. If planting materials are not available, the activity can be completed with only paper and pencils.

Give each child a small seed and allow them to look at it carefully. Ask: "Does this look powerful?" and "Does this look like something that could become much larger?" Remind them that Jesus used the mustard seed to help people picture how something can begin very small while God knows what it can become.

Have each child place soil in a cup and plant the seed. As they plant, repeat together: "Jesus is the King, and His Kingdom is worth more than anything else."

Give each child a small piece of paper. Ask them to write or draw one small way they can respond to Jesus this week. Examples might include telling the truth when it is difficult, praying when they are worried, showing kindness to a lonely child, apologizing when they have done something wrong, or reading a few verses of Scripture with a parent.

As they finish, explain: "Doing one good thing does not make Jesus love us more, and it does not purchase salvation. Jesus saves us by grace. We obey Him because He is our King and because we love Him."

Let children take the cup home if appropriate. Tell them that when they see the seed or plant, they can remember that God's plans are often bigger than what we can see at the beginning.

If no planting supplies are available, have children draw a tiny seed in the center of the paper and then draw a large plant growing from it. Inside the plant, they can write the Big Idea: Jesus is the King, and His Kingdom is worth more than anything else.

TEACHER CLOSING

Bring the children back to the memory verse one final time: "Whoever has ears, let them hear." Matthew 13:9

Remind them that Jesus welcomes children who come to Him honestly. They do not need to hide their questions, pretend they never sin, or make themselves good enough for Him because Jesus is the King who came to save sinners.

Invite the children to pray with you: "Father, thank You for sending Jesus. Thank You that Jesus is our King and Savior. Help us listen when You speak through Your Word. Forgive us for our sins and help us trust Jesus instead of trying to save ourselves. Holy Spirit, help us understand God's truth and help our lives show that Jesus is changing us. When we are worried or afraid, remind us that Jesus is alive, Jesus is King, and Jesus will come again. In Jesus' name, amen."

TAKEAWAY TRUTH

Jesus is the King, and His Kingdom is worth more than anything else.