

# The Mustard Seed And The Leaven



The Jewish religious leaders believed that the Messiah would arrive in pomp and glory to free them from the Roman rulers. Addressing the crowds one day, Jesus said His Father's kingdom was like a mustard seed that a farmer sows in the field, and it grows to become a tree on whose branches the birds can perch.



The Jews thought Jesus was an ordinary man. How could a carpenter's son from Nazareth be the saviour of a country? No wonder the people were surprised when Jesus used the image of a tiny mustard seed to explain the Kingdom of God.

Jesus meant to tell the people that the Kingdom of God will also grow from small beginnings.

The Bible tells us how the ordinary carpenter's son went on to establish His ministry by asking Peter and his brother Andrew, who were casting their nets on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, to follow Him. One by one, Jesus called His disciples until there were twelve of them. Jesus sent out the twelve and they brought others to Him and the Kingdom of God grew.

On another occasion, Jesus compared His Father's Kingdom to the leaven or yeast, which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour till it was all leavened. What He meant to convey was that a mere pinch of leaven has the potential to penetrate and transform enough dough to feed scores of people.

Jesus chose to establish His Church with the help of simple illiterate fishermen rather than the scholarly Pharisees. We do not need to be great people if we want to be followers of Jesus.



## Word of God

**Mark 4: 30 – 32**

"What shall we say the Kingdom of God is like?" asked Jesus. "What parable shall we use to explain it? It is like this. A man takes a mustard seed, the smallest seed in the world, and plants it in the ground. After a while it grows up and becomes the biggest of all plants. It puts out such large branches that the birds come and make their nests in its shade."

## Insight

Fr. Thomas Stephens, a British Jesuit missionary, composed *Kristapurana*, an epic on Christianity in Marathi in the 17th century. The epic was

composed in traditional Indian style to explain the tenets of Christianity to the masses. Stephens used many Indian terms and concepts to preach Christianity to people in Goa.



## Notes

### Know Now

**MUSTARD PLANT:** The plant referred to here is generally considered to be black mustard, a large annual plant up to 9 feet (2.7 m) tall, that grows from a proverbially small seed (this smallness is also used to refer to faith in Matthew 17:20 and Luke 17:6). According to rabbinical sources, Jews did not grow the plant in gardens, and this is consistent with Matthew's description of it growing in a field. Luke tells the parable with the plant in a garden instead; this is presumably recasting the story for an audience outside the Levant or the Eastern Mediterranean area.

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Find a picture or painting of a mustard tree during the times of Jesus in the plains of Palestine.