

**Little to Big**

(based on Luke 13:18–21)

Late on the day of the Sabbath, Jesus was teaching in the synagogue. People came to the synagogue to listen to God's words and to learn more about God. His followers were eager to listen to what Jesus had to say and always had many questions for their teacher.

One asked, "Teacher, what is God's kingdom like?" Jesus thought for a moment, trying to find words that they would understand. Jesus always did that. He tried to find things that his followers knew well so that they could see how they were in relationship with God.

"Aha!" Jesus said. "God's kingdom is like a tiny mustard seed that a man plants in his garden. Mustard seeds are small, but have you seen how full, and tall, and green they become? Have you seen all the flowers that come from such a tiny seed? The plant grows so big and so full that even the birds make nests in it!"

Jesus' followers looked puzzled. They wondered how a mustard seed was like the kingdom of God.

One, looking at the mustard bushes that surrounded them, said, "Does that mean that God's kingdom grows from the very small actions of people like us?"

"Or is it the way that God wants us to live?" asked another.

"I think the kingdom is what the world will be like when everyone follows God's way," said a third.

"Yes!" Jesus said. And then he thought of another example. "God's kingdom is like the small amount of yeast that a woman uses to make bread. She mixes the yeast carefully into three measures of flour to make the dough. What does yeast do? It makes the dough rise and stretch and grow so much that the woman can make many wonderful loaves of bread so that everyone can enjoy them."

"Ahhh," said the people, especially the women who knew how yeast made dough rise well.

People remembered the wonderful taste of bread and the beauty of the mustard flowers. And even though they could not fully understand, they knew that God's kingdom was a wonderful thing that grows and grows from the smallest of things.



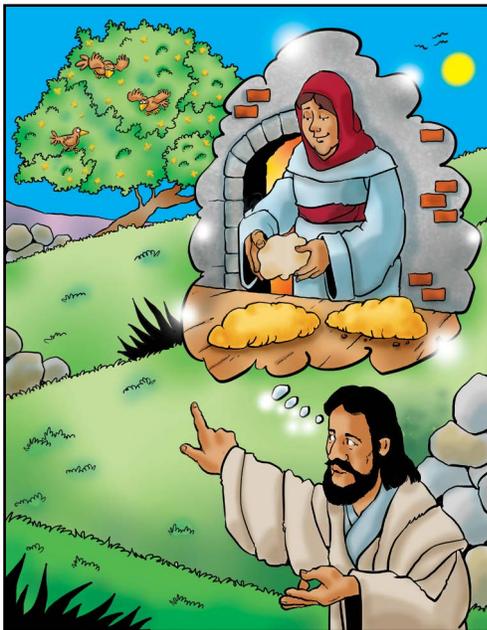
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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your child—imagine and wonder.
- Jesus tells stories using examples from the lives of his listeners. Imagine how Jesus might start a story today: “The kingdom of God is like . . .”
- Wonder together how God’s kingdom is growing in your life, your church, and your community.



Responding to God's Grace

- Read some of the other stories Jesus told about God’s kingdom: Mark 4:26–29 (seeds); Matthew 13:44 (treasure); Matthew 13:45–46 (pearl); Matthew 13:47–48 (net). Wonder together what these parables tell you about God’s kingdom.
- Watch a YouTube video together: “Kingdom of Heaven Parables (Matthew 13)” (bit.ly/GGGKingdom).
- Read *The Marvelous Mustard Seed* by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), pcusastore.com. Draw a picture of what you imagine the mustard tree might look like in your neighborhood.

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Make a recipe with yeast such as bread, pizza dough, rolls, and so forth. Watch the yeast bubble and grow, and then expand the dough. Consider why Jesus used the example of yeast to describe the kingdom of God.
- Find a recipe for rock candy that you like. Make rock candy and watch the crystals grow each day. Wonder together how Jesus might have used this as an example of the kingdom growing.
- Pray this prayer each day this week:

Dear God, may we help your kingdom grow by sharing your good news and loving and helping others. Amen.

Note: bit.ly web addresses are case sensitive.