

**INTRO**

- Do you like gardening? Ever planted and grown something? What's been your experience with it?
- "It's gone viral". What does this phrase mean?
- What has been your favourite movie/story you've experienced? Why?

**What are PARABLES?**

Parables are a simple story used to illustrate something often by comparison: *this* is like *that*. Jesus used parables to both reveal and conceal the truth of his kingdom. As we read today's text which contains 3 parables, think about what each story is trying to teach us.

**READ**

Mark 4:1-20, 26-35

**REFLECT**

**SEEDS & SOIL.** *This* is like *that*.

*This* (The Kingdom of God) is like *that* (a SEED).

*This* (our heart) is like *that* (SOIL).

Let's unpack both.

**THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS LIKE A SEED**

Remember, kingdom means God's ruling power and reign invading earth.

*Qu: how is the kingdom like a mustard seed (30-33)? What does it teach us about the kingdom?*

Just like the mustard seed is small and seemingly insignificant, it grows exponentially in both size and significance. *This* is like *that*. The kingdom is like that.

*Qu: how is the kingdom like a seed growing (26-29)? What is Jesus saying?*

Not only does the kingdom start small like a seed, it grows mysteriously ('he knows not how') and providentially ('by itself') by God's power.

To recap: the Kingdom of God is like a seed — starts small, and seemingly insignificant. Yet, it mysteriously and miraculously grows to exponential significance.

**YOUR HEART IS LIKE SOIL**

Seed needs soil.

*Qu: According to the parable of the sower (1-20), how does God grow his kingdom?*

*Qu: what are the various ways Jesus shows we can 'mishear' the word?*

According to this parable, God favours our hearts as the primary place he works in and through our lives. *This* is like *that*. Your heart is like the soil in the story. Biblically, the heart is used as a metaphor to represent the core of who we are controlling our mind, will & emotions. The quality of the soil represents the receptivity of our hearts towards Jesus, his kingdom and his word.

Jesus highlights 4 heart conditions:

1. HARD (along the path)
2. SHALLOW (rocky ground)
3. DIVIDED (among thorns)
4. RESPONSIVE (good soil)

*Qu: which of the 4 soils do you identify with now? How about in the past? Why?*

**RESPOND**

- What encouraged and challenged you the most out of today's discussion?
- How can you practically apply what you're learning to your personal life?

**PRAY**

- In light of what you've discovered tonight, pray for one another and then pray for those you interact with who need more receptivity toward the gospel.