

SERIES: The Good News, as Reported by Matthew

SERMON: **Don't Be a Weed Puller!**

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 13:24-43

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My sermon title this morning is taken from the first of three parables in the middle of Matthew 13, all of which provide us clues about the Kingdom of Heaven. One of the parables talks about weeds, another about mustard seed, and the third about yeast. Jesus takes each of these items found in everyday life in the first century and uses it to reveal something about the Kingdom. Three times in this passage we read the words: "The kingdom of heaven is like . . ." First in verse 24: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field . . ." but an enemy came and sowed weeds. Then in verse 31: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed." And once again in verse 33: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast."

But before we explore these three similes that offer clues about the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven, I think we should ask what the Kingdom *is*. What is the kingdom of heaven that is the subject of the parables of the weeds, the mustard seed and the yeast?

**1. The Kingdom of Heaven is not heaven itself.** Oh, there *is* a place called heaven, and it will be a kingdom that surpasses all human kingdoms, but that is not what Jesus is talking about here. Nor do I believe he is talking about the kingdom that precedes heaven, often called the Millennial Kingdom.

**2. It is not the Millennial Kingdom.** That is a real kingdom, too, as Jesus will establish His righteous rule for a thousand years following His Second Coming. One of the best known passages describing that future millennial kingdom is Isaiah 2:4ff:

*He (i.e. Messiah) will judge between the nations  
and will settle disputes for many peoples.*

*They will beat their swords into plowshares  
and their spears into pruning hooks.*

*Nation will not take up sword against nation,  
nor will they train for war anymore.*

By the way, the U.N. building in New York City has a huge plaque quoting this passage in its lobby, but it will not be the U.N. that accomplishes the universal peace spoken of here—it will be Jesus Christ when He comes again to set up His kingdom.

**3. Nor is the Kingdom of Heaven the Church.** Some theologians simply equate the two and teach that all the OT and NT promises about the Kingdom are simply inherited by the Church. In effect, they say, the only kingdom we will ever experience is the one we create for ourselves by doing good, eliminating poverty, and stopping global warming (all of which, by the way, are probably positive things, but they won't bring in the Kingdom).

Well, if the Kingdom of Heaven is not to be identified with heaven, with the millennial kingdom,

or with the church, what is it? I believe it actually includes all three.

**4. It is the rule of God in the hearts and lives of His people**, beginning with the ministry of Jesus, continuing through the Church Age and millennial kingdom, and culminating in the Eternal State. In fact, the Kingdom of Heaven is often referred to in the NT as The Kingdom of God. Some theologians love to nitpick these terms and make fine distinctions between the two, but the fact is when Luke records two of these very same parables in Luke 13:18-21, he substitutes “the kingdom of God” for “the Kingdom of Heaven.” I believe they are essentially synonymous terms.

One of the most helpful concepts in understanding the Kingdom of Heaven is this:

**5. It is “already, but not yet.”** The Kingdom is already here in some respects, but it has not yet arrived in other respects. For example, in regard to the “already” part of that formula, in Luke 17:20, where the Pharisees are trying to get Jesus to tell them when the kingdom would arrive, Jesus responds with an enigmatic statement: “The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is *within* you.” In other words, there is a sense in which the Kingdom is already here—in the heart of the believer.

Another passage that speaks of the Kingdom as being already here, at least figuratively, is Rom. 14:17: “The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” If you are experiencing those things, you are experiencing the Kingdom.

But there are plenty of other Scriptures that speak of the “not yet” aspects of the Kingdom. When the Bible speaks of swords being beaten into plowshares, or of lions lying down with lambs it is speaking of future aspects of the Kingdom. We have not seen those things happen, nor will we until Jesus comes.

So I am suggesting to you that we do not need to choose between believing in the *coming* Kingdom and the *present* Kingdom. The present Kingdom will merge into the coming Kingdom when Jesus returns. We will see the final ultimate triumph of God’s Kingdom only when Jesus comes; but if we keep our spiritual eyes open, we will see some amazing demonstrations of the King and His rule in our world today in the hearts and lives of God’s people.

Now let’s turn our attention to the first of these three parables.

### **The Parable of the Weeds**

Matthew 13:24-30

*Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed*

*heads, then the weeds also appeared.*

*"The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'"*

*"'An enemy did this,' he replied.*

*"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'"*

*"'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.' "*

To me this parable is easily one of the most fascinating Jesus ever gave. Like with the Parable of the Sower, Jesus provides the interpretation, although it isn't given until after the next two parables (verses 36-43). There's a reason for that. Jesus gave all three parables together, and according to verse 36, "Then he left the crowd and went into the house," and there he gave the interpretation of this one (apparently the other two were so obvious they didn't need to be interpreted) to His disciples in private. This goes along with what we learned last week—that parables had two purposes, to hide the truth to the unresponsive but reveal it to those who have responsive hearts.

Now since we've been given the interpretation, let's read it and save ourselves a lot of time. Matthew 13:36-43.

*Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field."*

*He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.*

*"As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.*

Clearly the Parable of the Weeds has *some* similarities to the Parable of the Sower, but it has even *more* differences.

**Similarities to and difference from the Parable of the Sower.** First, the farmer here is identified as the Son of Man, or Jesus, whereas his identity in the previous parable is not stated. The field is not the hearts of people this time, but the world. The seed is not the Word of God here, but the sons of the kingdom, i.e. believers. The enemy is once again the devil, but instead of snatching seed from unresponsive hearts he is now sowing weeds in the world. The weeds are the sons of the evil one or unbelievers. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are the angels.

**The theme of the Parable of the Weeds.** I would like to suggest to you that the theme of this parable is that it is not our responsibility as followers of Jesus to be weed pullers, or, if I may use a different analogy, we are not to be Kingdom Cops but rather Kingdom ambassadors. I am going to try to make application of this theme in two important arenas—the world and the church:

1. **Believers are not assigned to be weed pullers in the world.**
2. **Believers are even to be cautious about pulling weeds in the church.**

**1. Believers are not assigned to be weed pullers, or Kingdom Cops, in the world.** I want you to notice that Jesus identifies the field as the world. If the field is the world, and if it belongs to the owner, and if the owner is the Son of Man, then the logical inference is that the world belongs to God. Of course, the Scripture teaches this everywhere, like Psalm 24:1: “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it.” That is a given. But another logical conclusion is that the devil is a squatter. A squatter is someone who settles on land he has no right to, and works it for his own advantage.

What the Lord is doing in His world, according to this parable, is planting His people as witnesses, ambassadors, and influencers. They are not where they are by accident but on divine assignment. The weeds, on the other hand, are sons of the Evil One planted by The Squatter himself in an effort to sabotage the owner’s crop. (By the way, all human beings are one or the other—either sons of the Kingdom or sons of the Devil. There are no neutral observers. This is made clear in 1 John 3:7-10 and 5:19). Weeds, of course, are a common occurrence in any field, but there are so many weeds in this field that the servants are astonished. “Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did (all) the(se) weeds come from?” The answer is that the devil planted them, and he obviously has been very successful. The fact is that throughout history (since the Garden of Eden), the weeds have probably outnumbered the wheat by enormous percentages. In some parts of the world they seem to be the only thing growing.

The servants in the story are ready to put the sickle to the unbelieving weeds immediately, just as James and John were ready to execute the unbelieving Samaritans. Do you remember the story in Luke 9:54 where the Samaritans refused to grant hospitality to Jesus’ disciples? These two asked Jesus, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” Rather brash, I would say, for them to assume they even had the power to do this, but Jesus rebuked them for their attitude, just as the owner in our parable forbids his servants from pulling the weeds.

Now the unspoken question behind the servants’ desire to pull weeds seems to be, Why should wicked people who are sons of the Squatter be allowed to coexist with sons of the Kingdom? And the unspoken answer, but clearly implied is: Because God is a God of grace who does not rejoice in the death of the wicked, who is not willing that any should perish, who has a marvelous plan of redemption, and who has placed us here to be salt and light and witnesses and ambassadors of His love.

The church age is for evangelism, not judgment. Besides, Christians are not qualified to

distinguish infallibly between true and false believers, and every time the church has presumed to do that it has produced an ungodly bloodbath. John MacArthur writes,

*When the fourth-century Roman emperor Constantine required every person to make a profession of faith in Christ on pain of death, he succeeded in killing many true believers who refused to submit to his spurious brand of Christianity. During the Crusades of the Middle Ages, unbelievable brutality was committed against non-Christians, especially Muslims and Jews, in the name of the Prince of Peace. During the inquisitions in reaction to the Protestant Reformation, countless thousands of Christians who did not submit to the dogma and authority of Roman Catholicism were imprisoned, tortured, and executed.*

Even the great Protestant Reformer John Calvin engaged in the execution of heretics in his hometown of Geneva, Switzerland. And in our own country we have the Salem witch trials to our shame, as well as the settlers' horrendous treatment of native American populations—often using religious justification (they were pagans!).<sup>1</sup> In our own lifetimes we have seen Protestants murdering Catholics (and vice versa) in Ireland and militant Christians killing abortion doctors here. I believe these are all examples of weed pulling that Christ would disapprove. God has not assigned us the job of Kingdom cops but rather ambassadors and witnesses.

Now to be very frank, at this particular time in history and at this point in our culture, the more common problem we face, at least in the Church in America, is probably not the attempt to eradicate evil or evil people, but rather the temptation to compromise our morality and tolerate unimaginable evil. We are more likely to cohabit with the enemy than to exterminate him. I think we need a new call to hate sin but love the sinner. That may sound trite, but it's not. It may sound impossible, but it's not. There's one person we do this with constantly; we hate our own sin but love ourselves. God never calls us to think of evil as anything but heinous and inexcusable, but at the same time He calls us to exercise grace and mercy to sinful people, just as *He* has always done.

I want to make a second, probably more controversial point about weed pulling:

**2. Believers are even to be cautious about pulling weeds, or being Kingdom Cops, in the church.** Allow me to preface this with a few important observations: We evangelicals believe in the purity of the Church (not the purity of the world, but the purity of the Church); we ask new members for their testimony before they join because we want to be as sure as we can that they are believers (since the membership is making important decisions for the church); we warn people about cults and false religions and unsound doctrine; we practice church discipline when people conduct themselves in a manner that brings disrepute upon the name of Christ. And I'm glad we do all these things, because there are plenty of passages in the NT, particularly in Paul's writings, which make it clear that God honors holiness and purity in His church.

But this parable may provide a much-needed balance on the purity issue. I would put it this way: we should be relentless in demanding purity in our own lives, but when it comes to policing others' lives, even other professing believers, perhaps we should be a bit less relentless. I think

this parable indicates that if we're too focused on doctrinal purity in the church, too negative in attacking falsehood, too fastidious and legalistic, we can actually end up damaging young or immature believers and drive them away from the truth.

I have known a few people who believe they were called to be Kingdom Cops, or better yet, God's watchdogs (perhaps even better, God's attack dogs). They are not very pleasant people to be around, or to have in one's church! They can spot a deviation in someone's life from a mile away. I want to tell you a story about one of these watchdogs. Many of you remember the name of Roe Messner, the somewhat notorious second husband of Tammy Faye Baker, who recently passed away. What you may *not* know is that Roe Messner used to attend this church. In fact, he personally financed and built the youth building that used to sit where this sanctuary is today. It was called The Quiet Place. Roe's wife Ruth Ann had a beautiful voice and sang solos in our church.

The Messners applied for membership shortly before I was called as pastor. They gave their testimonies and were approved, but in those days new members had to be voted on by the congregation. When their names were presented, a certain watchdog stood up and challenged the Messners' membership on the grounds that Roe had experienced a bankruptcy in his business. The congregation rejected his argument and voted them in anyway, but the Messners were so hurt that this issue had been aired that way in the church, they left First Free, never to return. The Messners remained friends of ours, even loaning out their home in Vail, CO to us several times during our first pastorate here, but on several occasions he expressed to me the deep pain of that experience.

Roe started a new church in a different denomination, one that in my opinion was not as biblically based as ours, and his life subsequently took some very unfortunate turns. I suppose some might conclude, "It's a good thing the Messners didn't become members, because their subsequent divorce, his prison term, and other problems would have created huge public relations problems for our church." On the other hand, I can't help but wonder whether his entire life might have turned out differently if Roe had remained under the ministry of the Word in this fellowship, if one man hadn't decided that he was called to be a weed puller and a Kingdom Cop.

Please understand that I am not saying we shouldn't be concerned about sin in the church, but the last time I checked bankruptcy was not the unpardonable sin. Should the church offer financial counsel to its members? Of course. Should a member of the church be encouraged to pay his debts, *even* debts forgiven by a bankruptcy court? I think so. But do we eliminate someone from the family of God because they get into financial trouble or suffer a divorce? I don't think so!

I've tried to be as honest as I can about what I believe Jesus is teaching here, but I recognize the danger if we don't maintain our balance. We need to set this passage alongside such passages as 2 Timothy 3:1-5:

*But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers*

*of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.*

One passage says, “Don’t pull the weeds; let them grow in your midst”; the other says, “Have nothing to do with them; excommunicate them.” How do you reconcile these two teachings? Frankly, it’s not easy. I do have one suggestion that may be helpful. If you are naturally easy-going, a live-and-let-live type, tolerant of just about anything, you may need to take 2 Tim. 3 more seriously and ask God to give you His attitude toward sin, namely, He hates it. On the other hand, if you’re a hard-nosed, toe-the-line watchdog kind of personality, maybe you should take more seriously what Jesus says in this parable about the danger of becoming a professional weed puller.

Now WHY does Jesus tell His servants not to pull the weeds—whether killing unbelievers in the world or eliminating certain people from the church?

**Why should we refrain from being weed pullers?** There two reasons: 1) because we can damage the wheat as we pull the weeds, and 2) because that’s someone else’s job—someone better equipped than we are.

**1. We can damage the wheat if we pull the weeds too soon.** Scholars tell us that the Greek word for “weeds” in this passage refers to a variety of darnel that closely resembles wheat and is almost impossible to distinguish from it until the wheat ripens and bears grain. For this reason sowing it among the wheat was sometimes done by an enemy to sabotage someone’s crop. It was a common enough crime for the Romans to have had a specific law against it.

Now if the servants were to go into the field prematurely and try to pull the darnel, they might trample the wheat or disturb its roots. The roots of the wheat and the weeds would have become closely intertwined, and pulling up weeds would result in uprooting some of the wheat. Furthermore, the two plants look very much alike before they mature, and some wheat would undoubtedly be mistaken for weeds.

So also the spiritual weed puller sometimes creates so much ill-will that the sons of the Kingdom get damaged in the process. How many of us, for example, have known young people who left the church altogether because of what they perceived as intolerance and mean-spiritedness and legalism in church leaders? I have sometimes wondered if we need to have a special ministry for recovering fundamentalists, maybe even recovering evangelicals who have been damaged by weed pullers.

**2. Weed pulling is someone else’s job—someone better equipped than we are.** The harvest of sin will one day come due—you can count on it, and at that time God will call His true Kingdom cops to go into action—not you and me, but His angels. God grants to them divine knowledge as to who is a son of the Kingdom and who are sons of the evil one. They are given the task of

weeding out of God's kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. Both evil things and evil people are destined for the fiery furnace of eternity. That this is a clear reference to hell is indicated by the familiar phrase, "where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

People sometimes jokingly envision hell as the place where the ungodly will continue to party with one another while the godly endure an eternal worship service in heaven. But the picture the Bible presents is that there will be no friendships in hell, no camaraderie, no pleasure of any kind or any degree. But let's not close this parable on such a sour note, for Jesus doesn't. A glorious truth is shared in verse 43: "Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear."

Every person who is uncertain about his relationship to God should examine himself as to whether he is wheat or weed, a child of God or of the evil one. If you do not belong to God, you can come to God, because God is actually in the business of making wheat out of weeds, saints out of sinners. But those who are sure they are sons of the Kingdom should also hear what Jesus says, in order that their attitude toward sinners out in the world, and even toward those in the Church, might be the same loving, merciful, compassionate attitude of their Lord. He has called all of us to witness rather than condemn, to love rather than hate, to show mercy rather than judgment. In that way we will become, as Phil. 2:15 puts it, "blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the Word of Life."<sup>ii</sup>

Now I'm going to speak *much* more briefly about the other two parables, and I'm even going to group them together.

### **Two parables about the glorious growth of God's Kingdom. (13:31-35)**

*He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches."*

*He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."*

*Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet:*

*"I will open my mouth in parables,*

*I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world."*

I suspect the Parable of the Mustard Seed and the Parable of the Yeast were probably generated by quizzical looks on the faces of Jesus' disciples. They were probably thinking, if the Word of God is rejected by so many, whose hearts are unresponsive, impulsive, or preoccupied (that was the Parable of the Sower last Sunday), and if those who reject Christ are allowed to remain, exercising their contaminating influence (that is the Parable of the Weeds), then how can the Kingdom survive, much less thrive?

Will not the power of Satan and his evil forces, both demonic and human, utterly overwhelm God's saints? Yes, that would happen, except for a simple fact—Jesus said, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it!” There is a supernatural power behind the Kingdom of God that enables it to grow in numbers and influence beyond all reasonable expectation.

**Externally it will grow huge from small beginnings, like the mustard seed.** The mustard seed, the smallest kind of seed sown by farmers in Palestine, could grow in a relatively short period of time to be 15 feet tall!<sup>iii</sup> The point is that God's Kingdom would start small, but it would eventually reach every corner of the earth. Through just a handful of unlearned disciples, totally weak and inept in themselves, God would turn the world upside down. Eventually believers would be found in every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.<sup>iv</sup>

Of course, we haven't seen the ultimate fruition of this promise, because the Church is only the first phase of the Kingdom. But a time will come when every knee will bow to Jesus and “the kingdom of the world (will) become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 11:15).

Another lesson of this parable is that the Kingdom of Heaven will be a blessing to the rest of the world. The mustard seed not only grows into a tree, but the birds come and nest in it. The figure of nesting carries the idea of protection, safety, refuge, and sanctuary. If the birds here represent the nations, as some scholars think, then the point may be that those nations which recognize God's existence and seek to build their laws and culture on a Judeo-Christian foundation will prosper. Historically those nations have enjoyed economic success, high standards of education, justice, dignity for women, rights for children, prison reform, and countless other such social benefits.

Frankly, I can't for the life of me understand why the secular progressives in our country can't see that they are living off the benefits of centuries of at least partial adherence to an ethical, legal, and social fabric based on Scripture. Do they really think the benefits will remain if they succeed in undermining the foundation?

**Internally the Kingdom will permeate the world with its influence, as yeast permeates bread.** The last of our three parables tells us that a large amount of flour needs only a pinch of yeast. Working quietly, from the inside, it transforms the dough into a product that satisfies the hungriest person. I think Jesus uses this metaphor to show that the Kingdom will not just grow externally in size, but also internally as it quietly transforms people's lives. (Now this presumes that yeast here is used, not as a symbol of evil but as a neutral or positive symbol of spreading influence. Some Bible teachers insist that yeast or leaven is always a symbol of evil in the Scriptures, but both John MacArthur and D. A. Carson have demonstrated convincingly that this is simply not the case).

The quiet spread of the Gospel fits well historically with the fact that the greatest work of God

on earth has never been accomplished through armies or through legislation or through protest marches, though on occasion these may be necessary. To manifest the Kingdom's presence is not to build buildings or pass laws or perpetuate organizations, but to honor God with a quality of life that is directed powerfully by the transforming work of His Spirit.

Historically Christianity would grow and spread remarkably, externally and internally, but it would never become the religion of the Empire. Oh, I know Constantine made it so officially, but that was a foolhardy effort and introduced one of the saddest periods of church history, called The Dark Ages for good reason. Biblical Christianity will never be socially acceptable. It will never be politically correct. It will never again even be the civil religion of the United States; I hate to tell you but those days are long gone. But the Kingdom will continue to grow and spread into more and more areas of the world, more and more languages will be reduced to writing so that God's Word is available, and more and more lives will be permeated with the transforming work of the Gospel.

There's just one more question I want to ask? Has the Gospel permeated your heart. Has it spread through your family? Have you put your faith and trust in Jesus as your personal Savior?

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i. Lori Day, a high school history teacher in our church, shared the following with me: "Before slaughtering thousands of Inca in Peru in 1532, Francisco Pizarro had a priest read passages from the Bible in Spanish to the Inca chief, Atahualpa. Atahualpa and the thousands of Inca gathered to meet the outsiders were confused by the Spaniards' gesture and obviously didn't convert. The conquistadors, estimating their efforts at evangelism to be sufficient, proceeded with a surprise attack using muskets and mounted soldiers to cut down nearly 3000 unarmed Inca and capture Atahualpa. The Spanish received a ransom of 20 tons of gold for Atahualpa. Once they had the gold, they executed the Inca chief and returned to Spain. There are hundreds of stories like this one. (Don't even get me started on the Moravian massacre at Gnadenhutten during the American Revolution).

ii. John MacArthur, Matthew 8-15, 379.

iii. Some have argued against the infallibility of Scripture on the basis that the mustard seed is not the smallest of seeds. This is silly. Jesus is speaking proverbially, not technically or scientifically. The fact is the mustard plant has the smallest seeds of the many plants grown at that time in the gardens and fields of Palestine.

iv. John MacArthur writes, "When He was born, Jesus was placed in a manger, in the midst of cows, sheep, goats, donkeys, and other animals. The region of Judea, in which He was born, and of Galilee, where He grew up, were insignificant backwaters of the Roman empire. In the region of Galilee, Nazareth was among the least promising towns—a fact that prompted Nathanael to ask Philip, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?' (John 1:46). None of the twelve disciples came from the Jewish religious leadership or from the economic and social aristocracy. They

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were few in number, uneducated, fearful, weak, slow to understand and believe, and generally unqualified to be the leaders of any significant earthly kingdom. The group of believers who gathered for prayer in Jerusalem just before Pentecost numbered only about 120 (Acts 1:15). A modern church of that size is thought to be quite small, yet that was the nucleus of the early church. When Jesus ascended to heaven, His kingdom on earth was, figuratively and relatively speaking, much smaller even than a mustard seed.”