

Never Underestimate the Little Guy
Mark 4:30-34

I. Human tendency to underestimate

A. Human beings often underestimate important components of their lives and environments.

1. Studies
 - a. People often overestimate benefits and underestimate risks of medical interventions.
 - b. High achievers underestimate their talents while underachievers overestimate theirs.
 - c. People tend to underestimate the prevalence of other people's negative emotions.
 - d. People underestimate the number of years of retirement
 - (1) they have to plan for and finance.
 - (2) underestimate the effect of longevity and inflation on retirement economics
 - e. People underestimate how much other people like them.
 - f. People underestimate the power of their habits
 - g. People underestimate the power of a simple "thank you."
2. The parable and the parallel
 - a. People often underestimate important components of their lives and environments
 - b. **Christians often underestimate the power and potential of the kingdom of God in their lives and environments.**

B. What Christians underestimate

1. Christians tend to underestimate the spiritual deficiency of an unholy life.
2. Christians tend to underestimate the impact of a single act of kindness.
3. Christians tend to underestimate the transforming power of the gospel message.
4. Christians tend to underestimate the potential of the Spirit of God through the word of God to lead us into the joy of God in the will of God.
5. Christians tend to underestimate the power of corporate and personal prayer as the means for knowing and thriving as followers of Jesus in the world.

C. Why do Christians underestimate the potential and the power of the kingdom of God in their lives and in the world? (Reasons)

1. A lack of knowledge
 - a. Hosea -
 - (1) **Hosea 4:1 (ESV) *Hear the word of the LORD, O children of Israel, for the LORD has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or steadfast love, and no knowledge of God in the land;***
 - (2) **Hosea 4:6 (ESV) *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject***

you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

(3) **Hosea 6:6 (ESV)** *For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.*

b. God reveals Himself in the written word and in the living Word

(1) Access the word through reading

(2) Access the word through listening

(a) **Ephesians 4:11-12 (ESV)** ¹¹ *And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,*

(b) God gave teachers to the church as a means of increasing knowledge among His people so they would not perish from lack of knowledge!

c. Knowing God and Christ is THE means to eternal life

(1) **John 17:1-3 (ESV)** ¹ *When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, ² since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³ And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*

(2) Eternal life is the knowledge of God as He is. Where there is no knowledge the people perish!

2. **A lack of confidence**

a. Specifically a lack of successful experiences

b. Might be tied to a lack of successful engagement

(1) Israel at Kadesh-Barnea

(2) Refused to engage God on His terms and spent the next 40 years wandering in the wilderness for their lack of confidence

c. How many today underestimate the power of the kingdom of God because they have not engage the promises of God by faith?

3. **Lack of commitment**

a. **Luke 9:57-62 (ESV)** ⁵⁷ *As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." ⁵⁸ And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." ⁵⁹ To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." ⁶⁰ And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." ⁶¹ Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." ⁶² Jesus said to*

him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

- b. Many look for the benefits of faith without embracing the responsibility of faithfulness.

T.S. Whatever the reasons might be, Jesus addresses this tendency to underestimate the work of God in the parable of the mustard seed.

II. The Message of the Parable: Never Underestimate the Little Guy

A. The layers of the parable

1. First, nothing in this parable would cause Jesus’ audience to dismiss it as fantasy
 - a. Black Mustard, common in Israel, a shrub that reaches up to 10’, likely had the smallest seed of cultivated species at the time
 - (1) This is not the “Early Spring Mustard” of the continental US that rarely grows more than 18" tall
 - (2) The comparison is not about the seed doing the impossible but the seed doing the expected!
 - b. When interpreting parables, it is best to start with them in their historical context and bring the point, not the details, into current application!
2. Second, you can expect the kingdom to behave exactly according to its nature, in your life and in the world.
 - a. **Isaiah 55:10-11 (ESV) ¹⁰ “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, ¹¹ so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.**
 - b. God sent both the announcement of the kingdom and the inaugurator of the kingdom into the world, and what He intended WILL be accomplished!
3. Finally, whether in a life or a ministry, don’t be surprised if the kingdom starts out small and weak and grows into something substantial and fruitful.
 - a. Examples
 - (1) **Luke 2:7 (ESV) *And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.***
 - (2) **Acts 17:6 (ESV) ⁶ *And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also,***
 - b. Impact:

- (1) Where there is “seed” and “soil” there should be growth
- (2) If there is no growth, which is the nature of the seed, then we have to examine the condition of the soil.
 - (a) Christian, the kingdom will grow
 - (b) Are there conditions in your heart that impede the growth of the kingdom?
 - i) hard hearted unbelief
 - ii) shallow, undeveloped faith
 - iii) weedy worldliness
 - (c) **Tend to the condition of your heart and the seed WILL grow**
 - (d) **Don't underestimate the kingdom!**

B. How can we avoid underestimating the kingdom?

1. Assertions

- a. No single believer should underestimate the value of personal faithfulness.
- b. No single congregation should underestimate the value of their presence in their community.
- c. The Church as a whole should not underestimate the power of her testimony in the world (whether for good or evil)
- d. No one should underestimate the power of God to accomplish the will of God through the people of God
 - (1) **Job 42:1-2 (ESV) ¹ Then Job answered the LORD and said: ² “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.**
 - (2) **Isaiah 54:17 (ESV) ¹⁷ no weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall refute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication from me, declares the LORD.”**
 - (3) **Micah 7:8 (NIV) ⁸ Do not gloat over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will rise. Though I sit in darkness, the LORD will be my light.**

2. Efforts

- a. Personal Bible study and prayer
- b. Step out and step up -