Preschool–Grade 6

The Mustard Seed

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: God's kingdom started small and grows big, like a mustard seed. Faith as small as a mustard seed, put in our great God, matters, because nothing is impossible with Him.
Bible passage: Matthew 13:31–32 and Matthew 17:14–21. Read them before class.
Memory verse: "And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." *Matthew 17:20 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), a few real mustard seeds taped to an index card, a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board. Tape a few mustard seeds to a card.

1. Opening game: What Does It Grow Into? (5–10 minutes)

Name something small, and kids call out what it grows into: an acorn *(an oak tree)*, a tadpole *(a frog)*, a caterpillar *(a butterfly)*, a puppy *(a dog)*, a pumpkin seed *(a pumpkin vine)*, an apple seed *(an apple tree)*. Then pass around the card of mustard seeds and ask: *What do you think these grow into?* Let a few kids guess. Say: "Jesus told a parable about this very seed. Let's find out what it becomes."

2. Bible story: Small Seed, Great Tree (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Matthew 13. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

Jesus teaches by the sea. Look up Matthew 13:2–3. Great **multitudes** (crowds) came to Jesus, so He sat in a ship and taught the people on the shore. He "spake many things unto them in **parables**." A parable is a story from everyday life that teaches a lesson about God. **Look up Matthew 13:34.** Jesus taught the multitude in parables a lot!

The parable. Look up Matthew 13:31. "The **kingdom of heaven** is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and **sowed** in his field." The kingdom of heaven is God's kingdom: God ruling as King, and the people who love and obey Him. **Sowed** means planted.

The least becomes the greatest. Look up Matthew 13:32. The seed "indeed is the **least** of all seeds" (the smallest of the seeds). But "when it is grown, it is the greatest among **herbs**" (bigger than all the garden plants), "and **becometh** a tree" (becomes a tree), "so that the birds of the air come and **lodge** in the branches **thereof**" (come and stay in its branches). Hold up the seed card: *Could you guess this would become a tree?*

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How God's kingdom grew. Jesus did not explain this parable in the Bible, but we can see something like it in the book of Acts. After Jesus went back to heaven, the believers numbered "about an hundred and twenty" (Acts 1:15). On the day of Pentecost, "about three thousand souls" were added (Acts 2:41). Soon "the number of the men was about five thousand" (Acts 4:4). God's church started small, and it grew and grew.

A father asks for help. Look up Matthew 17:14–16. A man knelt before Jesus and said, "Lord, have mercy on my son." His son was **sore vexed** (badly troubled) and often fell into the fire and into the water. The disciples had tried, but "they could not cure him." **Look up Matthew 17:17–18.** Jesus said, "Bring him **hither** to me" (here to me). Jesus **rebuked** (sharply commanded) the devil, and it left the boy. The child was cured "from that very hour."

Faith as a grain of mustard seed. Look up Matthew 17:19–20. The disciples asked Jesus privately, "Why could not we cast him out?" Jesus answered, "Because of your **unbelief**" (not trusting God). Then He used the mustard seed again: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove **hence** to **yonder** place (move from here to over there); and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." **Look up Matthew 17:21.** Jesus also said, "this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." Faith means trusting God. A mustard seed is tiny, but the One we trust is great.

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. Why do you think Jesus picked the smallest seed for this parable instead of a big one?
2. The birds came and lodged in the branches (13:32). Who has God's church helped or given a home to?
3. The church grew from about 120 to thousands (Acts 1:15; 2:41; 4:4). How can one kid help God's kingdom grow today?
4. Jesus said the disciples could not help the boy because of their unbelief (17:20). What makes it hard to trust God sometimes?
5. "Nothing shall be impossible unto you" (17:20). Does that mean God gives us anything we wish for? Read 1 John 5:14 together and talk about it.

Recall questions

1. Where did the man sow the mustard seed? *(In his field, Matthew 13:31)*
2. What is the mustard seed the least of? *(All seeds, 13:32)*
3. What did Jesus say the disciples needed, even as small as a grain of mustard seed? *(Faith, 17:20)*

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4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **unbelief** means not trusting God, **verily** means truly, **ye** means you, **a grain of mustard seed** is one tiny seed, **remove hence to yonder place** means move from here to over there, and **impossible** means it can't be done. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Faith is trusting God, and the most important thing we trust Him for is saving us. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5). That day in Acts 2, about three thousand people obeyed (Acts 2:41), and the church grew like a mustard seed."

Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

This week: pick one thing that feels too big for you, pray about it every day, and trust God with it. Invite one friend to church, and help God's kingdom grow.

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6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. Matthew 13:2: Where did Jesus sit to teach? *(In a ship)*
2. Matthew 13:31: What did the man take and sow in his field? *(A grain of mustard seed)*
3. Matthew 13:32: What does the mustard seed become? *(A tree)*
4. Matthew 13:32: What comes and lodges in the branches? *(The birds of the air)*
5. Matthew 17:16: What could the disciples not do? *(Cure the boy)*
6. Matthew 17:20: Why could the disciples not cast it out? *(Because of their unbelief)*
7. Acts 2:41: How many souls were added that day? *(About three thousand)*
8. Acts 2:47: Who added to the church daily? *(The Lord)*

Or choose the **Mustard Seed word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/mustard-seed-word-search), crossword (vbshq.com/puzzles/mustard-seed-crossword), maze (vbshq.com/puzzles/mustard-seed-maze) or worksheet (vbshq.com/worksheets/mustard-seed-worksheet).

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that nothing is too hard for You. Help us trust You when things feel too big, and help Your kingdom grow through us. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child asks, "Can I really move a mountain?": answer honestly. Jesus used a mountain, something huge, to show that nothing is too hard for God. We pray and trust God, and "if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us" (1 John 5:14). Faith is trusting God, not a way to get whatever we want.

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