

The kingdom of God means the rule of God. A kingdom needs a king and the king is Jesus. He has come to establish God's rule on earth. Those who place themselves under his rule accept his forgiveness won on the cross. They enter into a relationship with God and live out this relationship by exhibiting 'Kingdom values' in their personal lives and in the community of God's people, the church. The church is a window for the world onto what God's rule looks like when lived out in community.

These two fairly straight forward parables describe the characteristics that should be present in the lives of those who live in the kingdom.

In **Matthew 13: 31-32** the parable of the mustard seed speaks of the Kingdom of God expanding numerically.

In **13:33-33** the parable of the yeast speaks of those in the Kingdom of God having influence in the world.

Starting with the **parable of the mustard** seed:

1. God wants his kingdom to grow. Why?
2. It is right to enjoy church. But do you think sometimes we might make our personal enjoyment of church more important than our desire to see the church grow?
3. How do you feel about God's kingdom expanding in our church, with more people being added to our number? And what challenges will an expanding church mean for those of us already in the church?

The parable of the yeast:

4. God calls us to influence those amongst whom we live. Who are the people around you that God has called you to influence? How do you actually go about doing this? What in your everyday life will point them to the fact that you now live your life under the influence of Jesus Christ? What won't?
5. When people come to Southover church, what in our church life will influence people by pointing them to Jesus? And what won't!
6. If people don't come to Southover Church, God calls us in this parable to go and influence people with the presence of his Son. This should be our mindset. How shall we do that?