

# Mark 4:32

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

## Analysis

Jesus describes transformation: 'But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.' The contrast is dramatic: smallest seed → greatest herb (garden plant). 'Great branches' provide shelter for 'fowls'—possibly alluding to Daniel 4:12, 21 where great tree represents kingdom sheltering nations. The kingdom starts small but grows to universal scope, providing refuge for all peoples. 'Lodge under shadow' suggests protection, rest, blessing. The church becomes shelter for all nations, fulfilling Abrahamic promise (Genesis 12:3) that all families would be blessed through Abraham's seed.

## Historical Context

The image echoes Old Testament kingdom prophecies: Ezekiel 17:22-24 (tender twig → mighty cedar sheltering birds); Daniel 4:10-12 (tree reaching heaven, sheltering all). Jesus' Jewish audience would catch these allusions—kingdom starting small but becoming universal. Early church fulfilled this: Jerusalem sect → Gentile mission → global Christianity. The 'birds' represent nations finding refuge in Christ's kingdom. Church history demonstrates parable's truth: small, persecuted church grew into global faith. This growth isn't always institutional triumphalism but gospel's advance transforming lives and cultures.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

## Study Questions

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1. How does understanding kingdom's destiny—universal scope sheltering all nations—affect your missional vision?
2. What does this teach about trusting God's timing in kingdom advance despite current smallness?
3. How can the church provide 'shade and shelter' for spiritually homeless people today?

## Interlinear Text

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καὶ ὅταν σπαρῇ ἀναβαίνει καὶ γίνεται πάντων τῶν  
But when it is sown it groweth up But becometh all G3588  
G2532 G3752 G4687 G305 G2532 G1096 G3956

λαχάνων μείζων καὶ ποιεῖ κλάδους μεγάλους ὅστε  
herbs greater than But shooteth out branches great so that G5620  
G3001 G3187 G2532 G4160 G2798 G3173 G5620

δύνασθαι ὑπὸ τὴν σκιὰν αὐτοῦ τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ  
may under G3588 the shadow of it G3588 the fowls G3588  
G1410 G5259 G4639 G846 G4071

οὐρανοῦ κατασκηνοῦν  
of the air lodge  
G3772 G2681

## Additional Cross-References

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**Psalms 91:1** (Parallel theme): He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

**Isaiah 11:9** (Parallel theme): They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

**Isaiah 32:2** (Parallel theme): And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

**Lamentations 4:20** (Parallel theme): The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the LORD, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen.

**Song of Solomon 2:3**: As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

**Proverbs 4:18** (Parallel theme): But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.