

The Parables of the Kingdom

Mark 4:21-34

February 10, 2013

Introduction

For the last couple of weeks, we have studied the parable of the Soils and Jesus' explanation to the disciples when they asked Him what He meant. Jesus explains that the soils are the human heart and the seed is the word of God. He explains further the condition of the human hearts when it receives the words. Three soils reject the truth and the other three soils are bountiful. It is basically the response of the people to God's word. It is a simple parable that Jesus illustrates while He is on the boat.

Interestingly, it is to the disciples that Jesus reveals that the parables are told to conceal the meaning from the people who reject Him. This concealing is an act of judgment against them. In **Mark 3:21**, the religious leaders have accused Jesus of being demonic, using its powers to cast out demons. As a result, many people accept what the religious leaders tell them and believe that Jesus to be demonic. From that point on, Jesus conceals from those who reject Him. However, with the disciples, He reveals the meaning and explains to them what He means.

I want us to take a step back and look at **Mark 4** as a unit, so we can have a clear mind what is going on. As I studied through this, there are commentators that believe that Mark is pulling different parables at different times to make a point. I do not think this is the case here in the gospels. I believe that everything we have here is chronologically in order and this is one setting. **Mark 4:33** says that Jesus spoke many parables. There are many parables that are not recorded in the Gospels (just as there are not every healing is recorded in the Gospels). It is more than likely that Jesus repeated those teachings at more than one place (which is evident in the Gospels).

He is teaching the crowd at the seaside of Galilee, on the boat. He is giving the crowd a parable about the soils (because at this point, the crowds are only interested in the miracles and not in His teachings) (**Mark 4:1-9**). At some point...maybe a lunch break or a quiet time, the disciples ask Jesus what He means in the parable (**4:10**). Jesus explains to them what the parable means (**4:11-20**). He continues His explanation with the disciples alone from **4:21-25**, then goes back to the crowd from **4:26-32**. By **4:35**, (which Mark says, "on the same day") they get on the boat to cross over to the other side of Galilee. So this is one day in Jesus' teaching with break(s) in between while He explains to the disciples. I believe that Mark is a very careful writer and, with the Holy Spirit's help, he puts together events exactly as it happens (although, he does not record everything that happens).

The question then is why does Mark (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) pick those sayings of Jesus? What is the connection between all these sayings? Jesus tells these parables (with Mark writing them down) for the simple reason—to encourage those who are discouraged. Remember Mark is writing to those who are persecuted by Rome—plenty of believers are discouraged by what they are seeing and experiencing. Jesus, with divine omniscience, knows that we will be discouraged because the beginnings of the kingdom of God seem small, almost miniscule. Opposition is all around us. Can we succeed? Is this God's blessing? Jesus brings forth encouragement for our souls when we battle the forces of darkness for souls.

I. Understanding the Word (21-25)

- Lamp

Mark 4:21-23 He said to them, "Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don't you put it on its stand? ²²For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. ²³If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."

- Clay pot with oil
- Placed on lampstand (only source of light)
- People do not hide it under large pots or under beds (absurd)
- What is Jesus talking about here?
 - Lamp = word of God
 - Context of Mark 4
 - **4:3**—listen
 - **4:9**— "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"
 - **4:23**—"If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."
 - **4:24**--Consider carefully what you hear

Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

- Old Testament uses of light

Psalms 19:8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Proverbs 6:23 For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life,

Psalms 119:130 The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

- With the lamp shining, we have understood God's word
- Once we have understanding, nothing is hidden

Mark 4:11 He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you."

Mark 4:22 For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open.

Note: At this point of time in Jesus' ministry, things are hidden about Christ. No one knew who Jesus was...not even the disciples. His deity was hidden from the world as well as His purpose. However, at the appointed time, everything will be revealed. When? At His death and resurrection.

John 2:22 After He was raised from the dead, His disciples recalled what He had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

- We proclaim the word of God

2 Peter 1:19 *And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.*

- Measure

Mark 4:24-25 *"Consider carefully what you hear," He continued. "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you-and even more. ²⁵Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him."*

- This is the fruit of our labor as new creation
- Whatever you give (in relation to the gospel)
 - You will be blessed and more!
 - You cannot out-give God

2 Corinthians 9:6 *Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.*

II. The Growing Seed (26-29)

Mark 4:26-29 *He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. ²⁸All by itself the soil produces grain-first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. ²⁹As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."*

- Seed in ground
 - Growing without man's help
 - Kingdom of God is like this growing seed
 - Man has no role in the growth of the seed
 - Who is responsible for the growth of the seed?
 - God!

1 Corinthians 3:6-7 *I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. ⁷So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.*

- Soil produces grain by itself
 - Divine work
 - Born again—the fruit of being born again

John 1:12-13 *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God- ¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*

- Seed matures
 - Seed doesn't stop growing until harvest!

Philippians 1:6 *being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

- Harvest

- Think of the fellowship of believers!

III. The Mustard Seed (30-32)

- Small seed
 - Size of the sand
 - Yet grows huge! 15 feet tall by 6 feet across
- Meaning
 - Small beginnings—no indication of how big it can get!
- Expansion of the kingdom!

Revelation 7:9 *After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.*

Conclusion

Jesus is telling His disciples and us, “You have been given the word of God. It has grown in your good soil. Shine it as a lamp on a stand. You have been given the kingdom of God. You now understand the words of life that I’m speaking to you (although you will not completely understand until My death and resurrection). Sow the seeds as I’ve commanded you. You may think this is impossible, that we are small in number and we have so many enemies. Proclaim the gospel. God will bless you abundantly because He started the good work in you. In another person’s heart, God is growing the seeds that you have sown. This person becomes part of the fellowship and in turn he will be spreading seeds. Our small beginnings are now worldwide and countless people from every nation, tribes and tongues join us.” Preach, teach, proclaim the word, and God will take care of it!