

The Parable of the Seeds

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Mark / Parables / Mark 4:26–34

INTRODUCTION

1. We are looking at two more parables this morning
2. They are found in Mark's gospel chapter 4
3. The first one is found in verses 26-29 and is only found here
4. The second one is found in verses 30-34
5. It also occurs in [Matthew 13:31-32](#) and [Luke 13:18-19](#).
6. The first parable is the parable of the growing seed
7. the second is the parable of the mustard seed
8. Both parables give us more information on the parable of the soils that's found in verses 1-20
9. Listen to these two parables as I read them
10. Read [Mark 4:26-34](#).
11. When we studied the parable of the soils, we learned that understanding this parable was key to understanding all the parables
12. That may be why we do not hear Jesus giving an explanation for them
13. We do in verse 34 where it says, "He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples."
14. Both parables mention seed and soil, just like the parable of the soils
15. We said in the parable of the soils that the seed fell on different types of soil
16. But only one type of soil produced a crop
17. The same is true here but the emphasis is not on the soil but the seed and the mystery behind its growth
18. Both parables make reference to the kingdom of God
19. Jesus says in verse 26 the kingdom of God is like and then describes it
20. He asks in verse 30, "How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it?"

21. The first parable emphasizes the sovereign and mysterious work of God in the growth of His kingdom as illustrated in the growing seed
22. The second parable signifies the small and humble beginnings of the kingdom of God, starting with Jesus and His few disciples, then growing immensely and having a significant impact as illustrated in the mustard seed

· Let's look at the first parable in vv.26-29...

I. The Parable of Growing Seed (vv.26-29)

· Jesus says...

a. A man cast seed upon the soil (v.26)

1. This is the farmer
2. Using the broadcast method, as in the parable of the soils, he casts seed on the ploughed soil
3. [Isaiah 28:24-25](#), “24 Does the farmer plow continually to plant seed? Does he continually turn and harrow his ground? 25 Does he not level its surface and sow dill and scatter cumin and plant wheat in rows, barley in its place and rye within its area?”

b. After he's done, he goes to bed at night (v.27)

c. He gets up day by day (v.27) and waits for the seed to grow

1. Here is the most patient man on the planet
2. He understands that growth takes time and cannot be rushed
3. His waits in faith hoping for the seed to grow

› Then...

d. The seed sprouts and grows (v.27)

e. But he does not know how this happens (v.27)

1. He knows that this mysterious process occurs without his direct intervention
2. Biblically speaking, it's God who causes the growth ([1 Cor.3:7](#))

f. The soil produces crops by itself (v.28)

g. First the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head

h. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come

1. The sickle is a farming tool with a curved blade
2. It's used for harvesting grain or cutting crops

3. By mentioning the sickle Jesus is speaking of harvest time when the grain is ripe
4. In Scripture the sickle is often associated with judgment and the final gathering
 - a. [Joel 3:13](#), “Send in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; The vats overflow, for their evil is great.”
 - b. [Revelation 14:14–16](#), “14 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. 15 And another angel came out of the sanctuary, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sits on the cloud, “Put in Your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.” 16 Then He who sits on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.”

> What’s...

i. The meaning of the parable

> First...

1. The sower is the evangelist
 - a. An evangelist is someone to proclaims the gospel to the lost
 - b. In short, he is a church planter
 - c. Paul told Timothy in [2 Timothy 4:5](#) to “do the work of an evangelist”
 - d. He wasn’t calling him an evangelist because he was a pastor
 - e. No he was telling Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist”
 - f. What is his work? To preach “the good news of the word” which is “Christ”
 - g. We see that in [Acts 8:4–5](#), “4 Therefore, those who had been scattered went about, proclaiming the good news of the word. 5 Now Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began preaching Christ to them.”
2. The seed is the word of God or the gospel (v.14)
 - a. It’s called the “word” in verse 14
 - b. It’s called “imperishable seed...the living and enduring word” in [1 Peter 1:23](#), “for you have been born again not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.”
3. The parable reveals the power is not in the evangelist, it’s in the gospel
 - a. Paul said in [Romans 1:16](#), “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

- b. He said in [1 Corinthians 1:18](#) that for “us who are being saved it is the power of God.”
 - c. He gives more detail in [1 Thessalonians 1:5](#), “for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full assurance; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.”
 - d. Even to the Corinthians, he said in [2 Corinthians 4:7](#), “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves.”
4. So, according to [1 Corinthians 3:7](#), the evangelist “plants” and “waters” but it’s “God who causes the growth”
 - a. [1 Corinthians 3:7](#), “So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.”
 - b. That is illustrated in verses 27-28 when the farmer “goes to bed at night and gets up day by day, and the seed sprouts and grows” and he doesn’t know how
 5. When you and I present the gospel to someone, it is God’s responsibility to open the heart to it
 - a. [Acts 16:14](#), “And a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening, whose heart the Lord opened to pay attention to the things spoken by Paul.”
 - b. [Ezekiel 36:26–27](#), “26 “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to do My judgments.”
 6. We don’t save anyone
 7. We give them the gospel in order to be saved
 8. But it is God who “causes the growth” not us
 9. So we don’t have to worry
 10. It’s the sovereign work of God to birth life into an unregenerate soul
 11. [John 3:7–8](#), “7 “Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 “The wind blows where it wishes and you hear its sound, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who has been born of the Spirit.””
 12. To the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Luke says in [Luke 24:45](#), “Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.”
 13. So how the seed grows is beyond finding out but it is God who does it

- a. [Ecclesiastes 8:17](#), “and I saw every work of God, I concluded that man cannot find out the work which has been done under the sun. Even though man should seek laboriously, he will not find it out; and though the wise man should say, “I know,” he cannot find it out.”
- b. [Ecclesiastes 11:5](#), “Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the work of God who works all things.”

14. God is the One who causes His kingdom to grow

15. He is the One who causes the new birth

16. He is the One who opens the heart and causes it to bring forth new life

17. In the words of [Ephesians 2:5](#), “even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—”

18. The kingdom of God is like growing seed

· Jesus gives another parable in verses 30-34...

II. The Parable of the Mustard Seed (vv.30-34)

“30 And He was saying, “How shall we compare the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it? 31 “It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smallest of all the seeds that are upon the soil, 32 yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes largest of all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that the birds of the air can nest under its shade.” 33 And with many such parables He was speaking the word to them, as they were able to hear it; 34 and He was not speaking to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.”

This parable signifies the small and humble beginnings of the kingdom of God, starting with Jesus and His few disciples, then growing immensely and having a significant impact

· Jesus says...

a. It is like a mustard seed

1. There are different types of mustard seed
2. There is the black mustard, brown mustard, and white/yellow mustard
3. Jesus is referring to the common black mustard plant
4. The leaves were used as a vegetable and the seed as a condiment
5. It also had medicinal benefits
6. The seeds are very small about the size of a grain of sand (Hiebert)

· Jesus said...

b. It is the smallest of all the seeds

1. Jesus was referring to it being the smallest in comparison to all the other seeds the Jews sowed in Palestine (MacArthur)
2. **R.C. Sproul** says by Jesus referring to the mustard seed as the smallest seed, He was using “hyperbole, [which was] a literary device that is used for emphasis. Furthermore, in Hebrew idiom, it was common for the Jews to refer to the mustard seed as the smallest seed because it was superlatively small. There is small, smaller, and smallest, and the mustard seed was in the category of the superlatively small.” (Mark Commentary)

› Jesus says...

c. It grows up and becomes largest of all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that the birds of the air can nest under its shade

1. This tiny seed produces a plant ten to twelve feet (Hiebert), some as large as 15 feet high (MacArthur)
2. While it’s not a tree in the truest sense of the word, it has the properties of a tree, such as having branches large enough for birds to nest in
3. **Sproul** again says, “God can use the smallest words that we speak, the smallest service that we give, and bring a kingdom out of it. This points not to the greatness of the mustard seed but the greatness of God, who works everyday to bring about His plan for the ages.”

› By comparing the kingdom of God to a mustard seed, He is saying...

d. The kingdom of God, starting with Jesus and His few disciples, and has continued to grow immensely

e. It started small but then has grown beyond all comparison

1. [Acts 2:41](#), “So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.”
2. [Acts 4:4](#), “But many of those who had heard the message believed, and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.”
3. [Acts 5:14](#), “And more than ever believers in the Lord were added to their number, multitudes of men and women,”
4. [Acts 11:21](#), “And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.”
5. [Acts 12:24](#), “But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.”
6. [Acts 14:21](#), “And after they had proclaimed the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch,”

7. [Acts 16:5](#), “So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were abounding in number daily.”
8. [Acts 17:4](#), “And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a great multitude of the God-fearing Greeks and not a few of the leading women.”
9. [Acts 17:6](#), “And when they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brothers before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have upset the world have come here also;”
10. [Acts 19:20](#), “So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.”
11. [Acts 21:20](#), “And when they heard it they began glorifying God; and they said to him, “You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law;”

Wayne Jackson of the Christian Courier writes, “On the day of Pentecost some three thousand souls were ushered into the kingdom of God ([Acts 2:41](#)), and subsequently, day by day, others were added to that number ([2:47](#)).

Soon, the number the men was five thousand ([Acts 4:4](#)), and “believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women” ([Acts 5:14](#)). The apostles were presently charged with having “filled Jerusalem” with the gospel ([Acts 5:28](#)). So the “number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly” with even a great company of priests obeying the faith ([Acts 6:7](#)).

Before long, persecution came and the disciples were scattered abroad, but they went about preaching the word and so the gospel went into Samaria where great multitudes gave heed to its precepts ([Acts 8:4, 5](#)).

In [Acts 8](#), the saving word was dispatched to Ethiopia in Africa by means of the conversion of the eunuch, and in [Acts 9](#), in connection with Saul’s conversion, we discover that Christianity had already been planted in Damascus, Syria (cf. [Acts 9:10](#)). In [Acts 9:31](#) there is evidence that the church had spread throughout “all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria.”

The Gentiles are introduced to the Christian message in [Acts 10](#), and in the latter part of chapter eleven, the word goes into Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch (Syria) with a “great number” turning to the Lord ([Acts 11:21](#)). Again, in [Acts 12:24](#), “the word of God grew and multiplied.”

The missionary endeavors of Paul commence in [Acts 13](#). He and Barnabas take the gospel to Cyprus and then on to Asia Minor where many converts were made (cf. [Acts 14:21](#)). On the second missionary campaign ([Acts 15:40ff](#)) Paul again forged westward, along with Silas (and later Luke and Timothy) where, in Asia Minor, “churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily” ([Acts 16:5](#)).

In [Acts 16](#) the kingdom spreads into Europe and the Christian system burns like a fire out of control. Great multitudes are led to the truth (cf. [Acts 17:4](#)) and presently the

disciples are accused of having “turned the world upside down” ([Acts 17:6](#)).” (Wayne Jackson, Christian Courier, <https://christiancourier.com/articles/the-explosive-growth-of-the-kingdom-of-christ>)

f. It's still growing today

1. “God is at work even now, building His kingdom, not with entertainment, not with flash, not with all of the pizzazz that we try to conjure up, but by obedience to His Word, which is attended by His Spirit, so that the kingdom grows and grows until the day when the Lord of the harvest comes for His fruit.” (Sproul)
2. It's impossible to know the true numbers but, some have estimated as of 2024, there are approximately 2.6 billion Christians in the world (Gordon Conwell) (Baptist Resource Network)
3. Everyday God is saving someone from their sin and His wrath
4. [Psalm 79:9](#), “Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name; And deliver us and atone for our sins for Your name's sake.”

· Mark makes a couple final thoughts about Jesus' parables by saying in verses 34-35, “And with...

III. Many Such Parables (vv.33-34)

“33 And with many such parables He was speaking the word to them, as they were able to hear it; 34 and He was not speaking to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.”

Mark records no further parables from the lips of Jesus until Passion Week. (Hiebert)

· But we know from verse 33 that...

a. Jesus spoke other parables that are not recorded (v.33)

1. He spoke somewhere between 30-40 parables
2. We know that for a couple of reasons one being the repeated use of the word in the NT
3. The Greek word for parable (parabole) occurs 46 times
4. The same is true of the signs He performed
5. We don't know how many signs He performed

› But we do know what John says in...

6. [John 20:30-31](#), “30 Therefore many other signs Jesus also did in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these have been written so that

you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”

› Mark also tells us in verse 33 that...

b. When He spoke in parables they were able to hear it but not understand it (v.33)

1. Mark says in verse 33, “And with many such parables He was speaking the word to them, as they were able to hear it.”
2. **D. Edmond Hiebert** says, “Jesus carefully fitted His message to the condition of His audience, intuitively reading their hearts to see what they could receive.”
3. **Lenski** explains by them being “able to hear,” the word akouein is not to be understood in the intensive sense of understanding the inner meaning of the parables but in the ordinary sense of hearing so as to remember.”
4. **Albert Barnes** translates “as they were able to hear it” as “as they could comprehend it.”
5. He says, “They were like children; and He was obliged to lead them along cautiously and by degrees to a full understanding of the plan of salvation.”
6. Parables enlighten or obscure depending on the ability to hear
7. Those who hear find them revelatory—and even more will be given to them (vv. 24–25)
8. Those who are unable to hear find parables opaque
9. Hearing determines whether one is an insider or an outsider. (James Edwards, PNTC Mark)
10. Notice the pronouns “them” and “they”
11. That is referring to the crowds

c. He didn’t speak to them without a parable (v.34)

1. So the crowds got parables
2. But the disciples were explained everything
3. Remember why? [Mark 4:11–12](#), “11 And He was saying to them, “To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to those who are outside, everything comes in parables, 12 so that while seeing, they may see and not perceive, and while hearing, they may hear and not understand, lest they return and be forgiven.””

CONCLUSION

1. Do you understand this morning?
2. Are you inside or outside the kingdom?

3. Is God growing your heart towards Him for salvation?
4. My prayer for you today is that God will grow your heart into the kingdom
5. How does He do that?
6. By calling you to turn to Jesus in faith and repentance
7. Receive Him now
8. Stop rejecting Him by not giving Him your life
9. Let's pray

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