

Mark Chapter 4 Continued

Verses 21-23: Here is another practical illustration.

“Candle” refers to a small lamp. Jesus’ point (in verses 21 and 22), seems to be that God’s in-breaking kingdom, which it is Jesus’ task to reveal in God’s time, must for now be partially hidden. But the time will come when it is gloriously revealed.

Mark 4:21 "And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?"

“Candle”: This refers to a very small clay bowl made with a spout to hold a wick and containing a few ounces of oil that served as the fuel.

“A candlestick”: In common homes, this was simply a shelf protruding from the wall. Wealthier homes might have separate, ornate stands (Rev. 1:12).

Jesus was just making an example of how foolish it is to hide the Light of the world. This lamp symbolizes the divine Truth that is caught up in the person of Jesus Christ. A candlestick is to give light. Covering the very thing that produces light would be very foolish.

Christians are the bearers of the Light of Jesus to the lost world. We must shine forth, not cover the Light the Lord has given us.

Mark 4:22 "For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad."

“Nothing hid ... manifested”: The purpose in keeping something hidden is so that one day it can be revealed. Jesus’ teaching was never intended to be just for inner circle of followers. It would be the responsibility of the disciples to communicate the gospel of the kingdom to the world at large (Matt. 28:19-20).

Much was hidden before Jesus came. The way into the Holy of Holies was opened when Jesus died on the cross, and the curtain was torn from the top to the bottom. This tells us that Jesus has opened the way to God the Father for us.

The Scriptures are revealed to us by the Holy Spirit of God. The hidden things of God are revealed through Jesus Christ.

Mark 4:23 "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear."

Again, He was speaking of the understanding of man being opened. This was speaking of listening carefully and understanding.

Verses 24-25: This may be paraphrased: "Give careful attention to what you hear. For according to the proportion of study given God's Word, a corresponding amount of knowledge will be given you, and generously multiplied at that."

The point is that God's truth, instead of being divinely hidden from man (verses 21-22), will be understood in proportion to one's attention to and study of it.

Mark 4:24 "And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given."

"With what measure ye mete": The spiritual results which the disciples realized were to be based on the amount of effort they put forth; they would reap as they had sown.

"Shall more be given": The one who has learned spiritual truth and applied it diligently will receive even more truth to faithfully apply.

More than ever before, it is very important what you listen to. The brain is like a computer, and everything that goes into the brain is recorded. We must filter out all the dirty movies, the rock music with its suggestive lyrics, and even much conversation of the general public; because it is spiced with cursing.

The information that we receive into our brains can be built upon, so we must make sure that it is absolute truth. The more we receive the truth, the more we build upon it. The Bible says that we must seek to find. It is amazing how much extra knowledge we can acquire from just one extra hour in the Bible.

If we desire to learn the truths in the Bible, the Holy Spirit of God will teach us. Whatever you do, study and memorize as many Scriptures as you can. We see here, that if we preach (mete), what we do know, God will fill us with more and more that we can pass on. It never ends. He just fills us over and over again.

Mark 4:25 "For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath."

This is just saying that the knowledge God has given you must be used. If you never recollect a Scripture, pretty soon you couldn't remember it even if you tried. If you use it frequently, then you will add more and more to it all the time.

Verses 26-29: The point of this parable is that God causes the gospel to bear fruit and His kingdom to grow. Just how He does these things we do not fully understand.

This parable is recorded only by Mark and complements the parable of the sower by explaining in more depth the results of spiritual growth accomplished in good soil.

Mark 4:26 "And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground;"

“Kingdom of God” (see note on 1:15).

Remember the seed was the Word of God. If we scatter that Word out, we may not see the results right now, but on harvest day there will be those who have received that Word and are counted in the kingdom, because of that Word that was spread.

Mark 4:27 "And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how."

Many times, we do not know that we have said something about the Lord that has influenced their lives. We don't always know that the Lord is working in someone's life when He is. By the foolishness of preaching, men are saved. This means foolish to the world.

Two or three different people may think they have ministered to a person to no avail; but when you least expect it, he comes into the kingdom. We know not how, but it is part of God's plan; just like the seed in the verse above.

Mark 4:28-29 "For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." "But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."

We see in verse 28 and 29 above, the life of an individual Christian, and also the growth of a church. A person, when he first receives the Word of God (seed), is not a full grown Christian. In the meantime, we must patiently await and grow until harvest.

“Putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come”: When the grain is ripe, the sower of the seed must harvest the crop. There are two possible interpretations of this unexplained parable. It could be referring to the entire scope of the kingdom, from the time Jesus sowed the gospel message until the final harvest in the future.

His disciples would continue the work of presenting the gospel that would eventually yield a harvest. The better interpretation pictures the gospel working in lives. After the gospel is presented, the Word of God works in the individual heart, sometimes slowly, until the time when God reaps the harvest in that individual and saves him.

Verses 30-32: The central truth here is: Although God's work in Jesus currently is very small, apparently insignificant, and making little visible headway, His kingdom will grow eventually worldwide and have global impact.

Mark 4:30 "And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?"

The physical heaven has no comparison here on this earth. Heaven far surpasses anything on this earth. This perhaps, could be speaking of the kingdom of God's people.

Even while we are on the earth, we Christians make up the kingdom of God on the earth. We are His kingdom here. It is very peculiar how the Christian population grows. One gets saved, and then that one draws several more; and then the first thing you know, there are millions of Christians.

Mark 4:31 "[It is] like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth:"

“A grain of mustard seed”: A reference to the common black mustard plant. The leaves were used as a vegetable and the seed as a condiment. It also had medicinal benefits.

“Is less than”: The mustard seed is not the smallest of all seeds in existence, but it was in comparison to all the other seeds the Jews sowed in Israel.

When you stop and think about it, it is amazing how one Jesus Christ about 2,000 years ago started what has grown into literally millions of Christians today. The seed that was planted was the Word of God, Jesus Christ. God's church started first with Jesus Christ, then the twelve, and look what it has grown into today.

Mark 4:32 "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."

“Fowls of the air”: While not a tree in the truest sense of the word, the mustard shrub has been known to grown as large as 15 feet high and to have the properties of a tree, such as having branches large enough for birds to nest in.

The tree represents the sphere of salvation, which would grow so large that it would provide shelter, protection, and benefit to people (see note on Matt. 13:32). Even unbelievers have been blessed by association with the gospel and the power of God in salvation. Christians have been a benediction to the world (see note on 1 Cor. 7:14).

Every country has been touched by this Word. In South America, the mustard tree grows so big that a man on horseback can ride under the branches. This is really minor however, to the true meaning of this Scripture about the humble beginning of the church of Jesus Christ, and how it has grown into millions of believers.

Verses 33-34: This is a summary statement. Jesus' indirect method of teaching created interest and summoned to decision, while yet leaving time to reflect and decide. The parables are at once both a sort of judgment on the hearers' spiritual dullness and an expression of God's active willingness to enlighten and save.

This conclusion to Mark's account of Jesus' parables highlights Mark's recording only representative samples of all the parables Jesus taught.

Mark 4:33 "And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear [it]."

The multitudes were not yet ready for more direct truth about Jesus or the kingdom of God, so in grace, Jesus gave them just enough information to spark their curiosity.

Mark 4:34 "But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples."

“Without a parable spake he not unto them”: On that particular day, Jesus spoke to the larger crowd only in parables. This method of teaching left unbelievers with riddles and kept them from being forced to believe or disbelieve Him, they could make no decision to follow Him since they did not understand what He taught.

These parables, as we said before, were spoken so that the unbelieving world would not understand what He was saying. The only ones who did understand were the ones to whom He chose to reveal it. He explained every parable in detail to His disciples.

Verses 4:35 – 5:43: Here Jesus takes His disciples from the classroom to the laboratory. Having just taught that God's power will cause His kingdom to grow to worldwide proportion and influence (4:30-32). Jesus now performs four miracles that demonstrate this divine might. God's power is seen overcoming

- (1) The danger of a storm (4:35-41);
- (2) Demons in a victim possessed (5:1-20);
- (3) Disease in a woman physically ravished (5:21-34); and
- (4) The death of a little girl (5:35-43).

Verses 35-41: This account demonstrates Jesus' unlimited power over the natural world.

Jesus stills the storm. In the Old Testament, such power resides only in God (Psalms 65:7; 107:29).

Mark 4:35 "And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side."

"The same day", spoken of here, probably means the same day that He spoke these parables. They dismissed the multitude, and Jesus climbed into the little ship that He probably used to preach from before.

“Unto the other side”: Jesus and His disciples were on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. To escape the crowds for a brief respite, Jesus wanted to go to the eastern shore, which had no large cities and therefore fewer people.

Mark 4:36-37 "And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships." "And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full."

It is not unusual for a strong wind to come up suddenly on the Sea of Galilee. Many fishermen through the years have lost their lives because of the sea. All of these little ships were having problems. Many had followed Jesus into the sea in small boats.

“Great storm of wind”: Wind is a common occurrence on that lake, about 690 feet below sea level and surrounded by hills. The Greek word can also mean “whirlwind.” In this case, it was a storm so severe that it took on the properties of a hurricane (see note on Matt. 8:24). The disciples, used to being on the lake in the wind, thought this storm would drown them (verse 38).

Mark 4:38 "And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?"

“He ... was ... asleep”: Jesus was so exhausted from a full day of healing and preaching, even that storm could not wake Him up (see note on Matt. 8:24).

You must remember that Jesus' flesh was of Mary. In the flesh, He got tired, and that was why He sent the multitude away and cast out into the sea to rest His body; and also that He might show that He is Lord of the sea, as well. Jesus knew no fear as these disciples did. Jesus was not concerned about the high waves for Himself.

Mark 4:39 "And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."

“Peace, be still”: Literally “be silent, be muzzled.” Storms normally subside gradually, but when the Creator gave the order, the natural elements of this storm ceased immediately.

Jesus is Peace. He is the King of Peace. Jesus is in total authority over everything in this world. Land, sea, air, and under the earth, as well. When He speaks, it must obey.

Mark 4:40 "And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?"

Jesus constantly questions in order to spur people to deeper trust (see 2:8, 19, 25-26; 3:4, 23, 33; 4:13, 21, 30).

Fear is not of God. Faith is the opposite of fear. Jesus scolded them for doubting. They should have known, if they had truly known Jesus, that no harm would come to them as long as Jesus was with them.

Mark 4:41 "And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

“They feared exceedingly”: This was not fear of being harmed by the storm, but a reverence for the supernatural power Jesus had just displayed. The only thing more terrifying than having a storm outside the boat was having God in the boat!

“What manner of man is this ... ?” This statement betrayed the disciples’ wonder at the true identity of Jesus.

The fear must have been a mixture of reverential awe and real fright, it would be chillingly eerie to witness the instantaneous dissipation of a violent storm.

That is the secret. He is not a man at all. He is God the Word housed in the body of a man. I have used this Scripture so much, but it tells us that Jesus is Lord of all. (Philippians 2:10), tells us that Jesus is Lord of everything.

Philippians 2:10 "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [things] in heaven, and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth;"

Mark Chapter 4 Continued Questions

1. Where is the natural place to put a candle?
2. This Light symbolizes the divine truth that is caught up in _____.
3. What is going to happen to things that are hidden?
4. When was the way opened for Christians to God the Father?
5. What does Jesus tell us to do with our ears?
6. What does this really mean?
7. How will measure be made to us?
8. What is our responsibility toward what goes in our brain?
9. What can you compare the brain to?
10. What will happen to those who have?
11. What did Jesus liken the kingdom of God to?
12. Can you explain in detail what makes a seed grow?

13. What is the seed symbolic of?
14. What kind of foolishness are men saved by?
15. The earth bringeth forth fruit of _____.
16. When is the harvest?
17. Who makes up the kingdom of God on earth?
18. What kind of seed is supposed to be the smallest?
19. What does it grow into?
20. What does it symbolize?
21. When Jesus had finished the parables, what did He do?
22. Was Jesus' ship the only ship that went into the sea?
23. What happened that frightened the disciples?
24. What was Jesus doing on the ship?
25. Why did Jesus need to rest?
26. When they awakened Jesus, what did He do?
27. What question did Jesus ask the disciples?
28. What is fear?
29. What surprised even the disciples about Jesus?
30. What is the secret of Jesus?