

## Sowing – Mark 4:26-29

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. *Taken For Granted*

1. We take so many things we use everyday for granted.
2. We're surrounded by things we depend on but have no idea of how they work.
3. When you get in your car and turn the key, do you know how the engine fires up and provides motion to the wheels?
4. When you turn on the radio or TV do you know how the circuitry changes electricity into sound waves and visual images?
5. When you pull up a chair to your computer and hit the on switch, do you know how the software & hardware allow you to check your email?
6. All these inventions of the modern era seem rather complicated.
7. But far more complex than these *man-made objects* are the mechanics of living things.
8. It's only been in the last fifty years that scientists have begun to pull aside the veil of genetics and take a look at life on a *sub*-microscopic scale.
9. Recent discoveries in the field of genetics have put the final nails in the coffin of Darwin's theory of evolution.
  - a. the amount of information and *design* in living things simply *cannot* be explained by *any* model of evolution,
  - b. and more and more scientists are now admitting this.
  - c. Jonathan Wells, a double Ph.D. said,

My conclusion is that the case for Darwinian evolution is bankrupt. The evidence for Darwinism is not only grossly inadequate, it's systematically distorted. I'm convinced that sometime in the not-too-distant future—I don't know, maybe 20 or 30 years from now—people will look back in amazement and say, 'How could anyone have believed this?' Darwinism is merely materialistic philosophy masquerading as science, and people are recognizing it for what it is. <sup>[1]</sup>
  - d. the whole field of intelligent design in living things has become a new arena of scientific inquiry and many former skeptics are becoming believers regarding Creation.

#### B. *The Mystery of Life*

1. While research scientists have made some amazing discoveries about living things in the last fifty years, there is still much that remains a mystery.
2. It's about the mystery of life Jesus speaks in these verses and uses it as an illustration of the *importance* of God's Word.

### II. TEXT

#### A. *Set The Scene*

1. In this chapter Mark is giving us a sample of Jesus' teaching.
2. One of the subjects He spoke *often* on was how the Kingdom of God grows & appears in the world.

3. Several of His *parables* were illustrations of this. One of them is found here in vs. 26-29

### **B. Vs. 26-29**

**26** And He said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, <sup>27</sup> and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. <sup>28</sup> For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. <sup>29</sup> But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

1. This was an image Jesus’ audience would have easily understood.
2. They’d all seen farmers scattering seed on their fields.
3. After a long day of planting, the farmer would retire to his house and take a well-earned rest.
4. When he got up the next day, he didn’t go back out to apply more attention or work *to the seed*.
  - a. his task with the seed was done – he’d planted it, and as far as the seed was concerned, that’s all he could do.
  - b. his attention was then turned to the *field*: he’d water it & pull up the occasional weed,
  - c. but as far as the seed was concerned, there was nothing more to be done.
5. No, the farmer trusted the *mystery* that’s inherent in the seed; that it possesses the *potential* to bring forth life and fruit and to reproduce itself many times over.
6. He didn’t understand the process of *how* the seed sprouts & grows, but his lack of understanding didn’t alter the fact of what the seed does.
7. The farmer was content to play his role – scatter the seed, then harvest the fruit when it ripened – the rest was out of his hands.

### **C. Understanding the Parable**

1. We have the key for understanding *this* parable in the Parable of the Sower which Jesus *explained* to His disciples in vs. 13-20.
  - a. in v. 14 He said the seed represents the Word of God.
  - b. and while the sower in that parable was Jesus, in *this* parable the sower is *anyone* who proclaims or shares the Word.
2. The lesson Jesus was speaking is this – **God’s Word will accomplish the purpose for which He’s sent it.**
3. **Our task is simply to be faithful to share it.** [Again from 2]
4. Jesus is repeating something the prophet Isaiah said in ch. 55:10 & 11.

**10** “For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, <sup>11</sup> So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper *in the thing for which I sent it.*”

5. There’s *power* inherent in the Word and Words of God.

- a. that power often works in quiet and unseen ways,
  - b. just as the seed that's planted in the ground drops into the soil and remains hidden for at time.
6. This parable is quite poignant for me because I recently re-seeded some bare spots in our lawn.
    - a. there's a section of our backyard that for years we'd grown vegetables in. This year we decided to extend the lawn over it.
    - b. so I weeded it, fertilized, raked it even, then scattered grass seed on it and put some topping soil over the seed.
    - c. every evening when I got home I watered it, and for 4 days, nothing happened. There was nothing but dirt.
    - d. then, on the 5<sup>th</sup> day, the first little green shoots poked through the soil.
    - e. on the 6<sup>th</sup> day, the blades of grass were nearly an inch long.
    - f. and now, weeks later, I have to mow the thing every week!
  7. During those first 4 days, though I couldn't see any evidence of growth, the seeds had sprouted and sent out roots into the surrounding soil, gathering water and nutrients.
  8. This feed the upward growth of the grass, which then sent out shoots into the sunlight.
  9. ***Though I couldn't see it, growth was happening.***
  10. Now, I have to admit, while I was taught the basic mechanics of how a seed produces roots and shoots in high school and college, I don't really understand the whole process of germination or how the seed is turned into a full grown blade of grass that ***itself*** produces seed.
  11. What I do know is that if I scatter grass seed on the ground, grass will grow and I'll have a nice yard.
  12. That's precisely the lesson Jesus wants His followers to glean from this parable.
  13. Just as there's life-potential in a seed, there's power & life in the Word of God.
    - a. we may not see or understand ***how*** God is at work or ***how*** He'll use His Word
    - b. but that lack of understanding must not keep us from faithfully sowing His Word into those around us.

#### **D. We Are Sowers**

1. God wants each of us to see ourselves as sowers, as scatters of the seed of His Word. A sower's job is to – **SOW!**
2. As we go about our daily lives, consistently scattering spiritual seed, God will use it to bring many to faith and to produce an incredible harvest of righteousness.
3. We'll probably never know in this life the result of ***most*** of the seeds we scatter. It won't be till we get to heaven that we'll see how God used the Word we shared.
4. The great preacher Charles Spurgeon was once invited to speak at a large gathering in London and prior to the meeting was testing the acoustics of the hall where it was to be held.
  - a. he stood on the stage and quoting the words of John the Baptist in John 1:36 said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

- b. he said this several times, getting a feel for what volume he'd need to use when he addressed the meeting.
  - c. unknown to Spurgeon was the presence of a worker high in the rafters in the back of the auditorium who was also getting things ready for the meeting.
  - d. Spurgeon's rich voice rolled out again and again, but it was *what* he said, not *how* he said it that so touched the man.
    - 1) he was a hardened sinner who thought himself well past God's forgiveness.
    - 2) God's Word was like a seed that found a tiny crack in an otherwise hard heart.
    - 3) and in the days that followed, that seed burst forth into a root of conviction, then a stalk of repentance and finally the fruit of faith in Christ.
  - e. it wasn't until *many years later* that that man had a chance to tell Spurgeon what had happened, and by then the great preacher had forgotten all about testing the acoustics of that hall.
5. The Apostle Paul knew it was his task to simply scatter the seed of God's word, then leave the result to the Lord.
- a. in writing to the Corinthians he said . . .

**5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. 7 So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. [1 Corinthians 3:5-7]**

- b. the Corinthian church was divided into warring factions.
  - c. one group thought Paul was the best teacher.
  - d. another group claimed Apollos was best; and these two groups had heated debates over who was better.
  - e. they'd made *celebrities* out of various leaders in the Body of Christ and were lining up behind their favorite.
  - f. Paul corrects them by saying that while they were fighting over who was best, he & Apollos weren't at odds with each other!
  - g. each knew he had a role to play and all they were concerned about was being faithful to their calling.
  - h. that calling was to sow the seed of God's word.
  - i. if any growth took place in the lives of those they ministered to, that was God's doing, not theirs.
  - j. what God was looking for was simple faithfulness in doing their part to sow the seed of His word.
6. I'm troubled that the error of Corinth is alive & well in the Church today; that we're still make *celebrities* of our favorite teachers, then lining up behind them & debating over who's best.
- a. some say, "I'm of Chuck Smith." Others – "I'm of John MacArthur."
  - b. "We're with Swindoll," or "Alistair Begg is the best!"
  - c. if you talk to Chuck or John, Charles or Alistair, they'll tell you they're not

- at odds.
  - d. they're simply seeking to be faithful to proclaim the Word of God.
  - e. if there's been any fruit from their ministries, they know it's because of the Lord's power, not theirs.
7. Now, here's the thing – **YOU** are every bit as much a minister of the Word as these men.
    - a. your audience may not be as large as theirs,
    - b. but the fact is, you have the opportunity to reach people they will never be able to reach.
    - c. your field for scattering seed is at your work, among your neighbors, at school, at that store you shop at.
    - d. the people you meet there don't listen to Christian radio, they don't go to church,
    - e. they've never heard of Chuck Smith or Alistair Begg.
    - f. they don't read the Bible.
    - g. in fact, **you** may be the only Bible they ever read!
  8. So it's imperative we realize God wants all of us to be sowers, scattering the seed of His word **liberally** as we go about our daily lives.

### **E. How To Sow**

1. Now, how do we do this? I'm not suggesting that you walk around just quoting scripture out loud. That would appear a little odd.
2. Sowing the word means to look at life from a **Biblical perspective** and to make your decisions on the counsel of God's Word.
  - a. as others watch you, they ought to see a life that's lived in **harmony** with God's will.
  - b. when they ask you **why** you made a particular choice, you tell them what passage guided you.
3. When others ask what your opinions and thoughts on a matter are, share what you know God's Word says about that.
4. Of course, all of this assumes that before you can sow the seed in others, you've first had it sown in you!
  - a. this means you need to have a steady diet of the Word of God yourself.
  - b. you need to be in a healthy church where the Word of God is taught consistently and in a manner you can understand and grow by.
  - c. it means you need to be spending time in the word yourself, daily!
5. Since I first came to the Lord I've heard different Christians say something like, "I read the Bible but I just don't get much out of it."
  - a. they'll say, "When I first came to Christ, every time I went to church or read, I learned something new, but it's not like that now."
  - b. "It used to be exciting to study, but now it's mostly just feels like a routine."
  - c. now let's be honest – who's felt that way?
6. Some years ago an editorial appeared in the newspaper from a man who complained that while he went to church every week, he really could not remember the sermon from the previous Sunday.
  - a. he mused that maybe all that time he'd spent in church was really just a waste of time.

- b. a few days later a letter was printed in reply to his editorial.
  - c. it was from a man who said, “My wife is a really superb cook and makes delicious and nutritious meals. But I have to admit that I can’t remember what I had for dinner last Sunday.”
  - d. “So I’ve been thinking that I’m just going to quit eating. After all, if I can’t remember what I ate, why bother wasting time at meals?”
7. His point was clear – though he couldn’t remember what he’d eaten, that didn’t change the fact that the food consumed provided what he needed to maintain his strength & health.
  8. In the same way, we may not remember what last Sunday’s message was about, but that doesn’t alter the reality of the power of God’s Word!
  9. It’s at work in us to produce the life and fruit He intends.
    - a. it may be days, weeks, months or even years from now that *this* message bears fruit in you.
    - b. the timing is not the issue – the final result is!
    - c. so I will continue to do the one thing the Lord has called me to do as pastor of this church – scatter the seed, sow the Word.
    - d. I know the Spirit will make sure it does it’s life-giving thing in you!

#### **F. The Word Itself**

1. There’s something this passage *does* say to me *as Pastor*,
    - a. it’s this: It’s the *Word of God itself* that’s the thing!
    - b. it’s not *my words about* the Word.
    - c. the power is in God’s Word, not Lance’s words *about* His Word.
    - d. far more is accomplished when we *simply read the text* than in all the words that follow.
    - e. I often wonder if it wouldn’t be more profitable to just read the verses, pray, go home and simply do them!
  2. But we all know God *does* give teachers to His people so a clearer understanding of His Word can be gleaned.
  3. The thing we need to keep in mind is that it’s *not the teacher* who brings growth – It’s the Spirit working through **THE WORD**.
  4. All the teacher is doing is sowing that word, then watering it through explanation.
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5. You may not be a teacher in the usual sense, but you’re still called to sow the Word into the lives of those around you.
  6. Once it’s sown, you can water it through prayer and by lovingly serving those you’ve sown in.
  7. Nothing gives greater evidence to the power of God’s Word than the fruit of spiritual growth it produces.
  8. If we’re going to tell the lost there’s power in God’s Word, they have a right to say, “Prove it!”
  9. The proof ought to be the fruit of God’s Word in the life of the sower!
  10. And what’s the main fruit the Spirit produces – *love*!
  11. A loveless Christian is an oxymoron.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

### **A. Faith Comes By Hearing**

1. You're probably aware that today many thousands of churches are caught up in a movement called the *seeker-friendly movement*.
  2. The goal of this movement is a good one – to win the lost by being sensitive to the needs of the unchurched.
  3. Since the unchurched don't read the Bible and are more apt to listen to the popular media, these churches move away from traditional church activities and seek to look more *appealing* to the lost.
  4. Since the world isn't all that crazy about the Bible, preaching & teaching are replaced with *friendly talks* about how to be more spiritual.
  5. And church services move from being times of *worship* to entertaining, self-help therapy sessions.
    - a. the whole aim is to make church look and sound less like church and more attractive to the lost.
    - b. but the church does not exist for the lost – it exists for God.
    - c. and I think the lost are smart enough to realize that a church is a church, no matter how unlike a church you try to make it appear.
    - d. I am not ashamed or hesitant to say that Calvary Chapel of Oxnard is a church.
    - e. and our goal is to bring people to faith in Christ, then lead them in that faith.
  6. Last time I checked, the words of Romans 10:17 hadn't changed, faith comes how? By *hearing the Word of God*.
    - a. so – please be assured of something, as long as I am your pastor, what you'll consistently hear when you come to church, is the Word of God.
    - b. it may not be eloquent or entertaining, but it will be spiritual seed that will produce life in you as you receive it.
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### **B. Those Out There**

1. But here's the thing, most of the people *you* come into contact with every day aren't going to church.
2. So God has brought church to them in you.
3. He wants them to come to faith – but that faith is only going to be birthed in them when the seed of God's Word is sown in their hearts.
4. **Sow!**
5. Don't worry about fruit or rush the harvest – Just sow.
6. So often we get worked up and disappointed when those we've shared with don't respond.
7. Let the Spirit work and in His time the fruit will come.
8. Our task is to simply sow.

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[1] Lee Strobel *The Case for the Creator* pg. 65