

The Gospel of Mark

Walking with the Servant Saviour

Lesson 6

Mark 4:26-41

Day One: The Growth Cycle

The parable of the growing seed is mentioned only in Mark's Gospel, but it bears similarities to the others Jesus used to reveal something about the kingdom of God. This kingdom was ushered in by the first coming of Christ and will be fulfilled when He comes back a second time for His church. Christians everywhere eagerly await the day when they will reign with Him. In the meantime, God actively continues to add to the kingdom all those called by faith: "*He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love*" (Colossians 1:13). He truly does work in mysterious ways!

Read Mark 4:26-41. Today we'll focus on verses 26-29.

1. Like the *parable of the sower*, the *parable of the growing seed* uses the symbols of a sower, seed and soil. What similarity do you see between the ground in this parable and that of the good soil in the *parable of the sower*?

Just as seed will not sprout and grow until it is planted in the ground, so the Word of God will not bring forth life until it is planted in the heart of its hearers.

2. According to the *parable of the growing seed*, when the sower plants . . .
 - ❖ What is his attitude about the planted seed: is he confident or anxious? How do you know? v. 27

- ❖ Is it the sower's responsibility to *make* the seed grow? v. 28

 - ❖ Does the sower have to understand the growth process in order to benefit from it?
3. When *you* take on the role of the sower planting the seeds of God's Word . . .
- ❖ What is your usual attitude? Are you confident or anxious about it?

 - ❖ Whose responsibility is it to make those seeds grow?

 - ❖ Can *you* completely understand the growth process? What does John 3:8 say about it?

 - ❖ What is the most important thing for you, the sower, to remember? See Romans 1:16
4. Should the sower expect to see an immediate harvest? v. 28

The sower doesn't need to understand or be able to explain every detail of the growth cycle. He/she only needs to know that the power is in the seed. It seems to grow of its own, but of course we realize God is responsible for it. The power to bring forth life is in the Word!

5. What happens once the grain has ripened? v. 29

There will come the day when the last seeds are planted in the last human heart and the crop will be mature and ready for Christ to return for the harvest. Until then, He patiently waits, allowing time for the Word to produce results in the lives of those who welcome it. Are you thankful to be among those looking for Him to return?

Heartbeat . . . “*Being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.*” Philipians 1:6

Day Two: Small Beginnings

What to look for . . .

No one parable could completely encompass all there is to know about the kingdom of God, and so Jesus used numerous parables to convey His meaning. The *parable of the growing seed* illustrates the mysterious growth cycle of the kingdom. The *parable of the mustard seed* illustrates the degree to which that growth can extend out from very small beginnings.

Read Mark 4:30-32

Once again the seed in the parable represents the Word of God. But this time the seed is the smallest of any that might be planted in the ground. To understand just how small, a farmer would have to measure out 20,000 seeds to equal just one ounce of weight.

1. What did Jesus say about the size of the plant that would grow from the mustard seed? v. 32
2. In your own words, see if you can relate the significance of this plant's beginning and growth with that of God's kingdom?

Do you sometimes feel that your contribution to God's kingdom is too small and insignificant to make a difference? Be encouraged today in your faithfulness to do what God has called you to do. If each of us took seriously our part in His plan we would complete the Lord's mission and hasten His return!

3. **Personal:** Take a moment and think back to who and what you were when God called you into His kingdom. Have you seen growth from those small beginnings? Give an example.

No one could imagine that what began with Jesus and a handful of men would one day grow into a church body that spanned across the globe! Though its early beginnings were small in man's eyes, wherever the kingdom of God has spread, it has brought with it much good for the sake of all mankind. The believing and non-believing alike have all found shelter and provision beneath its branches.

4. Jesus taught using many parables, more than could be written down. Using verses 33 and 34, finish the following sentences . . .
- *He taught as much as*
 - *He did not speak to them except*
 - *He explained everything*

Jesus spoke in parables not to confuse, but to challenge people to discover their meaning. He used basic spiritual truths that at times even His disciples found difficult to understand. Often He explained things in greater depth to His disciples in private. The word explained in verse 34 literally means, *He kept on explaining everything*. In other words, He did not hide anything from them.

Looking closer . . .

Are you the Lord's disciple today? Do you desire to have a greater understanding of His Word? Take to heart what He says to you in John 15:14-15. Look this up and write the main point in the space below. How does it encourage you today?

Review this week's memory verse.

Day Three: The Storms of Life

What to look for . . .

The incident related in today's passage is also recorded in the gospel accounts of Matthew and Luke, but Mark records details not found in the other two books. "*On the same day*" indicates that the event about to happen took place at the end of a very long day of ministry. Everyone, including Jesus, was very tired and in need of some rest. Their

destination “*on the other side*” was six miles across the water. The mode of transportation was a small boat, probably one that was used for fishing.

Read Mark 4:35-41, along with Matthew 8:23-27, and Luke 8:22-25.

Mark states that as they had left the multitude the disciples took Jesus along with them “*as He was,*” meaning most likely that He had not made any preparations for the trip.

1. Who would become additional witnesses to the miracle about to take place? v. 36
2. Describe what took place after the group set sail. v. 37

The Sea of Galilee is situated approximately 600 feet below sea level, surrounded by mountains. Once the sun sets it is not unusual for the winds to blow, creating a down draft that results in violent waves in the water. This made for a dangerous situation for these weary travelers.

Selah . . .

Having Jesus along in your boat does not mean you will never experience difficulty or danger. In fact quite to the contrary, the closer you get to Jesus, the more the enemy will attempt to stir up a storm. Although you will not be kept from the storms of life, Jesus promises you His presence as you go through them!

3. Where was Jesus, and what question did the disciples ask? v. 38
 - ❖ Do you think this was a sincere question or were the disciples merely making a strong point?

This is the only instance in Scripture that mentions Jesus sleeping. Though He was the Son of God, He was also human. His men had provided a place on the boat where He could rest and even a pillow for His head. But they were astounded that He could sleep through such a fierce storm.

The disciples were very close to Jesus by this time. They had witnessed the miracles and the teachings, but when they were passing through the rough waters of life they failed to understand who He truly was. They had even dared to ask if He cared about them at all.

4. **Personal:** Has there been a time in your life when you looked around at your circumstances and panicked? Did you complain to God and even, perhaps, criticize Him for the situation? Did you ask the question: “*Do You not care?*” Briefly state the circumstances and what you learned when the storm passed.

5. When facing tough times and not knowing what to do next, Scripture is clear on its instruction to us. Philippians 4:6-7 contain the right response for the tough moment.
 - ❖ What instruction does this passage give you?

 - ❖ If you follow it, what are you promised?

Take a moment now and commit yourself to God’s keeping in whatever circumstances you find yourself.

Review this week’s memory verse.

Day Four: “Peace, Be Still!”

What to look for . . .

If you’ve ever experienced firsthand the forces of nature at work, you can understand the fear and panic the disciples felt that day on the Sea of Galilee. Without speaking a word to the disciples, Jesus instead spoke to the elements. He arose, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “*Peace, be still!*” The words in the Greek used by Jesus are the same ones He used to silence the demons. They literally mean to *be calm and remain calm*.

Read Mark 4:35-41 for review.

1. After speaking to the forces of nature, Jesus turned to speak to His men. What did He ask them? v. 40

Jesus pointed to their fear, which He said was due to a lack of faith. By now they had been with Him long enough to know who He was and what authority He possessed, but still they were unable to trust Him.

2. What realization came over them when Jesus calmed the storm? v. 41

Everything the disciples had witnessed up to this point now paled in comparison to what they felt about Jesus at this moment. The fear they felt toward Him was not the cowardly fear of the storm, it was the utter reverence of being in the presence of the Divine. They had much to learn, but this incident would remain alive in their memory banks for a very long time.

Faith and fear cannot rule in the believer's heart at the same time—one will always overrule, excluding the other. The Bible teaches that *"faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God"* (Romans 10:17). The more of God's Word we take in, the more our faith will grow.

3. Let yourself take in some of what God's Word has to say on the issue of faith. Look up and summarize each of the references below and then select one that ministers to you deeply today.

❖ Hebrews 11:6

❖ Hebrews 12:2

❖ 2 Corinthians 5:7

❖ Galatians 2:20

❖ Luke 17:5

❖ Which of the above is a faith builder for you today? Why?

When the storms of life catch us off guard and we don't understand what is going on, we must turn to the one who controls not only the elements of nature but our lives as well! Never underestimate His power to calm the crises of your life. Get as close to Jesus as you possibly can—lean into the wind up ahead—He is there! Even the wind and the sea obey Him—do *you*?

Review this week's memory verse.

Day Five: Praying God's Purpose

It's time to do some *prayer walking*—not in the literal, but the *spiritual* sense. The Holy Spirit will lead you today as you consider three points from your lesson, write them in the form of a prayer, and lift them to the Lord. If practicing the presence of God is new to you—be patient—it will come, and you will be blessed!

“ . . . We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.”

Romans 8:26-27 NLT

A prayer for planting seeds of righteousness . . .

You learned this week that you are responsible to sow the seed and God is responsible to bring forth new life. Ask Him to show you someone this week who needs those seeds planted in their heart.

A prayer for reaching out . . .

Being a member of God's kingdom means using what He gives you to bless others. What has He placed in your hands that you can use for someone else in need?

A prayer for growing closer to Jesus . . .

If it takes a storm to get your attention and turn you to Jesus, then thank Him for the storm! You will never know if He is enough until you experience a time when He is the only one you can turn to.

Write out this week's verse from memory:

Notes

