



‘Now!’ Sermon Series

Sermon #16

Sunday, August 11th, 2024

‘Lamps, Lots of Seeds, and the Lone Mustard Seed!’

Mark 4:21-34

Last week in ‘NOW’ sermon series:

- It’s been two weeks since we’ve been in the book of Mark, I was very thankful for Dr. Ed Carney being willing to come and preach an excellent sermon to us last week on forgiveness.
 - The last time we were in our ‘NOW’ sermon series, we looked at Mark 4:1-20 with a sermon entitled *‘Do We Really Get the Gospel?’*
 - I asked the question: *How does Jesus illustrate the urgency of the Gospel message by sharing the parable of the sower?*
 - **Point 1: *The Definition of Parables.* (V. 2)**
 - **Point 2: *The Dire Need to Proclaim.* (V. 3-9)**

- **Point 3: *The Distinct Privilege.* (V. 10-12)**
- **Point 4: *The Definitive Purpose.* (V. 13-20)**
- Based on that message from several weeks ago, do we really get the Gospel and the impact that spreading seeds should have on our lives?

‘Lamps, Lots of Seeds, and the Lone Mustard Seed!’

Mark 4:21-34

Sermon in a Sentence:

In this passage we find that Jesus shares three parables about Lamps, Lots of Seeds, and the Lone Mustard Seed. Through these three parables, we can learn that the Light of Jesus will not go out, the Longevity of God’s Kingdom is His responsibility, and the Launch of God’s Kingdom will continue to Grow.

Intro:

- This morning we have arrived to the second part of Mark 4, which contains three more parables.
 - *While we are not sure when chronological in Jesus’ ministry that these parables were originally told, it is believed by most scholars that Mark placed these parables here to reaffirm the truth of the parable of the sower.*
- *The setting of Jesus teaching here is most likely also beside the Sea of Galilee because we are not told any different.*
 - *Many of you have heard these parables before. Perhaps, all throughout your life. In reading*

the Gospels you will find sayings of Jesus that are similar to these and Matthew 13:31-35 is a parallel passage of the mustard seed.

- Many of the words and phrases that Jesus spoke to His followers were repetitive, but how do we know this?
- Verse 21 begins with the phrase **'And he said to them.'**
 - In the Greek text, the 'verb' said is in the imperfect tense.
 - **Which gives the meaning that Jesus was saying something that was repetitive and a customary action for Him.**
 - His disciples and close followers that He was speaking to here, more than likely heard some of the same lessons over and over. But why is that?
 - Chuck Swindoll said **'Experts affirm that repetition is an indispensable tool for learning, and the Twelve needed to hear Jesus' message often in order to take it all in.'**
 - You and I are no different than the disciples. We too, need to hear the same lessons and teachings of our Lord.
 - **Even if you've heard these three parables over the course of your life, the Lord wants us to look closer at them this morning.**
 - All three have a purpose for our lives and really show us three main principles

that we can and should apply to our lives.

- Dr. Daniel Aiken said this concerning these three parables **'The Theme of all of them is how God's kingdom emerges and grows with the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, who came to give His life as a ransom for many.'**
 - **May each of us this morning be encouraged to continue on in our Christian walk by a lamp, lots of seeds, and the Lone Mustard Seed.**
- *Mark 4:21-34***

Question to Ask:

What does Jesus want us to learn from these three parables that Jesus shared with His disciples?

Point 1: *The Light of Jesus Will Not Go Out. (V. 21-25)*

- 'And he said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand? **22** For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. **23** If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." **24** And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. **25** For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away."
- Jesus begins this set of three parables by looking at a simple object that all people can relate with and to, a lamp.

- *It's important for us to understand that in this parable, Jesus is referring to Himself, who has come as a light into the world.*
 - 'I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.' John 12:46
 - *The light that man desperately needed.*
 - 'In him was life,[a] and the life was the light of men.' John 1:4
 - *The true and genuine light.*
 - 'The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.' John 1:9
 - *The Light of THE world.*
 - 'Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12
 - ***Jesus is clear that what you choose to do with the light directly determines your eternal destination.***
 - I believe there are **2** important things to point out regarding the fact that the light of Jesus will not go out.
 - ***Let Your Light Shine Bright. (V. 21-23)***
 - 'And he said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand? **22** For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to
- come to light. **23** If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.'"
 - ***In the parable of the soils, it focused on those who receive the Gospel.***
 - This first parable that Jesus shares focuses on the light of Christ, but also on what we do with the light.
 - ***This particular parable, and the ones to follow, focus on the responsibility of those who have been planted in the good soil and what fruits are coming from our faithful ministry.***
 - Jesus using a very practical object to explain this parable. An object that his original audience would understand as well as us here today, nearly 2,000 years later.
 - ***The kind of lamp that would have been used in Jesus' day would have been a small pitcher with a handle on one end.***
 - The pitcher would then be filled with oil and a floating wick would be placed on top of the oil.
 - ***In order for that lamp to reach it's maximum potential in lighting up a space, the lamp would be placed on lampstands, shelves or anywhere where the light could easily be seen by others.***
 - ***In verse 21, I believe that very clearly Jesus is trying to get across the point***

that we are not saved so that our light can be under a basket or under a bed.

- ***We should let our Light Shine bright no matter what simply because the light of Jesus will never go out.***

- Dr. Daniel Aiken said ***‘God has sent this Lamp to bring light to a dark world. He has come to reveal truth, enlighten minds, and conquer the darkness.’***
- Before we look at verses 22 and 23, I want to look at an observation I’ve made from verse 21.
 - ***If an open flame were to be hidden under a bed or basket, would that not be dangerous and create a potential flammable situation in the home?***
 - Not only is it absurd to hide a light and pointless, it is also dangerous.

- ***See, when you and I hide the light that God has put inside of us through His Son, we are not only endangering ourselves, but we are endangering our witness of the Light that we say we have.***

- ‘Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.’
Romans 14:13

- I believe when someone who proclaims Christ hides their light instead of letting it shine bright, you are allowing yourself to be a hindrance, stumbling block and dangers to others.

- ***Because why would they want Jesus in their lives if all you do is hide Him and keep Him under a basket or bed?***

- Verses 22 and 23 can be somewhat confusing, but when we look closer, they make total sense with what Jesus is trying to communicate.

- ***For now, the light of Christ is not fully known to all. There are still around 3,000 people groups that have not heard of the name Jesus.***

- ***This is why it’s so important for our life to shine so brightly for Jesus.***

- While it is hidden in some parts of the world, the fact that Jesus defeated death and was resurrected assures us that all the earth will shout His praises one day, every knee will bow.

- ‘so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.’ Philippians 2:10-11

- ***The consummation, second coming of Jesus, will cement these truths. He’s coming back, are you ready?***

- Verse 23 is interesting to me. I can sense and feel the Lord saying, are you really hearing what I'm saying? Are you really with me? Do you really get this?
 - *For those here today, are you really listening? Do you really let your light shine bright?*
- ***Some will Lose the Light that they never actually had. (V. 24-25)***
 - ‘And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. **25** For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.”
 - These words by Jesus need to be taken seriously by us all.
 - Verse 24: *When a farmer goes out to his fields at harvest time, he can only pull from the ground what he had put into the ground the season before.*
 - *As I tell everyone who goes through our New members class and chooses to join our Church, you are only going to get out of your relationship with Jesus and His Church what you are willing to put into it.*
- If you don't put much into your Gospel ministry, don't expect many fruits to come from it.
- *JM said 'Jesus' point was that those who faithfully preach the Gospel can similarly expect to be rewarded eternally by God for their diligent efforts.*
 - *Let me remind us all this morning that we will be rewarded in Heaven for what we have done for God here on earth.*
- If you haven't already I encourage you to go back on YouTube and listen to our Crowning Christ Sermon Series.
 - Where we examined all the times in the NT where Paul mentioned 5 different crowns that will be given in Heaven for what we did for Jesus on earth, then we will lay them at His feet.
- *You don't want to be empty handed at the throne of Jesus in Heaven.*
- Verse 25: *I believe that verse 25 is a reference to the rocky and weed filled soils of the previous parable.*
 - I believe that verse 25 is a reference to false converts who were not saved to begin with.
 - *I know that some will use Mark 4:25 to say that you can lose your salvation,*

but we have to view it within the proper context.

- ***Jesus had just talked about the rocky and weed filled soil, those who once claimed Christ, but were not saved.***
 - If you are a Christian, and you have received the light, you will not be ashamed to let it shine and the works of your life (fruits), will affirm that.
- ‘They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.’ Titus 1:16
 - ***So Jesus is not saying you lose your light (salvation), but that some never actually had it to begin with.***
- The first parable this morning shows us that the Light of Jesus will never go out.

Point 2: *The Longevity of the Kingdom is God’s Responsibility. (V. 26-29)*

- What we find in verses 26-29, is the only parable that is unique to Mark’s Gospel.
 - ***In Mark 4:3-8, Jesus illustrated through the parable of the sower the importance of sowing the seeds so that some would genuinely receive Christ.***
 - ***In verses 26-29, Jesus’ words emphasize the power of the seed. That is, the Word of God.***
- This parable mirrors the first one that we looked at in Mark 4, but the difference here is that the success and

longevity of God’s Kingdom and people are now contingent on us as the sowers, but the power and mystery of the Gospel.

- ***In other words, God is the one who grows His Kingdom, He just blesses us with the privilege of being able to see it grow and spread seeds.***
 - I believe there are **2** important things to point out concerning the longevity and sovereignty that God has over His Kingdom that are seen in this parable.
- ***People cannot Manipulate the Mystery of God’s Growth. (V. 26-27)***
 - ‘And he said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. **27** He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how.’
 - ***We need to see that the power for the growth of God’s Kingdom is not in the sower who sowed the seed, but in the God who allowed to be planted and to take root.***
 - ***While scripture is clear that if you and I love Jesus we will spread His Word, the growth of God’s Kingdom relies on our God who allows it to grow. Not you and I.***
 - We can’t explain the growth of God nor should we even try too.
 - ***For centuries, religious people, Churches and organizations have tried***

to figure out the mystery of God's growth by attempting to manufacture, manipulate and even monopolize the growth of 'God's' Church.

- Different 'plans', 'resources', and 'ideas' that lead back to people getting the credit instead of God.
- *If a Church or person grows in their walk with Christ it is because God is allowing them to grow. God is doing the work, not the manipulation of mankind.*
- *See what Jesus is saying here, is that once that farmer goes to sleep at night, he cannot control the growth that occurs over night in that seed.*
 - *The farmer will however, be able to reap the harvest that will come, and will be able to rejoice in that.*
- Dr. Daniel Aiken said *'Once it is sown, a process is set in motion that cannot and will not be stopped, even though its growth is a total mystery to us.'*
 - Even in our own Church, we've been able to harvest some really good crop in the last few years. Those were seeds that were planted many years ago.
 - *We don't know how or by what means God made the seeds grow, but they did.*

- And we get to harvest and experience these great days of such phenomenal growth and seeing God work in incredible ways.

- We see the mystery that we cannot manipulate God's Kingdom Growth plan, secondly
- *People cannot Measure where we are in God's Kingdom Timeline. (V. 28-29)*
 - 'The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. 29 But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.'
 - **Word Study**
 - The 'english' word *'itself'* comes from the greek word *'Automatos'* αὐτομάτη *which only occurs twice in the NT. Here in Mark 4:28, and in Acts 12:10.*
 - *This word literally means self-excited, acting spontaneously, and of his own accord.*
 - *This same greek verb is used in the context of Acts 12:10, when God let Peter out of prison and when he passed the first and second guard, the gate to freedom opened on it's own.*

- *This greek word Automatos is also at the beginning of verse 28 in the greek text.*
 - To translate it literally, it would mean *‘Automatically the earth bears fruit.’*
- ***So, God does this of His own accord in accordance with His own will.***
 - Most of the jews thought that the first coming of the Messiah that all the things that had been foretold in the OT would all consummate at one time.
- *But, Christ shows here that there is a process. First the blade, then the ear, and then the full grain in the ear.*
 - This goes against the common belief in the days of Jesus that God’s Kingdom would all come suddenly at once.
- *But Jesus is showing that the Kingdom of God cannot be measured by man. The Kingdom grows slowly and will all come together at the second coming of Christ.*
 - Because we don’t know the day nor the hour of Christ return (Matthew 25:13), we don’t know exactly where we are on God’s eschatological timeline.
- *The ‘sickle’ that is mentioned in verse 29 is often viewed as a symbol of the Kingdom of God, and the judgment that will follow.*
 - ***Revelation 14:15*** affirms this: ‘And another angel came out of the temple,

calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.”

■ ***Because you and I are still on this side of Heaven right now, the time has not yet come for the Harvest to be right.***

- We aren’t at the end of God’s timeline and we can’t measure exactly where we are.
 - *The important thing is that you know we are closer than we’ve ever been to Christ’s return and that you know for certain where you are going.*
 - This morning we’ve been able to see that the Light of Jesus will never go out, the Longevity of God’s Kingdom is His responsibility, and lastly...
- Point 3: *The Launch of God’s Kingdom will Grow. (V. 30-34)***
- *Jesus wanted His disciples and followers to know that God’s Kingdom was launching full throttle through the ministry of Jesus on earth.*
 - The Kingdom was at hand because Christ was physically present on the earth. Therefore, they better get ready for the growth that they would be apart of as God’s Kingdom was launched.
 - *Meaning they would need to get ready for the Churches that would one day plant as apostles, the preaching they would do, and all the*

activities of the ministry they would be apart of.

- ***Even today, God's Kingdom is launching in places it's never been because people are sowing seeds in places where the Gospel has never been across our world.***
 - There are 2 things I want to point out concerning the Launch of God's Kingdom.
- ***The Christian Experience. (V. 30-32)***
 - 'And he said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? **31** It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, **32** yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."
 - Jesus' last parable of Mark 4, is the well known mustard seed.
 - ***The Gospel that had started out small and as a mustard seed in that small part of the globe, has grown and continues to get larger day by day.***
 - ***But until the second return of Christ Jesus, that mustard seed is not done growing.***

- The Kingdom of God is not done growing which is why you and I still have a job to do.
- Jesus also references the mustard seed (tiniest of the seeds), in Matthew 17:20.
- ***Jesus uses the mustard seed in this parable, to explain that something that starts out small, can explode in growth and be larger than anyone thought or imagined possible.***
 - ***This shows, that no matter how hard your personal ministry that God has called you to may be (especially our brothers in sisters who are in third countries right now spreading the Gospel), that you play a big role in God growing His mustard seed.***
- ***It's interesting that Jesus mentions 'so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.'***
 - There are 4 mainline interpretations among scholars when it comes to the mention of the birds verse 32.
- #1: That the birds of the air represent satan, which connects back to Mark 4:4.
- #2: That the birds are a symbol of rest and shelter for those in the Kingdom of God.
- #3: That the birds represent the nations coming into the Kingdom.
- #4: That the birds have no special significance at all.

- ***I'm not telling you which interpretation to believe this morning, but I personally agree with #3 the most.***
 - ***Here's why:*** Psalms 104:12, Ezekiel 17:23, Ezekiel 31:6 and Daniel 4:9-21 would all support this claim.
- ***We are told in verse 32 by Jesus that the birds 'make nests in its shade'***
 - ***This shows us that all the nations will be at the judgment. Not all people will be saved, but all people will be there which also backs up the fact that every knee will bow and every tongue shall confess.***
- The Christian experience is truly a blessing that God has allowed us to live. The fact that we get to see what began as a small seed grow even to this day, shows the blessing of the Christian experience.
- ***The Christian's need to Explain. (V. 33-34)***
 - 'With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. 34 He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.'
 - ***Jesus gives us the great example here that we should not expect those who do not know the***

Lord to understand the things of God on their own.

- It's important that we explain.
- ***Now, we know from our last sermon in Mark the role that parables played in Jesus ministry (made up 35% of His ministry).***
 - In the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke), there are 39 parables.
- But notice that Jesus explained everything to His disciples.
 - ***It's not when we get closer to the preacher that we better understand God's Word, it's when we get closer to God Himself, then we are better able to understand God's Word and Biblical truths.***
- ***Don't get frustrated if God uses you to explain what you've heard and been taught your whole life, to someone that has never heard.***

Conclusion:

- As we close this morning, I'm not sure what you expected when you walked in.
 - Maybe you were like me when I began studying for this sermon on Monday morning and it took me all week long.
- ***Oftentimes this week I asked God, 'what can you teach your people from with lamps, lots of seeds and the lone mustard seed?'***

- I hope and pray God was able to share with you these three main truths that we took straight from our text:
- **Point 1: *The Light of Jesus Will Not Go Out.* (V. 21-25)**
- **Point 2: *The Longevity of the Kingdom is God's Responsibility.* (V. 26-29)**
- **Point 3: *The Launch of God's Kingdom will Grow.* (V. 30-34)**
 - Let me leave you with this passage of scripture that will be the reality of all people. The main question you have to ask, is which side will you be on?
- ‘After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, **10** and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” Revelation 7:9-10