

STONE HARBOR

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Who Is Jesus and Why He Matters *Jesus on the Kingdom of God*

Mark 4:26-34

Introduction

This week I spent taking what God wanted to give me by way of understanding about the Kingdom of God.

He has helped me understand something this past week and I'd like to give it to you. But I don't want you to passively receive it; rather I'd prefer that you actively take it as I extend it to you – like a running back taking a handoff or a wide receiver reaching for a pass.

God did not mean it for me alone, He meant it for you as well; and once you have it, He means for you to give it to someone else. He wants others to take it from you.

Don't worry, once you have this gift you can give it to someone else and still have it. What a cool gift God has given mankind – one we can have, give away and still possess. As a matter of fact, I am finding that the more I give it away, the more I have of it. Go figure. It is one of those ways things work in the Kingdom of God that I don't really understand the mechanics of but still I know it to work.

So, today is all about taking... please first take in the teaching of Jesus about the Kingdom of God; then take hope in His teaching, and finally take action based on the truths He gives you.

This morning is a little bit of review from last weeks text in Mark 4:1-25 where Jesus told the parable of the sower and the soils and then He explained the meaning of the parable to His followers; but we will camp mostly on two new parables -- stories Jesus tells His disciples about the Kingdom of God in Mark 4:26-34.

Let's pray for the Holy Spirit to lead us into truth...

I. Taking In Jesus' Teaching

Taking In (Understanding) Jesus' Teaching on the KOG

A. Parable 1 -- Mark 4:1-25 from Last Week

1. Meaning of the Parable from Last Week

We saw last week that this is a parable about the Kingdom of God (KOG) (v.10). Sower = Jesus, Seed = The Word of God especially the truth of who Jesus is, Soil = Peoples hearts or more precisely, the way people receive the word of the KOG presented by Jesus.

2. Additional Insights about Last Weeks Parable

a) It is a Parable about the Unexpected Nature of the Kingdom of God

Jesus was explaining the KOG which looked very different from the one they expected would be established by the prophesied Messiah: They were expecting the restoration of a political/national kingdom much like David's kingdom used to be in Israel's glory days. They were looking forward to throwing the Romans out of their homeland and setup up a Jewish independent rule under God.

So Jesus coming as other than a conquering king was unexpected and confusing -- something that needed to be explained.

b) What the Crop = Fruit of the Seed Is

The fruit the seed of the word yields is not one thing only but it is the many things God intends to grow out of the words He plants in us.

Think of all the different types of seeds in the natural world. Each seed will produce only what that seed has in its design and make-up to produce. In creation we see that things bring forth fruit "after there own kind" – an apple seed will produce an apple tree; an orange seed, an orange tree; a nectarine seed, a nectarine tree...

I'm thinking God wants to produce an orchard in your hearts. Each word producing the tree and then the fruit according to God's intention and design for that word.

Seed of the Word	Fruit of the Seed
"You are my beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased" Mark 1:11	Understanding and conviction that Jesus is God's Son and the incorporation of that truth into our lives in such a way that we act on it.
"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." Mark 1:15	Understanding that in Jesus the KOG has broken into the history of man. And it would produce Repentance & Belief in Jesus as the King of God's Kingdom.
"Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men" Mark 1:17	We become fishermen and others follow Jesus because of our following Jesus.
"Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach	My participation in the preaching ministry of Jesus.

there also; for that is what I came for." Mark 1:38	
"For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother." Mark 3:35	Awareness of my identity as a member of God's family with Jesus.
God's Word	God's likeness most evident to us in our becoming like Jesus.

c) Fruit as Eschatological Harvest

William Lane sees the fruit and the harvest as speaking about the yet future event when the affairs of the KOG are consummated which includes the event of God's judgment.

The fruit and harvest Jesus says we can expect is not only what we will see in our lives in our life times, but it is that which will be the final result in the last days when Jesus comes again and brings to consummation all that He inaugurated when He came the first time.

There is more! If I spent another week studying this parable there would be more for me to take in. I'm so glad I know what I know now of Jesus and I'm so glad He has so much more to show me.

I pray that we would all become life long learners discovering more truth about God, knowing Jesus better and better, and becoming a closer and closer friend. I am convinced He is looking to develop that same friendship.

B. Parable 2 – Mark 4:26-29

1. Reading

2. Content

I don't know how it happens, but seed planted in the ground grows into a crop. In nature, a man can plant seeds and the result is a crop to harvest.

The KOG we are trying to understand is like the natural kingdom that we do understand.

3. Simple Meaning

In the KOG, a man who plants the word of God in his own heart or in the heart of others (even though he doesn't know how it works) can expect to see that word grow into a crop of the fruit of God's intention – a crop so real he can and will harvest it. The harvest will be partly seen in this life and it will be fully realized when Jesus comes again to bring to conclusion all that He has started.

God's truth planted in man's heart will produce the fruit of God's intention!

C. Parable 3 – Mark 4:30-32

1. Reading

2. Content

Tiny mustard seed grows into a large plant which offers benefit to the world.

3. Simple Meaning

Even what looks like a small truth, if it be the word of God and if it be planted in the fertile soil of a cultivated heart, will produce the significant results intended by God.

The KOG is like this: a stinking small seed grows into a big dude bush. The seeming insignificant truth about who Jesus is (suffering savior) produces, in the KOG, unexpectedly big results.

So we have taken in the truth, now let's give our attention to...

II. Taking Hope in Jesus' Teaching

Hurtado: These are unremarkable stories unless you are the sower sowing the seed of the word. If you are the sower you will relate and take hope from these parables.

Example of Sowers Who Could Take Away Hope from These Parables:

Met with two other pastors this past week, one was at another church plant the same age as our church, the other was 1 year into his pastorate at an older church in our area but both churches have about the same number of people meeting on Sunday morning as we do. This passage would bring encouragement to them. Why? Because they have followed Jesus into the business of sowing the seed of God's word.

A. Hope from Parable 1

If we follow and inquire, Jesus will give us understanding of what we can not understand on our own about the Kingdom of God.

If we cultivate the soil of our hearts by making room for the word of God to grow in us, God will produce a miraculous yield of the fruit of His intention in our lives and in the whole story of redemptive history that we are a part of.

B. Hope from Parable 2

It works! I don't know how, but sowing seed does yield crops to harvest!

If I plant seeds crops will grow and produce a harvest.

If I plant truths from Scripture in my own heart and mind, and in the hearts and minds of others, they will grow and produce what God intends those truths to produce.

From the first two parables a common hope arises: If we cultivate the soil of our hearts by making room for the word of God to grow in us, God will produce a miraculous yield of the fruit of His intention both in our lives and in the whole story of redemptive history that we are now a part of.

C. Hope from Parable 3

It'll grow!

It may seem small, but God will grow seed planted into to something big.

Some may look at a truth from God's word and see it to be an insignificant thing; but when the small words are from God, big results will follow.

In the KOG big things come in small packages.

I take hope in these optimistic truths. Now, finally, let's give ourselves to...

III. Taking Action Called for by Jesus' Teaching

A. Action Called for by Parable 1

1. We should follow Jesus and ask Him to explain His teachings.

a) How?

This informs one of our core values: At Stone Harbor we value paying careful attention to God's word as found in the Scriptures.

2. We should cultivate the soil of our hearts and minds so that we are fertile soil for God's Word to grow in

a) Go get God's word in you

It is recorded in your Bibles, it is taught on Sunday's, it is discussed in community groups... take responsibility to get it into your heart and mind.

b) Make room in your hearts – Resist Shallow, Create Depth

Take out some rocks, add some soil = don't just think a little, pursue full understanding!

Example of a Gun – If you were going into battle and were given a weapon that would save your life and win the war, you would learn everything there was to learn about that weapon and how to use it effectively.

Make the same thing true of the word of God.

c) Cut out the Thorns

d) Use the Lamp

Jesus encouraged His disciples to use the lamp (understanding of Jesus) He had given them. I believe this is a subtle/veiled call similar to the later explicit call to make disciples and be My witnesses by preaching the gospel – the good news that Jesus is the King of the KOG who has come to establish His Kingdom, first by suffering and serving, next by reigning, ruling, and judging.

- e) **Remember the hope: God gives more understanding to those who ask of Him. Be that life-long student of Jesus.**

B. Action Called for by Parable 2

1. **Sow the word of God in your own heart and in the hearts of others!**

Read the Bible!
Share truths of Scripture with Others

2. **Remember the hope: Seeds of truth will grow and produce God's desired results**

C. Action Called for by Parable 3

1. **Trust God Will Grow His Seed You Sow**

In yourself
In others
They may seem small, but our trustworthy God will grow them into Kingdom fruit. McDonalds' super-size has nothing on God's King-size.

Conclusion

We have here in the first part of Mark 4, 3 parables which all speak of the KOG. This morning we hear again that the KOG is at hand in the presence of Jesus. But it is not like any kingdom we are used to, neither it is like what me might think the KOG would be like. Rather, it is like what Jesus taught it to be like.

It is about a sower sowing truth in hearts and producing fruit of God's design.

In studying this passage God put brought one central thought front and center. Here it is:

A correct understanding of what God wants us to know especially about who Jesus is does not come from a casual look, a quick once over, or even attentive introduction; but only from actively **following** Him and **asking** Him questions, **listening** with focused attention to His responses and **believing** His self disclosure to such a degree that you put your self in subordination to Him and live His will not yours.

You may not know Jesus as well as you think you do. You may not even know the real Jesus, but only a counterfeit you first heard him to be – maybe He is the one, to you, who if you pray this prayer will make everything in your life the way you want it; or maybe He is to you the counterfeit Jesus who just loves you and wants you to be happy what ever it takes.

We have already read about many who had met Jesus and thought Him to be someone He was not. His family thought Him to be a lunatic and the religious leaders thought Him a demoniac. These folks had more than a little exposure to Him but they were wrong about who He was.

If you find yourself living in any other way than in total submission to God as King of the Kingdom of God that has come in the presence of Jesus, you don't know Jesus as well as He wants to be known by you. How can I say this? If we know Jesus to be the Son of God and the King of the Kingdom of God we know Him as worthy of our submission and loyalty and obedience.

To know the King of the Kingdom of God the way He wants to be known will require that we make room in the soil of our hearts and our thoughts for the seed of His word to grow and produce the results He wants in us.

This morning I hope and pray that you have taken in Jesus' teachings about the KOG. I trust you have taken hope that as you engage with the truth and become an active sower of it in your lives and in the lives of others, **GOD WILL CAUSE SIGNIFICANT GROWTH!** I pray that you will take action, following Jesus' lead and becoming as sower of the seed of the word just like Christ!

Let's pray!