

The Seed is Still Powerful

2.11.18

Message 17

Mark Series

Mark 4:1–20 (NIV)

4 Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. ² He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: ³ "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times."

⁹ Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

¹⁰ When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. ¹¹ He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables ¹² so that,

" 'they may be ever seeing but never perceiving,

and ever hearing but never understanding;

otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!"'

¹³ Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? ¹⁴ The farmer sows the word. ¹⁵ Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them.

¹⁶ Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. ¹⁷ But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.

¹⁸ Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; ¹⁹ but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. ²⁰ Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.”

1. The Seed is still powerful.

- A. This statement may not mean anything to you yet.
 - 1. But hopefully, by the end of today's service, it will.
 - 2. Today's passage is one of the most important parables in Scripture.
 - 3. And Jesus' topic is one of His favorites: the Kingdom of God.
- B. **The Kingdom of God is the place where God's will is fully expressed.**
 - 1. Since the day Adam and Eve sinned against God, we find God in the process of returning the Earth back to its original state.
 - a. When you read Revelation and what God does at the end of human history, what has he done?
 - b. He has restored us back to “Eden”, so to speak.
 - 2. This perfect time where there is no more sickness, pain, or death is the fullest expression of the Kingdom of God.
 - a. Someday, there will be no more sin.
 - b. Someday, we will not have to ask for “God’s will to be done” because it will be automatically done because there is no sin.
 - c. This is the future, perfect day.
 - 3. We all know that that day has not yet arrived.
 - a. But it has started.
 - b. Back in Mark 1, John the Baptist and Jesus preached that the “Kingdom of God is at hand”.

- c. Every time Jesus healed a sick person, forgave someone's sins, or cast out a demon he was demonstrating that the Kingdom of God, the day when God's perfect plan shall be done, was coming.
- d. In fact, the Kingdom of God was already at work in the lives of people.

C. **Theological question:** If we know that God already wins, why is it that some people refuse to believe?

1. Some people struggle with this thought.
 - a. How can a loving God send people to hell?
 - b. Why would God allow people to reject him?
 - c. Maybe, God's Word isn't as powerful as it says it is...

Isa 55:10-11 10 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

- d. **Is God's Word really as powerful as God says it is?**
2. This last question is what Jesus is dealing with here in Mark 4.
 - a. In the midst of obstacles, distractions, sabotage, and everything else, God's Word will accomplish what it says it will do.
 - b. The Kingdom of God WILL be established,
 - c. Jesus will return and overthrow sin and shame,
 - d. And all who call upon Jesus' name WILL be saved.

2. The Setting of the Parable.

- A. Think for a moment about the crowd of people Jesus is teaching.
 1. There are people from all walks of life.

2. Some of them will remain long-time followers of Jesus.
3. Others, we can assume, were part of the crowd that cried out for Jesus' crucifixion.
4. Some will follow Jesus for a time, and then one day will walk away.
5. Clearly, Jesus is ministering to a mixed crowd.
 - a. Some are there because they want to learn and grow.
 - b. Others are trying to trap Jesus and betray him.
 - c. So Jesus chooses to teach them in the form of parables.

B. In a parable, Jesus expresses a spiritual reality in physical terms.

1. Jesus loved to use local illustrations.
 - a. Jesus wanted people to be able to relate the truths He was talking about to everyday life.
 - b. Because farming was a normal part of life, Jesus loved to use farming illustrations and parables.
2. But parables also served another purpose.
 - a. Have you ever tried to explain something to someone and you can tell by the look in their eyes, they DO NOT understand?
 - b. This also happens with spiritual conversations.
 1. Before you were saved, were there things about God that completely did not make sense but does now?
 2. When God makes His word come alive to you, that is called, "Illumination".
 3. IT's like the Holy Spirit pointing a flashlight and saying, "see this....this is what I mean".

4. But without the Holy Spirit living in you, there is no illumination of the Scripture.
 - c. Jesus used parables to separate his teachings from those who believe from those who don't want to believe.

1. Mark 4:10–12 (NIV)

¹⁰ When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. ¹¹ He told them, “**The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables** ¹² so that,

“ ‘they may be ever seeing but never perceiving,
and ever hearing but never understanding;
otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!’”

2. Some people don't want to change.

- a. Some people don't want to learn.

- b. And, guess what, they don't change or learn.

3. Parables helped teach about the Kingdom to those who wanted to learn while remaining obscure to those who wanted the Kingdom to fail.

C. Jesus is teaching about the Kingdom of God to a mixed crowd.

1. Most of the people there had their own ideas of what the Kingdom of God would look like.

- a. Some pictured Jesus overthrowing Rome and setting himself up as King.

- b. Others pictured Jesus as calling down fire from heaven and making everything new.

- c. Jesus' illustration was nothing like that.

2. Instead of fire, and swords, and thrones, Jesus illustrated his kingdom as a farmer and a bag of seed.

- a. This is what the Kingdom of God was like.
- b. Someday Jesus will come in power and will overthrow Satan with the Word of God.
- c. Someday Jesus will set up his throne on Earth and rule as a mighty King.
- d. But in the meantime, Jesus showed that the Kingdom was "like a farmer who sowed some seed".
- e. **Let's talk about what that means.**

Mark 4:3–9 (NIV)

³ "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times."

⁹ Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

3. A farmer sows seed.

- A. This doesn't sound like an exciting story.
 - 1. One of my favorite movies is "Princess Bride".
 - a. It has sword-fights, trolls, giants, and some great quotes.
 - b. Since Valentines Day is coming up this week, I thought you men might need a couple of lines for your lady:
 - C. "you were already more beautiful than anything I dared to dream. In our years apart, my imaginings did their best to improve on your perfection. At night, your face was forever behind my eyes. And now I see that that vision who kept me company in my loneliness was a hag compared to the beauty

now before me.” –Westley

Enough about my beauty.” Buttercup said. “Everybody always talks about how beautiful I am. I’ve got a mind, Westley. Talk about that.”

– William Goldman, The Princess Bride

d. “There have been five great kisses since 1642 B.C... (before then couples hooked thumbs.) And the precise rating of kisses is a terribly difficult thing, often leading to great controversy... Well, this one left them all behind.”

– William Goldman, The Princess Bride

e. This is how the Kingdom of God should come to pass.

2. Instead, Jesus talks about a farmer sowing seed.

a. The seed seems to be ordinary.

b. It does what every seed does:

1. It goes in the ground.

2. Then it attempts to grow.

c. There is something special about that seed.

1. It’s not a magic bean.

2. It’s not something fictional.

3. Instead, Jesus said the Seed is the word of God and in that Word was the power of the Kingdom.

B. *When reading a parable, it is always important to learn how Jesus interpreted the parable.*

1. In hermeneutics, we call it the principle of “letting Scripture interpret Scripture”.

a. This means that if Jesus tells us what the symbols mean, then that is what it means.

b. We don’t have to try to make up the answer.

2. Jesus is careful to define what the symbols in the parable mean:

- a. The farmer is someone who shares or sows the Word of God.
- b. The seed is the Gospel: The Word of God and its message.
- c. The soil is the condition of the heart of those who hear the Gospel.

d. **3 soil types listed.**

1. Mark 4:15

¹⁵ Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them.

2. Mark 4:16–17

¹⁶ Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. ¹⁷ But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.

3. Mark 4:20

²⁰ Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.”

C. In this parable we notice a few things:

- 1. The seed doesn't change.
- 2. The sower doesn't change.
- 3. The condition of the soil does.
- 4. And the condition of the soil represents the condition of our lives.

4. My life is the field where the Seed of the Kingdom either grows or dies.

A. When Jesus interpreted this parable he emphasized the importance of the Seed landing on good soil.

1. We know the seed is good.

- a. We know the seed will grow.
- b. We don't have to fear the ability of the seed to produce abundantly.

2. The variable in question is where the seed lands.

- a. And the seed does not always land on the productive soil.
- b. We all have known people who were on fire for God for a period of time, only to walk away from God.
- c. We also know people who flat out reject God altogether.
- d. Or those who are so overwhelmed with life that there is no room for anything else to grow, including their relationship with God.

B. Have you ever considered that the difference between an abundant life in Christ and a struggling one is the condition of my life?

1. The Word of God always has the power to change lives and produce good.

- a. "The Word of God never fails".
- b. Every "seed", every word of God, can produce tremendous blessing and change, far outpacing the size and amount of the seed. 30, 60, and 100 fold refers to exponential growth.

2. Yet **the condition of my life makes all the difference between fruitfulness and famine.**

- a. Some of our lives are under constant spiritual attack, threatening to steal the Word of God from our minds.
- b. Others of us have created conditions of life of shallowness.
 - 1. We move from one thing to the next,
 - 2. Never allowing the Word of God to create roots down deep in our lives.
- c. Then others of us are consumed by worry, pursuits of ungodly things, or desire that we have no room for the Word of God to produce life and blessing in us.

5. Regardless of our present reality, the Word of God is still powerful.

A. **The good news is that the Holy Spirit CAN change the condition of your heart and life so that the Word of God can produce an abundance of life in you.**

- 1. Every farmer knows that if you want the harvest to be bountiful, then you have to prepare the field.
 - a. Jesus didn't mention this in his parable.
 - b. But everyone in the crowd knew that.
 - c. **Preparation always precedes sowing and reaping.**
- 2. If you don't want to be like the people who:
 - a. Have the seeds of the Kingdom stolen by Satan,
 - b. Or you don't want the cares and worries of life to choke out the Word of God in you,
 - c. Then prepare the condition of your life so that the Kingdom of God will be produced in you.

B. How can I prepare my life for receiving the Seeds of the Kingdom?

1. **#1. Ruthlessly eliminate whatever is robbing your seed.**

- a. Is there something in your life that every time you do it, you feel a separation between you and God?
- b. In those moments, you feel deep inside you that something changed between you and God.
- c. That's what is known as grieving the Holy Spirit.
- d. And you need to pull those things out of your life just as a farmer pulls weeds from the garden.

2. #2. Provide intentional time and space for God to produce the Kingdom in you.

- a. There are defined seasons for growth.
 - 1. Seasons of preparation,
 - 2. Seasons of sowing,
 - 3. And seasons of reaping.
- b. You can't skip one season and expect the next season to be fruitful.
 - 1. If the Holy Spirit is preparing you for something, don't rush it.
 - 2. Let God produce His Kingdom in you.
- c. Your responsibility is to provide room for that seed to grow.
 - 1. You can't expect the seed of the Kingdom to grow in the same field that is also producing porn, hatred, anger, gossip, or any other sin.
 - 2. It's the Holy Spirit's job to produce His fruit in our lives.
 - 3. It's our job to make sure that His fruit has room to grow.

Closing: The Seed is still powerful.

- A. "What does this statement have to do with anything?"
 - 1. Everything.
 - a. The Devil wants to prevent the Seeds of the Kingdom from growing.
 - b. The world wants to overwhelm it with worries, concerns, and other distractions.
 - c. The busyness of life threatens to keep the Seed shallow in everyone who gives into the tyranny of the now.
 - 2. But the SEED will produce a great harvest.
- B. God wants to produce a harvest of love, righteousness, and spiritual power in you.
 - 1. Are you ready?
 - 2. Are you ready for God to work in your in your life and through your life in ways you never dreamed possible?
 - 3. Are you ready to see the will of God manifest itself in supernatural ways?

Would you stand with me this morning and let's ask God to help become the good soil that produces all that He desires in our life.