


The Gospel of Mark
Part 15
Parables of the Kingdom

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

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A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Triangle Community Church aims to be a "transforming church". We exist to be used by God as He transforms ordinary people into extraordinary followers of Jesus Christ. TCC believes not only that life-change is possible—but that it is to be expected. Growth is God's will for his people. But transformation does not happen by accident. It requires intentional, intelligent action. 1 Timothy 4:7 instructs you to "discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." Since "Talking Points, Walking Points" is intended both for individual reflection and for group discussion, questions vary in degree of vulnerability required. Generally it is best to begin group discussions with questions which involve less personal disclosure—but don't linger there. Be sure to "dive deep" too! The questions which require the greatest openness and honesty, as well as those in the section entitled "Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time", are perfect for private reflection.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you?
...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?
- Read Mark 4:21-23. According to v. 22, what intention does God have for "hidden things"?
How does Romans 10:14 unfold the intention of Mark 4:22? Have you ever played that role?
- Read Mark 4:24-25. How rapidly are you increasing in your grasp of the mysteries of God?
How careful are you at responding quickly and completely to the teachings of God's Word?
- Read Mark 4:26-29. Tell about a recent time when you "planted seeds" by sharing the gospel.
Should we be more concerned about sowing or about harvesting? Explain.
Read 1 Corinthians 3:5-8. What's our role? What's God's role?
- Read Mark 4:30-32. Take a moment to skim the content at JoshuaProject.net.
What did you learn about "unreached people groups"?
Choose an unreached people. Decide several actions you can take to help reach them.

Sermon Text: Mark 4:21-34

We are working our way through the gospel of Mark. The parable of the soils reveals that not everyone has ears to hear. Some have hard hearts; no amount of evidence is sufficient for some people to believe in God. Other people may believe for a while, but they fall away during persecution or difficult times. For still others, God gets lost amongst all of their competing loyalties. Finally, some have ears that hear. It all comes down to the spiritual condition of the human heart. Today we look at **four short parables**, all of which are designed to reveal various aspect about the Kingdom of God (Mark 4:21-34).

1. The Parable of the Lamp (v. 21-23). Lamps are not supposed to be hidden, but to be put on display. Then what was dim or imperceptible becomes clear and visible. The big idea of this parable is that some spiritual truths which had been kept secret in the Old Testament are now being revealed through Jesus' life and ministry. The message of the kingdom of God is all tied up with Jesus. The Jews didn't understand the nature of God's kingdom. They didn't know that it was accessed through the death of the Messiah, who through his death would make an atonement for our sins. They didn't realize that you receive God's salvation and enter into the spiritual aspects of God's kingdom by placing your trust in Messiah Jesus. They didn't know that the establishment of the promised earthly kingdom would come much later. "What in the Old Testament was concealed, in the New Testament is revealed." The mystery of the kingdom is exposed through progressive revelation (Ephesians 1:9–10). It includes the message of the cross as well as all that is coming in the future. The mystery now revealed is that all things find their source and consummation in Christ. It's all about Jesus (1 Timothy 3:16)! The mystery is about Jesus and the gospel. This mystery is to be proclaimed among the nations. Like the lamp in the parable, it's not to be hidden. While Jesus was on earth, he was the light of the world. Now we are to shine that light (Matthew 5:14-15). So be on mission! Proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of God to everyone who will listen! Be like a lamp on a lampstand—proclaiming Christ to all (Matthew 10:27).

2. A Parable About How to Listen (v. 24). We need to listen carefully to Jesus' teaching because there is a direct correlation between how well you listen and how much you will profit from divine revelation. The blessing you receive will be disproportionately large to the effort expended in listening (v. 25). But the opposite also is true: if you close your ears and harden your hearts, if you don't listen attentively with a view towards life application, you will lose the ability to understand spiritual truth. The author of Hebrews warns of this spiritual malady (Hebrews 5:11–14). Be very concerned if you sense that your heart is growing cold or hard towards the things of God, if you have internal pushback when you hear God's Word being taught. You need to address it today!

3. A Parable of Divine Growth (v. 26-29). The farmer does what he knows to do—sow his seed—and then he leaves the growth to God! Spiritual growth and harvest follow our faithful ministry of God's Word. Victory is assured; the harvest is coming! And, it will arrive at the exact moment decided by God's wise plan (Revelation 14:12-16). Farmers plant seeds not because they enjoy planting; it's all about the future harvest. So too with us; we too are awaiting Christ's return and the wonderful future we have ahead of us. Like the farmer, we must not grow impatient as we await our eternal home (James 5:7–8). God is in control of human history; he decides the timing of the harvest, so we set our hearts at ease.

4. The Parable of the Mustard Seed (v. 30-32). Whereas the previous parable was about sequence, this one is a parable of contrast. The kingdom of God begins small, but becomes big. The kingdom of God might begin in obscurity, but it will culminate in glory! To use Jesus' analogy, the tiny seed sown in Galilee in the first century has become a tree which today provides shelter and refuge for people all around the world. And yet the harvest has not yet come. The reach of the tree continues to grow. Countless people around the world have yet to hear the gospel message. Entire nations are virtually devoid of the shade and shelter extended by God's Kingdom. When the gospel has been preached to all nations of the world, then the tree will be fully grown and the harvest will come (Matthew 24:14).

I find **five take-aways** from these parables: **[1] Be a light for Christ.** Keep sowing seeds. **[2] Realize that there will be different responses to the gospel.** Don't be discouraged. **[3] Be an attentive, application-oriented listener.** Have ears that hear. **[4] Sow in hope—the harvest is coming!** **[5] Pray for the worldwide advancement of God's Kingdom.** God intends that people from every tribe and tongue and nation find shade and rest in the branches of his kingdom.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

"Five Question Bible Study" (see below) *is useful for studying any topic.*
Let's use it to explore the Kingdom of God during the church age...

Monday—Study Acts 20:24–27. Does the "gospel of grace of God" include "preaching the kingdom"?

Tuesday—Study Matthew 4:17. What role does repentance play in our response to the kingdom of God?

Wednesday—Study Acts 1:1-8. What is our kingdom-task now?

Thursday—Study Romans 14:17. Of what does the kingdom consist in the church age?

Friday—Study 1 Corinthians 6:9–11. Who does, and does not, inherit the kingdom?

Saturday—Study 2 Timothy 4:16–18. What is our stability amid persecution and abandonment?

Five Question Bible Study

Bible Text: _____ Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]