

More Parables About the Kingdom of God

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- [0 : 0 0] And take again your copy of God's word, joyfully able to open it together, to hear it preached. And indeed, let's be asking, Lord, speak to us now from it.
- Turn to Mark chapter 4. Continuing in our sermon series through the gospel according to Mark. Here in chapter 4, Jesus is teaching in parables.
- We looked together at one last week, and we're going to see three more this morning. We'll begin reading in verse 21. Mark 4, beginning in verse 21.
- And this is Jesus who is now speaking. He said to them, Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don't you put it on its stand?
- For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed. And whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.
- [1 : 0 1] Consider carefully what you hear, he continued. With the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and even more. Whoever has will be given more. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.
- He also said, This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground, night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up. The seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how.
- All by itself the soil produces grain, first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.
- Again he said, What shall we say the kingdom of God is like? Or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground.
- Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade. With many similar parables, Jesus spoke the word to them as much as they could understand.
- [2 : 0 5] He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything. Let's now hear the word of God preached. Two university freshmen are sitting next to each other in biology class.
- Stuart is only in the university because his parents made him go and paid his way. So he's not interested in studies. He's only there for parties and fun.
- Ted, he's been working for four summers to save up money to go to university, and is even working a job at university to cover his school bills.
- And he's always wanted to be an EMT, first responder. And so both these freshmen, sitting side by side, have the same teacher, the same textbook.
- Which boy do you think will get the most out of the class? Well, Ted. But why?
- [3 : 1 0] Because he has a heart to learn. He has a heart to take in the information and to hold on to it. It's viewed as something valuable. Last week we studied Jesus' parable of the sower in the first 20 verses of Mark 4.

The farmer sows his seed and he scatters it on all soils. And we were introduced to four different kinds of soil. In each case, it was the condition of the soil that determined the effect of the seed.

Though the seed sown was good in each case, only one type of the soils produced a harvest. That was the good soil.

Not the hard-packed path. Not the rocky soil. Not the thorny soil. But only the good soil. Well, even so, there's nothing wrong with the good seed of God's Word.

That Jesus was scattering. That I'm scattering. That you scatter as you go out and witness. Nothing wrong. It's good seed. And all people who hear it hear the same Word.

[4 : 22] And yet only one of the four types of hearers truly profits from the Word, produces a good harvest of fruit unto God, accepts the Word, and assimilates it into their heart and into their lives.

What makes the difference? The seed is the same for all. It's the good Word of God, the Gospel. But it's the condition of the heart that determines the response to that Word.

And so it's the heart made good. It's the heart that wants to learn. The heart that hungers and thirsts for righteousness to know this Savior. That's the heart that comes away the winner as the Word of God is being taught.

Now, Jesus said, if you don't understand the parable of the sower that we saw last week, then how will you understand any parable? As if to teach us, this parable is like a key that unlocks other parables that he teaches.

So be sure you've got that first parable that we studied last week. And now Mark's going to give us four more short parables. Colin mentioned three, and I'm dividing the first into two, as there's two different points I want to make out of that.

[5 : 44] And these four short parables are all about the kingdom of God, and they build off of the parable of the sower. And they comment further upon the use of parables, Jesus' use of parables, and man's response to God's Word.

And so we have the parable of the lamp, the parable of the measure, the parable of seed growing in secret, and the mustard seed. Now, many of these parables, or some of them we might even refer to as proverbial sayings, were used by Jesus on multiple occasions.

And he applies it to the people in different ways in whichever situation he was preaching in. And so we'll see that as we proceed, especially through these first two parables.

First of all, then, the parable of the lamp. Now, here the parable, or the symbol of God's Word, has shifted, then, from seed to lamp, or light.

And both of them are found often in the Word of God, aren't they? We think right away of Psalm 119, 105, Thy Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.

[6 : 58] So the Word of God is not only seed, it's also a lamp. So Jesus is still talking to us about the Word of God. He's still teaching us about its use.

And he's still concerned about the way we hear it. But this is the theme that gives cohesion and brings together all four of these parables piggybacked on the top of the parable of the sower.

So notice it in verses 21 to 23. He said to them, that is to the 12, I believe, is the last reference. So do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed?

Instead, don't you put it on its stand? For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed. And whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open.

If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. Now we saw last week in verses 10 through 12 that Jesus' use of parables was twofold.

[7 : 59] He had two reasons he used parables. He told us that. He used them both to reveal truth, that is to make it clear, but he also used parables to conceal truth, that is to hide it.

To do this, kids, to hide the truth. So he used it to reveal truth, but to others he used it to hide or conceal the truth.

And our Lord has more to say about that reality in this parable. Jesus spoke in parables, you remember, as a judgment upon those who didn't want to hear.

They didn't want to learn. They didn't want to believe in Jesus. They were not truly hungering after righteousness, like those in Isaiah, of whom Jesus quotes in that passage.

And so the truth, just spoken in parables, in the story, left them confused, unable to understand. What does he mean by this sower and seed and these different grounds?

[9 : 05] Because they didn't have the explanation. They just had the parable. And so that was a righteous judgment upon their hardness of heart. But for the disciples who wanted to hear, who wanted to learn, who wanted to know more of Christ and his way of salvation, Jesus explained everything to them.

So parables became a helpful teaching aid to them, illuminating the truth. Indeed, the secrets, the mysteries of the kingdom of God were given to them and not to the others.

That's the teaching of Jesus' earlier parable, verses 10 to 12. Now, there were other reasons Jesus was concealing and hiding truth.

It wasn't just always because of a judgment upon men's hardness of heart. Perhaps the greatest secret of all of the kingdom of God was the fact that the one who was teaching them is the king of this kingdom.

That he is none other than God, this eternal God we've been singing about. Infinite, eternal, unchangeable. That that's who he is.

[10 : 16] He is God in the flesh. That was a mystery, a secret. And we find Jesus concealing that, hiding it somewhat, don't we?

We've already seen it in Mark's gospel as the first recorded miracle of Jesus was driving out that demon in the synagogue at Capernaum. And in chapter 1, verse 24, this evil spirit screamed out as Jesus is preaching, What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth?

Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God. And Jesus sternly said, Be quiet. Be quiet. Why be quiet?

Well, it was the same thing later that evening at Peter's house. The whole town came out. Jesus healed everyone that was sick and drove out many demons. But he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

You see? He's concealing. He's hiding. Chapter 3, verses 11 and 12, Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, You are the Son of God.

[11 : 26] But he gave them strict orders not to tell who he was. The time was not right yet for that full disclosure.

He has three more years of preaching and training his disciples and then he's leaving and that whole thing's in their hands. And so he says, No, we're not going to precipitate an early death.

I have work to do yet. And so he's concealing, revealing his true identity to some and hiding it from others. The secret of the kingdom given to you, not to them.

Now, in this parable that we're looking at this morning, Jesus wants the 12 disciples to know that this concealing is only temporary. This truth that I'm teaching you, it's not to be kept hidden forever.

It's just for a while. Because the ultimate purpose for which God gives us his word is always to reveal, ultimately. And that's what he's telling us in this parable.

[12 : 34] He says, Do you bring a lamp into a room to then put it under a bowl or a bed? Now, we need to remember turning the light on was not as easy as flipping the switch.

And so, to bring light into a dark room, you had to be sure that the lamp had oil in it, that the wick was trimmed. And then you had to go find some fire somewhere and bring some fire and light that lamp and then bring it into the room.

Now, would you go to all that trouble to light a lamp and bring it into the room only to put it under a bushel or under a bed? Well, it's ludicrous. No, you wouldn't have brought it in unless you meant for it to reveal something.

Maybe you lost your keys or your glasses or your... Well, they didn't have keys, but they lost something. And it's a dark room and they're wondering, it's hidden from me.

I can't find it. So you bring a light in for what purpose? To reveal what is hidden. Oh, there they are. Or our glasses. Oh, here they are.

[13 : 39] And so the light reveals what is hidden. That's the point Jesus wants us to get from this parable. So the hidden, as he says, the hidden is indeed meant to be disclosed and is meant to be brought out into the open.

That's the reason for the lamp. So the word of God is ultimately given to us not to conceal forever, but to reveal. And so Jesus is saying, though some things about the kingdom of God right now are hidden, and I'm concealing them, a time is coming after my death and burial and resurrection and ascension into heaven, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, when what is hidden will be revealed.

What I tell you in the dark, speak in the light. And what is whispered in your ear, shout from the rooftops.

Matthew 10, 26 and 27. That salvation is found in no one else than Jesus Christ. No other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. We must make it clear He's God from heaven come to save sinners.

That Jesus of Nazareth really is God and King and He lived the perfect life. He lived all the obedience that we sinners needed and He died suffering all the punishment that we sinners need.

[15 : 13] He's done it all and now He's calling on you to trust in Him and to receive salvation from Him. And whoever repents and believes will be saved and declared righteous in God's sight.

So Jesus is saying, though my words for a season are concealed, they're not to be kept secret but to be revealed in due time. And so they did as the book of Acts teaches us as they went out preaching everywhere that Jesus is the Christ.

Now you and I live in this era then. We don't live in the era when there was a reason for some secrets of the kingdom to be hidden. Now the secret's out.

The mystery is revealed. We are to be proclaiming the Word of God, the Gospel, letting our light shine to others. You wouldn't light a lamp and bring it into a room only to put it under a bushel and neither would God.

Has He lit you up with His light? Has He opened your blinded eyes and shown you the light of the glory of God in the face of Christ? It's in order that you might shine and not hide that blessed truth of the Gospel.

[16 : 27] And if anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. Let him pay attention. That's the parable of the lamp that reveals, reveals.

Now, secondly, we have the parable of the measure. The measure, verses 24 and 25. Consider carefully what you hear.

Do you see the continuity of these parables? It's all about hearing the Word of God. And Jesus is concerned how we hear it. Carefully, now He's saying. Consider it.

Think about it. Don't just be a hearer of my Word, though. Be a doer. Listen to it.

Listen with care. Consider it. Kids, that's just a big word for think. Think. Think. Think. Don't check your mind at the door when you come to church, when you go to Sunday school class, when you come into the preaching and worship God.

[17 : 30] Think. It's the truth of God's Word that sets our hearts ablaze to sing these hymns, isn't it? We think about our God and we then praise Him out of that reality.

So, think. Consider carefully. What does it mean? How does it apply to me? Pray it in.

Work it out in your life. Take it on board. Because how you receive God's Word determines how much more understanding you will have of God's Word.

Because to Him who has will be given what? More. Oh, that's interesting. That's the law of the kingdom of God.

that to Him who has will be given more. He who has light and understanding will be given more light and understanding. And so He says in verse 24, with the measure you use, it will be measured to you and even more.

[18 : 35] Now, we're familiar with that, those words of Jesus, that proverb. But, but it's applied in a different context when He was preaching to a different group of people for a different reason.

In Luke chapter 6 and verse 38, the measure is used for the measure in which we give. He says, there give and it will be given to you.

A good measure pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. So there it's talking about a measurement by which we give.

That when we give to others, we ought to use a generous, large measure and God promises that it will be given back in the same measure, largely. But now, in this parable, Jesus is not applying it to the measure of giving, but the measure in which we receive the Word of God.

How do we receive it? What measure have you brought this morning? You brought a thimble? Maybe I can get a nugget of truth today? Or did you bring a big bushel basket? Say, Lord, teach me your ways.

[19 : 44] You've got a big measure, hungry heart. You're wanting to learn more from God's Word. Hungry, thirsty for righteousness, to know Christ better. So Jesus is saying, get all you can out of the Word of God that you hear.

Because the same measure of how much you understand and take on board today will be the same measure for how much more light you will be given tomorrow.

So the more you understand, the more light you have to throw light on other passages. I know you know the reality of that. You who've been walking with God for any number of years, as you read the Bible and you come to understand the truth of God's Word here, you're reading over here and suddenly you say, oh, I know what that means because of what this means over here.

and you find light from one passage shining its light on other passages. So get all that you can with a big measure because that's going to enable you to learn more and more and more.

Isn't it that way with algebra? That wasn't my favorite topic. But you can't solve big problems in algebra unless you know how to do each line of the problem, right?

[21 : 02] And so if you've worked out the smaller problem and you know how to do that, then you can move on to another line and learn to do that.

And as you're adding to your knowledge, then you can stand before this long equation and work it out because you know each step. It's kind of like the ABCs, kids. You've got to learn the ABCs before you learn how to read, don't you?

And as you learn the ABCs and their sounds, well then you can learn how to put these letters together and pretty soon you can pronounce words because the light of letters shines light for further knowing in words and then sentences, phrases and sentences and then to read a book and then to write and to learn grammar and to learn creative writing.

It all goes back, you see. The more you have, the more you are given the ability to have more. So make sure you bring a big measurement whenever you sit down to the word of God, a big hungry heart to take in whatever God's saying to you because he who has, this is the rule of heaven with regard to progress and understanding and profiting from God's word.

He who has will be given more. You say, well that doesn't really fit the way that we like to think. We like to think the guy that doesn't have anything, he's the one that should be given. But the rule of heaven is he who has will be given more.

[22 : 32] So get, get, bring the big measurement to receive. And you see how this sifts the wheat from the chaff in the crowds that Jesus was preaching to that day.

Who's really here with a heart to learn? This is back to the university and the two freshmen. Who really brings to the table a heart that wants to know God and to know his word?

And so those who want to learn and seek us for hidden treasure and ask for further light are given more. And the measure in which they get will be the measure of getting more.

So whoever has will be given more. Whoever's not have, even what he has will be taken from him. Boy, that's a powerful word. You see, it works both ways. The one who welcomes God's word will be given more, while the one who does not welcome it will lose both what he has and what he could have had.

You may have a skill to play the piano, but if you don't practice it, you lose it, right? And so you need to make use of what you take in. And if you don't, you can lose even what you have.

[23 : 45] Jesus says it this way in Luke chapter 8, verse 18. Whoever does not have even what he thinks he has will be taken from him. Perhaps that's how we're to understand this, that you might have come to church today and because you gave an hour to sitting under the word and you think, well, I've got something from that.

But if you don't receive it correctly, you don't gain from it and you lose what you did here. Isn't that what James said?

That be doers of the word and not hearers only. Why? Deceiving yourself. Because if you don't become a doer of the word you heard today at church and you walk out thinking I've gained something, you're only tricking yourself.

You're only deceiving yourself. No. Whoever does not have even what he thinks he has will be taken from him. Commentator Alan Cole says, failure to understand and to gain knowledge will lead further and further into the fog until completely groping in darkness.

So the measure of the kingdom works both ways. Bring the big basket. Suck in the truth of God and you'll be enabled to learn more. So that's the second parable.

[25 : 13] A third parable teaches us that the kingdom of God does not come with outward pomp and circumstance. It's not like the kingdoms of this world but rather it's like a seed secretly growing.

So this is the parable of the seed secretly growing. Verses 26 and following. He also said, this is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground night and day whether he sleeps or gets up the seed sprouts and grows though he does not know how.

All by itself the soil produces grain. First the stalk then the head then the full kernel in the head. And as soon as the grain is ripe he puts the sickle to it because the harvest has come.

The lesson is this. There is a secret power of God at work in his word that is establishing his kingdom, his reign in the hearts of men and women, boys and girls.

It's a secret power. It's a mysterious thing. It's not fully understood. Brother Mike referred to it in the Sunday school hour. The mystery of this seed at work in the hearts to establish King Jesus on the throne of our hearts.

[26 : 37] And Jesus here says it's like the mysterious growth of the seed in the soil. So the farmer, he's active in scattering the seed, isn't he? He's got to grab his seed bag and go out and scatter it.

He's also active in the harvesting. He's grabbing his sickle and he's going out and he's working to bring in the harvest. But between planting and harvesting, well, there's something mysterious that takes place.

It's the actual growth of the seed into a plant and all without his effort. So during the night, during the day, whatever he's doing, whether he's sleeping or getting up, where he's drinking coffee down at the corner shop with the fellas or going to a ball game with his grandchildren or his children, doesn't matter what he's doing, shopping with the wife, day or night, the seed is growing without anything of his doing.

This is the secretive power, the mysterious power of God's word, establishing the kingdom of God in the hearts of people. It's all rather mysterious.

The action starts underground, right? So he can get up in the morning and go out and stare at his garden and just watch. And what does he see?

[28 : 01] Absolutely nothing. Because it starts underground and that seed actually has to die and then has to come back to life and go through germination and then shoots up and finally maybe he'll see something.

But you see, there's mystery. He doesn't know how it grows. All by itself. The word means automatically. You remember when Peter was being brought out of prison by the angel and he thinks that he's dreaming a dream when it's in fact happening.

And remember it says the gate opened by itself. That's the same word here. So all by itself, the seed is at work. Whether he's sleeping or doing anything, there's something magical between the seed and the soil as they come together to produce this living plant that then eventually grows and develops into a harvested grain.

This is the mysterious growth of the seed. And it's not at all the work of man. And that's the way the kingdom of God grows. One person at a time.

Yes, God's servants scatter the seed of God's word. On the hearts of man. Man's activity is crucial here. They must hear the gospel in order to believe. So there's man's activity scattering the seed.

[29 : 25] Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3, 6 and 7, I planted the seed. Apollos watered it. There's activity to be done. But God made it grow.

You see, that's what Jesus is pointing out here. Only God makes it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything. But only God who makes things grow.

Paul's saying don't worship at my shrine. Don't look at me as if I have some secret mystical power. Not at all. Only God makes the kingdom grow in the hearts of men.

Makes that seed to bear fruit. That's the way the kingdom of God grows. When we were dead in sin, God made us alive with Christ.

He chose to give us birth through the word of truth. James 1, 18. By his mighty power, he brought us to birth as through the word of truth.

[30 : 30] He opens the eyes. He opens the heart. He gives life to the dead. There's something mysterious about that. And that's what Brother Mike took us to John 3.

Jesus is saying it's mysterious. It's like the wind. You can't see it. You hear it. You don't know where it's coming from and where it's going.

But you see, it's a fax. But the actual wind itself is mysterious. So is everyone born of the spirit. John 3, 7, and 8. And that's what Jesus is pointing to.

That this secretive growth of the seed into bringing a person into the kingdom of God is mysterious and unseen.

It's something that's apart from man's involvement. It's something God does as he plants spiritual life in the soul of man and thereby brings them to repentance and faith from darkness to light and then for the gradual growth.

[31 : 36] First the blade, then the stalk, then the head, then the full grain, and then the sickle. Now yesterday morning, we, in our discipling meeting, heard testimonies of this very thing.

I just was jumping up and down in my seat because that's what I was preparing to preach today. We heard about one believer.

Okay? Here's believer. And here's lost, hell-bound sinner. And as our pastor reminded us, that was every single one of us. Lost and hell-bound.

And this believer had a burden on his heart to bring the gospel to this person. And so they're together now. And the believer is witnessing and sharing the gospel.

He's planting the seed, you see. Only to have this sinner yawn with indifference, reject what was said, and walk away.

[32 : 39] And so their paths diverged. And the Christian went home to cry before the Lord. I gave him your word, and you rejected it.

And so they go on for months and even years and later find out that God took that seed that had been planted months, years earlier.

And all without this man's involvement, whether he sleeps or whether he gets up, the seed of itself germinates.

And this person suddenly remembers something that was shared and comes to faith in Jesus Christ. God made it grow.

God made it grow. So, brothers and sisters, don't grow weary in telling others about your great Savior. Keep scattering the good seed. It is good seed. And keep praying after you've scattered it.

[33 : 43] We little know what God might do with the seed we planted. Mothers and fathers, keep planting seeds of the gospel in your children.

Oh, you have to wait a long time, perhaps. I think of my own father having to wait some 40-plus years for one of his children to, and mom, to see him brought to faith in Christ.

Keep planting, dear sister. Keep planting, grandma. Keep planting, grandfather. Keep planting the seed and then praying. It may be that when they're long gone from home, God will take that seed and will use it to germinate and to bring into life a new believer.

And that's how the kingdom of God grows, one believer at a time, as he establishes his reign in the hearts of people. In fact, it may be after you're asleep in the grave that God will take a seed that you sowed and cause that person to germinate into a child of God.

So keep planting, keep praying. Mike and Mariko, keep planting. And we'll keep praying that those seeds you're sowing would bear fruit in the lives.

[35 : 06] What an encouraging parable is this. You know, only the day of harvest will really show what our planting has accomplished. And by harvest, you know, that's a reference to Jesus' second coming and the judgment.

It will only be there at the throne of God where Jesus separates all mankind, the unbelievers on the left and the believers on the right. And you may see people on the right hand of Jesus Christ in that day to whom he'll say, enter into the kingdom prepared for you before the creation.

And you'll say, I shared the gospel with him. I taught her in Sunday school. I planted a seed. And look, here they are. Maybe somebody else came along and watered it.

But we'll see just what God has accomplished, how he has made the seed grow in the day when he comes back. And so all the glory will go to him as we know that he alone can make the seed grow.

Well, that's the third parable. Encourage us to keep sowing. And then the last is a parable of the mustard seed. And here Jesus emphasizes the kingdom's great results that start from a small, unpromising beginning.

[36 : 21] Verses 31 and 32. Again, he said, what shall we say the kingdom of God is like? What parable shall we use to describe it? Well, it's like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground.

Yet, when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade. Some of you are sticking seeds into the ground right now in your garden.

And you know that the seed is smaller than the plant that will come forth from that seed. Well, that was never more true than it is with the mustard seed. It was the smallest of garden plants.

It's about the size of a dot in your Bible on top of the eye. That's about the size of the mustard seed. Maybe a little larger. And yet, so small.

Yet, when planted, something amazing again takes place between the power of the seed and the soil so that it grows and it becomes the largest of all garden plants.

[37 : 22] Indeed, sometimes growing 10 to 15 feet such that the birds can come and nest and perch to get some shade from the hot sun. Now let's think of the small beginnings of the kingdom of God on the earth as Jesus began his public ministry at age 30.

He's here to establish the kingdom of God. He's a carpenter from Nazareth. Not brought up in the big city. Not educated at the Ivy League Jewish schools or the rabbis in Jerusalem.

But from a backwater village of Nazareth. Even Nathaniel wondered, can anything good come out of Nazareth? You see, it's the mustard seed. What can this little dot become?

And as for the 12, he chose to be with them. They weren't much to write home about. Some were Galilean fishermen, a tax collector, a political zealot.

But they weren't the wealthy, influential movers and shakers of society to really get a movement going. No, that's not what they were. They were just ordinary, unschooled men without great gifts.

[38 : 39] Often found arguing with each other about who was the greatest. Didn't have a clue as to Jesus' mission on earth and why he's here. Constantly needing reminding, correcting by their master.

And in the end, one of them betrayed him and handed him over to the Romans or to the Jewish leaders who turned him over to the Romans. One of them denied three times that he even knew him.

And they all forsook him for fear of their life, leaving him all alone. And so after three years of preaching a message that few wanted to hear, Jesus was despised and rejected by men.

He was arrested. He was tried. He was condemned. He was beaten. He was whipped. He was mocked and nailed to a cross in weakness until he was taken down dead and buried, stuck in a tomb.

And looked at this from any human perspective, it would be hard for anyone to think that the Jesus movement would amount to anything, but will surely just fizzle out in a few months.

[39 : 53] It was a mustard seed. The kingdom of God was a mustard seed. So small, so insignificant, so unimpressive, so unpromising.

What is weaker in the world's eyes than a message of salvation through a bloody mess of a man crucified in weakness who couldn't even save himself from the Romans?

And you're telling me that he's the one that's going to save us from the wrath of God to come? That this Jesus of Nazareth is your hero? Your savior?

Your king? What a joke. Yet, who can speak of the greatness of his kingdom today and as it will be when it's full grown?

For it was precisely that message of the cross that's foolishness to those who are perishing, that is the power of God unto those who are being saved. The growth of God's kingdom is intentionally designed this way.

[40 : 58] God delights to take ordinary people and through them to do extraordinary things. God loves to take the foolish things of this world to confound the wise men of this world.

He loves to take the weak things of this world to confound the strong. He loves to take, well, Paul goes so far as to say the lowly despised nobodies of this world to confound the somebodies of this world so that no one may boast before him but only boast in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 1, 26 and following. So, within weeks after Jesus' ascension into heaven, a despised gospel in the hands of a dozen despised ordinary men had filled Jerusalem with their teaching.

Acts 5, 28. And only 20 years later as Paul and his missionary band come into Thessalonica on their second missionary journey, his enemies complained that they had turned the world upside down.

20 years after Jesus ascended. And the commentator Hendrickson says that within 40 years of Christ's death, his gospel had reached all the great cultural centers of the great Roman Empire.

[42 : 14] The whole world empire. It had made its way into those great cultural centers. And since that time, oh, it didn't stop growing then, did it?

Think what's happened since that time. As God's word has been spreading to every nation of the world with a message of a Savior crucified in weakness but raised in power, coming again in glory.

And yet in that way, through the weakness, the weakness of the cross, the foolishness of the cross, with that gospel, the little mustard seed is advancing and growing into a worldwide kingdom.

But the present manifestation of that kingdom is still weak and insignificant in the eyes of the world. world. We don't make the front page of the New York Times.

And if we do, it's often in a bad light, isn't it? The world doesn't say, wow, look at what Christ is doing in building His church. But it's growing.

[43 : 22] And though in any place and time there may only be a few who have found the narrow way that leads to life because most are going down the broad way that leads to destruction, Jesus says.

And though that's true in each place and time, at the end of the age when the kingdom is full grown, what will it be like then? This little mustard seed will be the largest of garden plants.

Listen to the way John the Apostle puts it in Revelation chapter 7. He says, I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no man could count. From every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb, they were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches of victory in their hands.

And they cried out in a loud voice, salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to our Lamb, to the Lamb, the little mustard seed, kingdom of God.

When gathered together from all ages and all times and all places will be a multitude that no man can number. Numbered only, known only, by the shepherd king who calls each one of them by name.

[44 : 36] And they heard his voice and they followed him and they put their trust in him and were cleansed by his blood. And now they stand before the throne, the called, the chosen, the faithful, a multitude that no man can number.

And the language of the birds of the air perching in the branches is a reference as you find from Daniel and Ezekiel that refers to the kingdoms of this world. And they're now coming into the kingdom of God and they're taking refuge in this king, Jesus, in the kingdom of God.

And that is surely what happened as the kingdom went from just Israel to now the nations of the world. Oh, the numbers began to swell then of those who are in the kingdom of God.

So the day of harvest is coming. Christ is returning as we read in 1 Peter 3. And when he returns, he'll judge all men who have ever lived.

He will assign to those on his left, depart from me, I never knew you, into the fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

[45 : 45] And he'll say to those on his right, welcome, come into the kingdom God has prepared for you since the foundation of the world. the harvest, it's coming. And then shall the kingdom of this world become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ.

You see, these two warring kingdoms of man and God, the city of God and the city of man, they've been warring all through the ages. The war will be over in that day. The kingdom of man is completely smashed and all the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ.

And forever and ever, Jesus will reign in the new heavens and the new earth with all that he's washed in his blood. A new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness where all things are made new.

Are you a part of that kingdom of God? Have you come to this Jesus and recognize what a sinner and undeserving wretch you are and cast yourself upon the mercy of God in Christ?

God, be merciful to me, a sinner. My only hope is Jesus and I put all my trust in him to save me. That's how the kingdom is established in the heart.

[47 : 02] Are you obeying that king? Are you hungering for his word? Do you want to know him better? Do you want to serve him better? Are you repenting from your sins?

Following the king's laws? He's coming. Will the day of harvest be your best day or your worst day? Because as Jesus gathers and harvests the whole world, he'll put the wheat into his barn and he will burn up the chaff with unspeakable torment where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth without end.

You know, Daniel wrote about the little kingdom growing into this large garden plant. It was in a different form though. It was a dream that Nebuchadnezzar had. And it's this huge statue, a dazzling, enormous, awesome in appearance and it represented the kingdom of Babylon that reached around the world and all the kingdoms of men that would come after him.

Here they are. This one dazzling, impressive statue. This is human power and might. This is human clout and authority. Human rule, vaunting itself against God.

But then, there's a rock cut out of a mountain and not by human hands. A mere rock. What's more insignificant, children, than a rock? What's more unpromising than a rock?

[48 : 31] Oh, but keep watching that rock. And in the dream, that rock came tumbling down the mountain. And it smashed into that impressive kingdom of man statue.

And it blasted it to smithereens, reduced it to dust, which the wind then drove away without a trace of it left behind. But keep watching that rock because it began to grow.

Things like that happen in dreams. Rocks grow. And it grew into a mountain. Keep watching. Because the mountain kept growing until it filled the whole earth.

You know the interpretation of it? Daniel gives it in chapter 2, 44. The God of heaven will set up a kingdom in the time of those kings, those Roman kings. A kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people.

It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end. But it will itself endure forever. So, where are these kings and empires now of old that went and came?

[49 : 41] But Lord, thy church is praying yet a thousand years the same. For not like kingdoms of the world, thy holy church, O God, though earthquake shocks are threatening her and tempests are abroad, unshaken as eternal hills, immovable she stands, a mountain that shall fill the earth, a house not made with hands.

Now, that's what Jesus is saying in this last parable. A tiny mustard seed of the kingdom will become the largest garden plant. An inconspicuous rock grows into a mountain that fills the whole earth.

The little kingdom that Jesus Christ came and established during his days of flesh with us here on earth will continue to grow and grow until when he returns to judge all men and their kingdoms will be no more.

His kingdom will fill the earth and endure forever. I must ask you, are you a part of this kingdom? If you died the moment that you left this building, would you be there with him?

Are you ready to face the king? Have you surrendered? Have you quit going your way and bowed to the king and said, it must be your way.

[50 : 56] I can't save myself. Only you can save me. I'm done rebelling against your law. I want to come and submit to your law and to your gospel. Be sure you're in the kingdom.

There is no second chance once Jesus comes back or you die and go to meet the king. What a privilege to belong to the king, this king, and this kingdom, both now and when all other kingdoms of men are no more and are cast into hell.

Our king is growing his kingdom today all around the earth one conversion at a time. He's riding forth victoriously in the gospel chariot in behalf of truth and humility and righteousness.

The king's sharp arrows are piercing the hearts of the king's enemies and turning them from enemies into friends. And his right arm is doing awesome deeds with the gospel. This is our king establishing his reign in the hearts and lives of men and women, boys and girls, the world over.

Well, pray with me, shall we? King Jesus, we thank you for your ministry of preaching and bringing light into this dark world so we can understand the most important things in our life, in our history, but also the most important things in the whole history of mankind.

[52 : 25] Oh, please bring many to enter the kingdom today all around the world and then come and gather us to yourself in that consummated, finished kingdom where there is nothing but your presence and your goodness without all the troubles and all the trials we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.