

Mark 4:21-34

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[0:00] Good morning. Tom was sharing with me just before we're with family.! This is wonderful to be with our family again weekly and other times throughout the week.

! It feels great. This is what we do. We get together, we hear the Word of God, and it gives us the food we need for the week, for days and weeks to come, as we read daily, for food, too. You've got to eat regularly. I want to pray again one more time as we start to hear the Word today. Father, I do say thank you for your goodness and kindness.

As freely we get to hear the Word of God and pray that we can continue to do that. Continue to open our hearts to truth, how it affects us, Lord.

Lord, help us to change and let you change us. We're going to learn today that all change that happens, anything good anyway, it comes from you. In our hearts and our souls, Lord, it all comes from you.

[1:10] You make the growth happen. Continue to show us that, Lord. Help us just to learn and hear. Hear the Word. Lord, let it come in and do the work it needs to do today.

And I echo the prayers for Trish and Jim with battling cancer and different ones have knee problems and all these issues that we have, Lord.

If you care about all these things, every one of them, you care about it. You care about people being homesick. Please help those people get better and use all these circumstances to draw us closer to you, Lord, too, in the midst of it all.

Praise your name. In Jesus' name, amen. All right. Here we go.

So we're going to continue in the book of Mark. As we've started, we're up in chapter 4. Jesus is up in Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee up in the northern part of Israel there.

[2:18] He continues to disciple the disciples. He's teaching them. He's teaching crowds of people. He's starting to get into a lot of parables in this chapter.

There's a number of parables, and we're going to look at a couple of those here today. And if you remember the last parable, the first part of Mark, when J.J. spoke, I believe it was on the sower, the sower of the seeds.

And we're going to look at a couple more parables today also about seeds. And it's just interesting that Jesus would use that metaphor, if you would, of seeds.

And so we're picking up here then in Mark chapter 4, verse 21. Let's read the first section here. I've got it broke down into, I think, four little sections of four paragraphs, if you will, of Scripture that we're going to look at this morning.

And let's read it. And he was saying to them, For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.

[3:52] Just one little side note here. I've written on there the LSB version of the Scriptures. I just started reading it a little bit recently.

I've been talking to some other pastors about it. The LSB is called the Legacy Standard Bible. And basically it's just an update to the NASB, New American Standard Bible.

So it's a really good version, and I'm excited to read it. It's a good word-by-word translation. So that's what this verse is. I think you'll see in your Bible it's pretty similar.

So let's pick this apart a little bit. Start in verse 21. And he was saying to them, Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or a bed?

Is it not to be put on the lampstand? You can also find the same Scripture in Matthew 5, verse 15, and Luke 8, verse 16.

[4:54] It's also repeated there. And he starts out this section of Scripture with a pretty odd question. I mean, who would ever take a lamp out and put it under a bed?

Kind of a silly thing, right? Or under a bowl where you can't see any light. It's kind of a silly question. But it's an important one, and Jesus had a reason for asking this question.

And we're going to kind of dive into that a little bit. It's not uncommon that a lamp, a lamp is a metaphor for God. We see in 2 Samuel, 2 Samuel there, For you are my lamp, O Yahweh, and Yahweh illumines my darkness.

We know that's a lamp's our ford. Get rid of the dark. And David was speaking to God when he said this. That's another Scripture about the lamp.

However, Yahweh was not willing to make Judah a ruin for the sake of David, his servant, since he had promised him to give a lamp to him through his sons always.

[6:08] Just a quick little kind of overview of this particular Scripture. This is talking about a king from the southern tribe, Jerhoram.

At the time, he had married one of the daughters of King Ahab, who was a bad king. And he wasn't doing a good job being a king.

He was a bad king. And it sounds like punishment was coming. But read the Scripture, and this is what God says. However, it's a big however.

Yahweh was not willing to make Judah a ruin by the grace of God. This is such an important thing, the God we serve. However, he saved us when we deserve punishment.

He was talking about breaking of bread for the sake of David, his servant, since he had promised him to give a lamp. Jesus Christ, I believe, we're talking about there.

[7:14] That's really, really cool. You should read that story about that. Read that chapter. We see the grace of God. So I believe the lamp we're talking about here in 21 is Jesus.

It's Jesus Christ. This is no ordinary lamp. And again, I think this is pointing to Jesus. Can Jesus be placed under a bowl or a bed?

Again, that just doesn't seem like the question to ask. But evidently, they weren't letting the light out. That's why he asked the question. Of course, we are to let our lamps shine out in the open for the world to see Christ in us.

God's purpose is to enlighten and reveal truth about him. And here's a verse. Many of you, I know, you're familiar with this one, but it's a good reminder.

Matthew 5, verse 16. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

[8:26] That's our task here on this planet, is to let our light shine out into the world. This is our response to him and showing his love to the world through us.

Jesus asked the question because evidently, people were not letting their light shine out. You don't put it under there. The parable that we saw in the first part of Mark about the sowing of the seeds, some seeds were on the path, some were in thorns, some were in the rocks.

You don't put seeds there, right? Put it in the rich soil. We don't put our lamps under a bed or under a bowl. It's out to be seen by the world.

Somehow we have to connect the world in some fashion so the world can see it. They can see our love. As Jack spoke last week, by our love they'll know we're our disciples.

Well, they got to see us to see the love. A good friend of mine, back before I became a Christian, he shared with me about the gospel of Jesus.

[9:43] And it was amazing. He took the effort and time to tell me about Jesus. I can't tell you how grateful I am for that. And then I find out later, this person had quite a few problems, emotional, deep-rooted issues.

And I'm just thinking to myself, if this guy had all these issues, but he was still willing to share with me, that's amazing. And I was thinking to myself, wait a second here, I got a lot of problems too.

And maybe you do too. Can I say that out loud? That we all got some problems? God's saying, hey, we can be lights apart from that.

This friend of mine, he went way out of his way to share with me. And boy, when I got to know him, he had some significant issues. But he took the time to share the gospel with me. How grateful is that?

That's amazing. Verse 22. For nothing is hidden except to be revealed, nor has anything been secret, that it would come to light.

[10:51] The coming of Jesus and his light brings sin to light. Right? It reveals the sin. It revealed it. When my friends share the gospel, it revealed sin in my life.

And that's how I know I needed Christ and why I accepted Christ. That's why we're the light of the world. It's to reveal sin so that lost people can see they have sin so they can come to know Jesus. And that's how I came to Christ. I wanted my sins forgiven because they were revealed. And similarly, we know that when we walk with Christ as Christians, the light reveals sin, doesn't it? If we let it, sometimes we stuff it away, but as we walk daily with Christ, the light of Jesus reveals sin. We can address it. Get help. And realize how forgiven we are.

Again, why we do breaking of bread. You know, you really can't keep sin a secret, can we? If you're serious at all about God, you won't keep sin a secret. It won't happen.

[11:58] Christ is going to be revealed. He reveals it to us. This is a good thing. It's a good thing. Continuing on there.

If anyone has ears to hear, let them hear. And he was saying to them, beware what you listen to. By your standard of measure, it will be measured to you and more will be given to you.

Hearing and listening. Incredibly important thing. How important it is that we listen to one another. You know, doesn't it feel great when someone really listens to what you have to say?

You know, I know we've talked about this many times. You get caught up, oh, I got to, what I'm going to say. But when we take the time to really listen, how important it is, here we're listening to the word of God.

How important is that? How important it is you're here today. I know, I know that's why you're here, to listen to what the word of God says. How important it is. It's incredible. Incredibly important.

[13:01] Listening. The entryway into the kingdom of God came through hearing. That's how I became a Christian. Because I heard it. And verse 9 of the same chapter about the sower says this, He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

So we're getting this, listening and how important it is throughout this entire chapter. We can say an awful lot about hearing. And then the later part of this verse here, Beware what you listen to.

By your standard measure, it will be measured to you, and more will be given to you. How we measure and receive God's word, it will be measured back to us.

And more will be given to us. We can then bear more fruit. We can bear more fruit. Measure should be our time, our attention to Jesus' words, our personal devotion, and time with Jesus.

Right? Living with God. And God will measure it out and He'll add to it and bear fruit as we have the Holy Spirit in us as we learn the words.

[14:14] It's such an important thing. And the last verse of this section here, For whoever has, to him more shall be given. And whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.

To the degree to which one hears the parables is the extent in which it'll affect us. Right? And hearing and learning will occur.

And better understanding of the parables, even though they're hard to understand sometimes. We saw that the sower parable, he shared the parable, then he gave the explanation of the parable, didn't he?

Help us to understand it. And the two parables that we're going to look at now, he doesn't really give much of an explanation. So we're going to try and dig in and see if we can understand what it says. Have a better understanding of God from the parables. So, again, we're going to look at two more parables here. The first one is unique to Mark. It's only found in Mark.

[15:19] And the second one is found in three of the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. And both of them talk about sowing seeds. So it's similar

to the sowing of the seeds and the different types of soil that we saw there in the beginning of Mark, probably a month or two ago.

And we'll look at two more stories, parables about seeds and growing. Really fascinating, as I've been digging into this, really encouraging to me. So let's look at the first one here.

And by the way, both of these parables talking about the kingdom of God. What's it like comparing it to the kingdom of God? And he was saying, the kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil, and he sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows.

How he himself does not know, the soil produces crops by itself, first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.

The kingdom of God. Going to the first verse. And he was saying, the kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil. The kingdom of God is like seeds in a soil?

[16:43] Some people might have thought, and at the time, they thought how the kingdom was going to come, it wasn't like that. They thought Jesus was going to come in and just take care of everything. You know, maybe like a, maybe compare the kingdom of God to mountains or a beautiful sunset or something like that.

But no, it was just a simple thing about seeds. Kind of a mundane thing, really a common thing. Would have been very common. Jesus doesn't tell us how high and lofty God is, but introduces us to how near and close he is by this common routine of planting seeds.

The kingdom. Very mundane. And I believe the seed here is like it was with the sower. It's the word of God. The seed is. And I was thinking about seeds and planting, and maybe you like to plant.

Anyone here like to do gardening? I like to plant seeds in my garden. It's pretty simple. There's nothing fancy about it. You know, you take my hoe and I make a little row and I drop the little seeds in there and you cover it up.

It's a pretty simple little task. I enjoy to do it. I enjoy to watch things grow and it's a lot of fun.

Harmless.

[17:55] You know, when you first plant seeds, you can hardly see the growth at first. The sun, the water, the soil brings growth all by itself, doesn't it? I used to ride my bike out in the country and I just, all the summer long, you know, first you see them plow the field, then they plant the seeds, and then I'm ever carefully watching for the little blade of corn to come up, you know, and it's just, is it there?

Is it not there? You know, I can just barely see it, right? In my own garden, when I want to, especially green beans, I don't know what is it about green beans, but they're just fascinating to watch because I think they grow kind of fast, but it takes about a week, maybe 10 days, and all of a sudden that one seed, all of a sudden you see a crack in the soil.

That's really exciting to me. The soil just cracks. You know, you know that green seed's coming up.

Actually, green beans are kind of cool because the seed kind of comes out the top.

somehow there's roots in there, they're growing, and it just opens up, it grows so fast. They taste good, we freeze them, we eat them all winter, and it's such a fun thing to see grow.

The seed contains in itself all the power of growth, first the blade, the stalk, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. I think I was supposed to move ahead to one more verse here.

[19:16] Sorry about that. I think I was supposed to move ahead to one more verse here. Yeah, verse 23 and 24, we're talking about this here. Okay, so the seed contains in itself all the power of growth.

First the seed, blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head, and this all happens apart from the farmer. Farmer can't do none of that, can he?

Farmer can't do none of it. The only human activity would be to wait in faith and confidence that the harvest will come. So the kingdom of God is growth, then would be strangely independent of human activity.

The seed contains within itself the fruit bearing potential, doesn't it? It's all in the seed. Comes up, leaves come out, blossoms come out, then little green beans come out, whatever you're growing, right?

Just, it's unbelievable, really. It's amazing. It grows slow sometimes, sometimes. So the seed, like the word of God, the gospel, prospers itself.

[20:27] Once in motion it leads to a harvest. The kingdom of God comes slowly and deliberately. I got this, have you ever had one of those amaryllis flowers, the big bulb?

Put it in a pot and it, man, the thing grows fast. Even as fast as it grows, I can't, I can't grab, grab it, pull it up bigger, can I? I can't make the bud open up.

It just does it. It's amazing. So do we have a part in all this if it's all God doing it? A little bit here, I think.

Even in God's help, God's helping us even here in this scripture here, but this is an important one. 1 Corinthians 3, 5-7, what then is Apollos?

And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth.

[21:30] So then, neither is the one who plants nor the one who waters as anything, but God causes the growth. God causes the growth.

We need to be patient when loving and reaching out to people and giving them the gospel. But in this growth, we can plant the seeds. And even though we can't make the seeds grow, we can throw some water and fertilizer on it, can't we?

You know, it says we're the salt of the earth. I read somewhere, Epsom salt helps things grow. We're the salt of the earth.

I was having a discussion recently with some good friends of mine. We were just talking about, you know, why aren't people really serious about growing? Some people. Why aren't they really serious about really, you know, sharing the word and all these things?

I don't know. I don't know how people grow. We don't know how plants grow. Actually, many times, I'm not that good of a gardener, I plant seeds and not all come up.

[22:36] That's how it works. Some seeds just don't plant. Some grow slow. Some just don't turn out to be anything. It just happens. But we can water and we can love people and show people the truth, right?

Some grow slow. Some grow fast. God's kingdom, sometimes it grows slow, grows fast. But we do know this.

When we connect with God, listen to the word of God, we will grow. Can't guarantee how fast it is, but we will grow. It's a fact.

The word of God doesn't come back void. And we do it by faith, by faith in God. track where I'm at there.

But when the green is ripe, he immediately puts in the sickle because the harvest has come. And most scholars would believe this is the coming of the God's kingdom and his judgment.

[23:42] So like the patient farmer, Jesus is confident in the coming kingdom. And he wants the seed to produce fruit, harvest.

And we can all partake in that, in the fruit of the harvest. We're part of it. We're part of the fruit. Accepting Christ, being part of his family.

So that's the first parable. Now we come into the second parable in the chapter here about seeds, or actually the third one, technically. And let's read this parable.

And he was saying, how shall we compare the kingdom of God? Once again, what's the kingdom of God like? Or by what parable shall we present it? Is it like a mustard seed, which when sown upon the soil, though it is smallest smallest of all seeds that are upon the soil?

Yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes largest of all the garden plants and forms large branches so that the birds of the air can nest in its shade. So once again, we're seeing the kingdom of God related to seeds and growing.

[24:53] Except this time, the last parable was more about how it grows, right? Slow and deliberately. This time, there's a comparison of the seed from tiny beginnings to a big tree like large bush growth.

We will see the contrast of the seed to the full growth. So there's a little bit of controversy here. Technically, it is not the tiny of the seeds, the mustard seed, but it stood for something small, and I think Jesus was using hyperbole about this.

But it does grow to be fairly large. I was trying to do some research. How big does a mustard seed get? Some say seven to nine feet. Some say taller. But it gets pretty big and the branches come out so the birds can nest in it.

It gets pretty big. Two schools of thought. I'll just share it with you. You know, again, it's a hyperbole. He's contrasting small and big, so is it the tiniest?

In the sense of small to big, it's hyperbole there. But this also happened 2,000 years ago. It's possible 2,000 years ago it was this smallest seed at the time.

[26:07] Things change, and we see lots of changes in birds and animals, and things change over time. But anyway, that's a discussion you can have amongst yourself about it being the tiniest of seeds.

And again, its growth of the seed isn't dependent on us. It completely depends on God, doesn't it? Once again, we see God causing the growth of this tiny, small seed.

But the main point here is that God's kingdom starts from something small and insignificant and grows to something magnificent. It's not something we expect from such a small seed.

And again, I'm thinking even as individuals, how we grow. Growing Christ, it's slow, methodical, but God does big things in our life. Expect Him to do big things in your life.

Changes your heart. Be effective for God's work, being the light. God's reign is and will be much more than we can imagine and more larger than seems possible.

[27:15] His tiny beginnings are ultimately affecting the whole world, isn't it? And verse 32 there.

Yet when it's sown, it grows up and becomes largest of all the birds and plants and forms large branches so that the birds of the air can nest under its shade. If you read Ezekiel, I don't have the verse, but it's in chapter 17.

You can read a little bit about another tree growing up with all kinds of birds coming. And so I believe this is talking about all kinds of birds that are going to nest in this tree, including Gentiles. Jews and Gentiles will be us. Thank God that we get to be part of this kingdom. So Jesus' ministry had small beginnings.

Just a few disciples came as a baby. Very small beginnings. And look what His kingdom is doing today. And look how we get to be a part of this incredible kingdom that He's creating, that He's building all around the world, sharing the truth.

[28:21] You see different ones that come here and share what they're doing in Sri Lanka, right? And Cambodia and the Philippines and all these different places.

how important that is. Let me go to the last couple of verses here in this section that I wanted to share today.

And with many such parables, we're hearing, right? He was speaking the word to them as they were able to hear it. And He was not speaking to them without a parable, but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.

about ten times in this chapter Jesus mentions the word hearing. We hear it again. Hearing as you're able to hear. What an important thing, isn't it?

How important it is to hear the word of God. It was the first step for me in accepting Christ as I heard the truth. John shared some truth with me too before I became a Christian.

[29:26] It was awesome. I heard the truth. Somehow it worked. God. That's why I'm standing here today. Praise God. Hearing the truth. And verse 34, and He was not speaking to them without a parable and He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.

He was not alone. When they were alone with Jesus, think about that. When they were alone with Jesus. Is that something we can do?

When we were alone, He explained everything. So maybe we don't learn everything in a big group. Maybe we learn alone with Jesus as well. That's how they learned it, privately.

Find some time to get alone with Jesus. To learn these amazing truths of Scripture. Maybe there's something you didn't learn, maybe you didn't understand everything we're talking about today from these words.

Get alone with Jesus. Maybe tonight, maybe tomorrow morning, someplace. Find a time. We want to experience the kingdom of God to the fullest.

[30:40] I want to be a part of that. That's exciting. small beginnings, big, large, fruitful trees, endings.

This is a whole amazing Scripture for me. Even this morning as I was just kind of getting ready here, thinking about who puts a lamp under a bed or under a bowl.

We're lights of the world. We're lights of the world. We plant seeds. We get to watch it grow. It's exciting. It's fun. It's much more exciting to watch people grow than it is my beans.

I'll tell you that. When I see someone change a heart or say something to me, I've had a couple different people say some things to me that recently were just amazing. It just warmed me up so much.

They were loving on me. It just felt so great. They said some things that were amazing. It's God's, you know, leaf coming out or something like that. I want to be a part of something big.

[31:48] Don't you want to be a part of something big? Small beginnings and big endings. I want to be a part of this. I want to let my light shine. I want to plant some seeds, do some watering. That's what I want to be a part of by faith.

It's all going to be by faith. It's not going to be by my works. You saw it. The kingdom of God isn't built by what we can do. It's what he's doing. I hope that scripture kind of stuck in your heart today. Felt something that's going to help you grow and we work together. Let's pray. Thank you, Lord, for your goodness and the scriptures just amazes me every time I prepare something, how much new things are in there and how many truths just unending.

It grips you. Different verses grip you more than other verses grip you. Thank you for that, God.

Thank you again for the freedom to hear the word so freely. Continue to help show us, Lord, how we can be a part of this kingdom.

What's our little role, Lord, seeing something big happen, someone changing a heart? I praise you, God. Thank you. In Jesus' name, amen.

[33:01] Amen. Amen.