

# **Gospel of Mark**

## **Do You Have Faith?**

### **January 10, 2010**

### **Mark 4:21-41**

#### **I. More on Parables**

Why would Jesus teach people other than His immediate disciples only in parables? Was He correct in doing so? If so, why do you feel that way? What was gained by teaching in parables if the people did not understand? How will the teachings revealed to Jesus' disciples be revealed to the larger community? If so, how?

Note: In today's lesson, we see a number of sayings by Jesus that are used in different situations in the gospels by Jesus.

#### **II. Lamp Under a Bowl**

**Mark 4:21-23**

**21 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? 22 For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. 23 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."**

**NIV**

Verse 21: After interpreting for them the parable of the four soils, Jesus provides several other parables.

Verse 21: The one concerning not putting a lamp under a bowl or bed is used here to emphasize that Jesus' teachings through parables will eventually be revealed to the broader community.

Verse 22: Jesus' parable teaching will be brought out into the light for all to see. Indeed, the purpose of the twelve was to do exactly this. The exact time as to when it will be disclosed is not identified. Indeed, if it is a multifaceted mystery, it might be revealed in many parts. Some suggest that the time is the resurrection or the ascension.

Verse 23: We saw a variation on this saying in verse 9. What does it mean? Jesus is speaking to His closest disciples; what does it mean to them?

**Explanation:** Jesus' teaching in parables will be made known to everyone.

**Question:** How are you communicating the gospel?

#### **III. Meaning to the Disciples (and to Us): Mark 4:24-25**

**Mark 4:24-25**

**24 "Consider carefully what you hear," he continued. "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you — and even more. 25 Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him."**

**NIV**

- Verse 24: Jesus says this to His disciples, but we should apply it to ourselves (as we are also His disciples.) We should listen closely to Jesus. What we hear, we should pass on to others. Those who do pass it on will be taught even more.
- Verse 25: Those who listen and understand are those who have. Those who do not listen and understand will lose even what they think they have.

#### **IV. Growth of the Seed**

##### **Mark 4:26-29**

**26 He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. 27 Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. 28 All by itself the soil produces grain — first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. 29 As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."**

##### **NIV**

- Verse 26: This parable about the kingdom of God (4:26-29) is recorded only in Mark. While not unrelated to the parable of the soils, we should not force the two into one grander parable.
- Verse 27: Men work to spread the gospel (scatters seed) in the kingdom of God. They scatter the “seed” but then must let it grow, even though he does not fully understand all the processes that are involved in that growth.
- Verse 28: Eventually the crop is full grown and ready for harvesting. Man does not do make it grow; God does it!
- Verse 29: Yet, even though God does the work in some mysterious way, it is man who harvested the crop.

**Explanation:** The seed is like faith in God. People sow the word of God. The seed takes root and grows into full faith, yielding fruit for the harvest.

**Question:** As we do the work of God today, what learning from this parable can we apply in our lives?

#### **V. The Mustard Seed: Mark 4:30-32**

##### **Mark 4:30-32**

**30 Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? 31 It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. 32 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."**

##### **NIV**

The counterpart for Mark 30-35 is Matthew 13:13-14.

- Verse 30: Again parables are limited teachings of one aspect of a topic. No single parable can explain fully the kingdom of God. Each is illustrating an aspect of it, where each aspect builds to help us have a better understanding of it.
- Verse 31: Some of the translation has earth rather than soil or ground at the end of this verse. This is the same word that has been translated several times as soil in this chapter. See the NAS for a fairly literal translation:

## **Mark 4:31**

**31 "It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil,**

**NASU**

Verse 31: Critics have claim that since the mustard seed is not the smallest seed in existence, this verse represents a Bible contradiction. Clearly, it was not Jesus' intent to compare it to all seeds everywhere but only to those that are sown by farmers...which is how soil and seed have been used throughout this chapter.

Verse 32: A mustard seed could grow to 10 or 12 feet in a few weeks. There is probably no reason to compare these birds to the earlier ones that took the seed sown on hard surfaces. The birds would appear to only show the size of the resulting plant.

**Explanation:** While our work in the kingdom of God might seem very small to us, God can use it to make something very big out of our effort if done in His will.

**Question:** Are you ever discouraged in your work for the LORD? If so, what should you do about it?

## **VI. Jesus' Parable Summary: Mark 4:33-34**

**Mark 4:33-34**

**33 With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. 34 He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.**

**NIV**

Verse 33: While many parables have been recorded in the gospels as was the case with His healings, it is probable that only a few of the total that were recorded. Apparently, Jesus kept drilling these teachings into the Apostles until they started to understand at least some of it.

Verse 34: In this phase of His ministry, He apparently highlighted all His teachings with parables. Notice how Jesus taught the disciples "everything." Apparently, it was only their finite minds that limited this teaching. How would you like to be alone with Jesus and him teach you, answering any question that you might put forth to Him?

## **VII. Even Nature Obeys Jesus: Mark 4:35-41**

**Mark 4:35-41**

**35 That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." 36 Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. 37 A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. 38 Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" 39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. 40 He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have**

**no faith?" 41 They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"**

**NIV**

We see a change of pace. Jesus is leaving Jewish territory. He can be a little more open while gone. Along the way, He provides an additional demonstration for His disciples.

The counterparts are Matthew 8:28-34 and Luke 8:22-25.

Verse 35: The "other side" would be the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus had been teaching from a boat with the disciples in it. Perhaps, the starting place was after such a teaching session. If so, they had probably left after a long day of teaching (NOTE: "when evening came,").

Verse 37: Given that the Sea of Galilee is a small lake, but very deep (150'), below sea level, and surrounded by mountains, winds can quickly whip up severe storms.

Verse 38: Jesus was likely extremely tired from the day's teaching...so much so that He did not wake up when the waves became very rough.

Verse 38: The disciples might have been very tired as well. They were concerned for their own health. Since many of them were seasoned fishermen, the waves must have been very tough. They probably had enough information to know when to be afraid and when not to be afraid.

Verse 38: Did they think that Jesus would live while they died...or did they think He might die with them...despite the many miracles that they had seen Him perform?

Verse 39: Earlier in the course, we discussed the authority in Jesus' words, including in teaching, in healing, and over demons. Now, we see that the Lord of the universe also has control of the nature.

Verse 40: If you were one of these disciples, how would you respond to this question?

Verse 41: The disciples are "blown" away by Jesus (but not by the storm ☺).

### **VIII. Do You Have Faith?**

It is easy to get down on the disciples until we consider that their faith (or lack of it) is shown as examples for us. How often do we despair when something happens in our lives that we do not like? Even when the event is not life threatening or altering? The disciples should have faith in God already having seen what He can do. Yet, they also have reasons for fear. In this case (and in many more to come), we will see that their fear wins out.

When was the last time that you did not have full faith? Assuming that you have been a believer for many years, have you ever had full faith in God? Consider these words of Jesus from Luke:

**Luke 14:33**

**33 In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.**

**NIV**