

We are taking a **cursory** look through Mark - not in-depth study!
Initially **intended** to **complement** the **Christianity Explored** course.
Now Mark has just recorded the parables of the Sower and the soils.

He continues and adds 3 more parables about the **kingdom** of God.
The first one teaches us about the **function** of the Church. The
second teaches us about **secret** and **imperceptible working** of God's
Spirit, "*the seed sprouts and grows, he **knows not how***"[27], and the
third about the **enormous growth** of the Church, although from the
smallest of beginnings, yet it becomes "***larger than all***" the trees!
Finally, Mark tells us about an incident in a boat crossing the lake!

Well, Xns, Jesus said, are the **light** of the world. But they can **hide**
their light! They can put their knowledge of truth and reality, under a
bed and no one is benefitted from the light that they have. That is the
whole point of this parable "*A lamp is **not** brought to be put **under..a**
bed*" but rather it is to shine brightly and give light to all in the house

The Church is the **means** the Lord has appointed to 'save' the world.
The Church **has** the **answers** to society's ills! And the world **needs**
what the Church has. But the Church is too **reticent**. A Xn said to me
recently, 'If we only knew how **afraid** the world is when challenged
about faith, the Church would be far **more confident** in its mission'.

The **principle** here is: we must **make use** of what God has given us,
or He will **take it away!** "*from the one who has not, even what he
has **will be taken away***"[25] Conversely, if we do make use of the
talents and gifts God has given us, we will **get more!** "*to the one
who has, **more will be given***"[25]. If we Xns are careless about
letting our light shine, then God will take away the light we have and
we ourselves will grow dark! If we allow those around us to go on in
sin, God will allow us to go on sin "*the measure **you** use, it will be
measured **to you***"[24]. So, "*Pay attention to what you hear*"[24]!!

So the main message is: spread the truth and make it known or you
will lose it yourselves! God can remove the candlestick! A church, a
denomination, an individual can have its candlestick removed!!

The 2nd parable Jesus told here is about the **secret working** of God's Spirit! *"It sprouts and grows, he **knows not how**"*[27] Solomon: *"As you **do not know** the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you **do not know** the work of God who makes everything"* including the new heart [Ecc 11:5] Jesus told *"The wind blows where it wishes...but you **do not know** where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with **everyone** who is born of the Spirit"*[J3:8]. The working of God's Spirit on a soul is a **mystery**. Many many Xns can testify that it was not until **after** they were converted, they realised that God was 'at work' on them since **years!**

A farmer will take a walk round his farm and see if the seeds he planted have come up. He hopes there will be a **full** field of produce and that a great 'work' is going on underneath the ground. He cannot see anything yet, but he **hopes** the seeds will have taken root. This parable is very **encouraging** for a **pastor** who sows the seed of God's Word regularly. He sees nothing in the way of fruit or spiritual life, but he hopes and he prays that 'underneath' a 'work' is going on! *"He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows, he **knows not how**"*[27] but one day he sees a real fruit sticking up!

It is true, that in one sense the farmer can do **nothing more** than plant the seed, and the minister can do nothing more than preach and pray, and that the seed is fertilised *"**by itself**, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear"*[28]! It is **God's** work to bring life! Salvation is a mysterious work of God. As in the natural realm, conception is 'hidden', unfelt, so in regeneration (when we were dead in sins) the seed planted is unknown until the out-workings of spiritual of life manifest itself in various ways (interests, affections).

The **3rd** parable Jesus told shows us how the Church is to **grow** into the **world's biggest organisation!** Although it had such a small beginning *"he **smallest of all the seeds**"*, it *"becomes **larger than all the garden plants...so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade**"*[32] *"...I looked and behold, a **great multitude** that no one could number, from **every nation**, from **all tribes** and peoples and languages, standing before the throne...clothed in white robes...*

crying out... **'Salvation belongs to our God'**"[Rev 9:11] + **"All the ends of the earth shall...turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you"**[Psa 22] **"All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You...and they shall glorify Your name"**[Psa 86:9] **"Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him"** re X's Messianic reign! No wonder Jesus said here **"With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it?"**[30]!

*We note again that X spoke **according to the understanding** of His hearers! **"as they were able to hear it"**[33] But **"privately to His own disciples He explained everything"**[34] His disciples had **spiritual understanding** and would not be **offended** at some of the things He would **have** to say! Xnity **does contain** some **hard** things! Even the Apostle Peter found that! He found the Apostle Paul's letters very hard to understand **"There are some things in them that are hard to understand..."**[2P3:16]! **APP** There is a **distinction** between something that is 'hard to understand', and something we are 'unwilling to accept'! Probably **both** would apply to what X would need to say at this time by way of explanation to the unregenerate!!

So X, and the disciples, had a hard day teaching the multitudes. He has said **enough!** Even the Master, having said what He said, had to **leave** it with to mull over! So, **"leaving the crowd"** He said **"Let us go across to the other side"**[35,36]! That might **not** have been **easy** for Jesus to leave people about whom He was uncertain where they stood regarding personal salvation. But nevertheless, it would have been the right thing for Him to do.

APP Life is full of **choices** that **are difficult** to make, especially regarding spiritual things and matters which affect **other** people. It is difficult to **balance** our responsibilities towards others, to let our light shine, without **'interfering'** with people's **private** convictions regarding **reality!** However, a time comes when we must **leave matters** in their own hands!!

Although it was Jesus initiative that they go across the lake, they took Jesus into the boat **"just as He was"**[36]! I am not sure of the

significance of that phrase- Jesus did not have any special belongings to take with Him! As we know, a **violent storm** arose when they were crossing the lake. Jesus made his way to the stern and went to sleep **'like a baby'** - as if He had **no worries** or concerns!! Even for those who have the greatest of burdens, can sleep soundly and well - if they commit themselves into their Heavenly Father's hands!

Imagine - a violent storm and all the noise of the sea battering the boat as well as the men shouting loud to be heard, and Jesus is asleep through it all!! However, He is awakened quite rudely *"Teacher, do You **not care** that we are **perishing**?"*[38]

Jesus awoke and had **two rebukes!** One for the wind and storm - the other for the disciples! There must have been an **awesome quietness** when the storm ceased! *"they were **filled with great fear**"*[41] Why **fear** when such a miracle in their **favour**? What was there to be afraid about! This:

The **clear demonstration of God's power over nature!** Being fallen, man is **not affected** so much by spiritual miracles (things **hidden** in the mind or soul) - he is much more affected by the unexpected working of **'nature'**, ie, when the **usual order** of His **government** over created matter is **broken** - that has a greater effect on him than the spiritual miracles of the new birth!

The **immediate** stilling of the storm, had an effect upon them - they could **see** and **hear** and **witness** Divine power. There is nothing like a stronger power to make you humble! **'A bully needs a bully'** to **retrain** his proud and threatening tactics.

To **realise** we are **not in control** of our own **destiny**, reduces our pride and enables us to **walk softly!** Good for the soul to realise we cannot fight against God - He is much bigger than us! We need to **submit** to Him!