

“The Seed Growing in Secret”
Mark 4:26-29
(Preached at Trinity, June 9, 2010)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Jesus is continuing to teach on the theme of hearing and receiving the Word of God. The chapter began with the Parable of the Sower. The good seed of the Word of God goes forth before the multitudes and many receive it. But most are temporary hearers. The Good Seed does not prosper and soon withers. But upon the good soil it is fruitful.
2. From this parable Jesus warns of the necessity of giving great attention to *how* we hear the Word.
Mark 4:24-25 – “And He was saying to them, “Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides. ²⁵ “For whoever has, to him *more* shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.”
 - A. To those who hear and receive the Word they will prosper with ever increasing measures of God’s grace.
 - B. To those who with hardness of heart refuse to hear even that grace which they have will be removed.
3. As we continue in this passage Jesus continues teaching by way of parables – a blessing to those who believed and a curse to the unbelieving.
Mark 4:11-12 – “And He was saying to them, “To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables, ¹² so that WHILE SEEING, THEY MAY SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE, AND WHILE HEARING, THEY MAY HEAR AND NOT UNDERSTAND, OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT RETURN AND BE FORGIVEN.”
Mark 4:33-34 – “With many such parables He was speaking the word to them, so far as they were able to hear it; ³⁴ and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.”
4. The common theme of almost all of the parables is the Kingdom. With most of the parables Jesus precedes with the statement, “The Kingdom of Heaven is like . . .” Scripture speaks of this Kingdom using three synonymous terms: Kingdom of God, Kingdom of Christ, and Kingdom of Heaven.
It is important that we understand the nature of this kingdom - it will control our Christology, our soteriology, our eschatology
5. God’s Kingdom is based upon his dominion – His sovereign rule
 - 1A. It is an independent reign -
 1. It is not rooted in the will of man – God’s Kingdom is not a democracy
 - a. Ultimately, the church is not a democracy
 - b. We don’t vote on whether or not to obey God’s Word
 2. God’s rule is not rooted in any higher power beyond Himself
 - 2B. His reign is absolute - He makes all law, holds all authority
 1. He is His Own Law - His own nature is His rule
He is bound by no law outside Himself

2. He has the power and authority to carry out every Divine decree
 3. Although His reign is absolute, it is not tyrannical
 4. Although it is absolute it is not arbitrary – The Kingdom of God is a legal kingdom. It is a Kingdom of law
- 3C. The Kingdom is a current reality
1. Jesus is currently ruling and reigning through His people, through His church.
 2. It is an eternal Kingdom - In a sense existed before Christ's incarnation - transcends time and space. God's rule and dominion has never be in question. The Mediatorial Kingdom of Christ is simply another aspect of God's dominion
Psalms 145:13 – “Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And Your dominion *endures* throughout all generations.”
 3. The eternal Kingdom took on a new and clearer manifestation at the first coming of Christ.
Matthew 3:2 - "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
 - a. Jesus came to establish His kingdom
 - b. At His ascension He ascended to His throne
Ephesians 1:20-22 – “which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,”
- 4D. Our Lord's Kingdom is a spiritual kingdom –
1. Jesus often referred to it as the “Kingdom of Heaven” – it is not an earthly kingdom
 2. Although it is a spiritual kingdom it has visible living subjects.
Jesus Christ is reigning the hearts of His people
 3. The citizens of this kingdom are made up of only genuine believers - those born again. The new birth is required in order to perceive this kingdom
John 3:3 – “Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." “
 4. God is mysteriously adding to His Kingdom. We cannot see His work but we can see the fruit of it.
John 3:8 - "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."
- 5E. It is a progressive kingdom - it will fill the whole earth
1. It is a victorious Kingdom - its victory stands apart from the conditions around us. Outward conditions are irrelevant to our Lord's Kingdom
 2. Christ is sovereign over all things and is carrying out His purpose
 3. Satan's kingdom shall not prohibit the advancement of our Lord's kingdom
6. As we continue with **Verse 26** Jesus continues this theme by delivering two additional parables. He begins, ““The kingdom of God is like
He is continuing the theme He began with the Parable of the Sower – the hearing and receiving of the Word of God. Some receive it others reject it. How can we explain it?

7. With salvation we find both God's sovereignty and human responsibility.
- A. In Parable of the Sower we find the great duty and care all men must exercise in hearing and receiving the Word of God. It stresses human responsibility. The Word must be received into the heart. It bears fruit only when it is received favorably.
- B. This is the focus of our Lord's teaching in **Verses 24-25**
 This is the aspect we focus upon in evangelism. We command lost sinners to repent and receive the Gospel.
 Both faith and repentance are presented in Scripture as commands.
 The Gospel must be obeyed.
Romans 10:16-17 – "However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?" ¹⁷ So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."
 The word for "heed" implies obedience.
- C. In evangelism we focus primarily upon human responsibility.
8. In salvation there are some things we can do, some things we must do. But there are some things we cannot do. There are some things that are entirely in the hands of God.
1 Corinthians 3:6 – "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. ⁷ So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth."
9. As we come to this next parable the focus is upon the aspect of God's sovereignty in salvation. It is a very brief parable. It's usually referred to as the "Parable of the Growing Seed." It is a parable particular to Mark. None of the other Gospels record it. It is a parable for all those who are interested in the Kingdom of our Lord. It is a parable for all who labor in our Lord's field.
- I. First, we see here what the laborer can do and what he cannot do
- A. On one hand the laborer is to sow the seed
1. Without the sowing of seed there can be no harvest
 2. The expenditure of labor is essential
 - a. Every farmer knows this. It demands long hours
 - b. He has to prepare the ground, he has to sow the seed, he has to water, he has to keep the weeds out.
 3. Every Christian is a laborer in our Lord's field.
Matthew 9:37-38 – "Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. ³⁸ "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."
Romans 10:14 – "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?"
- B. On the other hand he is absolutely helpless to cause the seed to germinate
Mark 4:26-27 – "And He was saying, "The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; ²⁷ and he goes to bed . . ."
1. Our Lord portrays the farmer as sowing the seed and then sleeping. In other words his job is done – he rests because he cannot make it sprout. He cannot create life.

2. This is the nature of evangelism. We sow and water but we cannot make it fruitful. We must trust God for the increase.
It's like the little boy who plants some seeds and continually digs them up to check on them. He is apt to ruin them.
Men with good intentions try to manipulate sinners to repentance – he risks bringing harm to their souls.
 3. The farmer can help the plant to grow after it germinates but he cannot make it germinate. We can and must help new converts but we cannot make the converts.
 4. Only God can change a sinner's heart. Only God can transform him from hating the Word of God to loving it and embracing it. Only God can make Christ precious in our sight.
- C. The wise farmer carefully watches and knows the proper time to bring in the harvest
- Mark 4:29** - "But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."
1. Notice it says immediately upon seeing the fruit he makes the harvest
 2. This shows first that there will be fruit – just as in the parable of the sower
 3. It also shows the importance of bringing the harvest into the barn for protection. New converts are added to the church
Spurgeon: "No wise farmer leaves the fruit of the field long exposed to the hail which might beat it out, or the mildew which might destroy it, or the birds which might despoil it. No believing man should be left outside the garner of holy fellowship, he should be carried into the midst of the church with all the joy which attends the home-bringing of sheaves."
- II. Second, we see what the farmer can know and what he cannot know
- A. He can know that the good seed of the Word will grow
- Mark 4:28** - "The soil produces crops by itself"
1. Not every seed in every place will grow. Some will fall on the wayside, some on stony ground, some will be choked by thorns, but some will fall on good ground and bear fruit.
 2. The great comfort for the Christian laborer is we can have absolute confidence in the power of God to make the Gospel effectual
Romans 1:16 – "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."
Isaiah 55:10 - "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; ¹¹ So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it."

- B. The farmer, however, does not know how it happens
Mark 4:27 – “and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows-- how, he himself does not know.”
1. It is truly a mystery how God implants faith
 “I know not how this saving faith to me he doth impart”
 2. We cannot see the workings of the Holy Spirit. We can only see the result – the fruit.
John 3:8 – “The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”
- C. The farmer also when he sows cannot know the size of the harvest.
Mark 4:27 – “and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows-- how, he himself does not know.”
1. Salvation is of the Lord. It is a monergistic work. It is God’s work
 2. We cannot know when we see a small sprout that it will mature to fruit.
 - a. The thorny soil brought forth a plant but it was soon choked. There are some who seem to be genuine for a season.
 - b. Simon the Sorcerer seemed to be a genuine believer
Acts 8:13 – “Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.”
 - c. It takes great discernment and patience on our part. When there is an absence of fruit we need to send out a warning.
Acts 8:21-23 - "You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. ²² "Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³ "For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity."
 3. But we are laborers who labor knowing that there will be a harvest in due time. There is life in the Word.
Hebrews 4:12 – “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword”

Conclusion:

1. We are involved in a mystery. We sow, we labor, but we cannot tell the increase until we see the fruit.
2. But we shall see a harvest. We’ll see this with the Parable of the Mustard Seed. The Kingdom is growing huge.
3. The question for all of us is are we being faithful in our Lord’s field? May we labor diligently and rejoice in the harvest.