

**“The Kingdom Takes Center Stage”**  
**“A Journey With Jesus” — Part 6**  
**Mark 4:1-34**

*Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."*

Mark 1:14-15 NAS

## **1. Unlocking the parable of the sower.**

*Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times." Then Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."*

Mark 4:1-9

### **What is a parable and what is its purpose?**

- A parable is a story placed alongside a teaching to help us understand its meaning.
- A parable gets the listener deeply involved and compels them to make a decision.
- A parable begins innocently as a story to catch our attention, but then becomes a mirror through which we see ourselves and God's truth.

### **Why did Jesus teach in parables?**

- A careful study reveals that parables can both hide the truth and reveal the truth.
- The careless listener, who though he knew everything, would hear only a story that he regarded simplistic, but in reality did not really understand.
- The careful listener, with a desire to know God's truth, would ponder the parable, confess ignorance, seek the lord, and begin to understand the spiritual lesson Jesus wanted to teach.
- Jesus taught in parables to help people understand the nature of His Kingdom.
- Jesus placed great importance on hearing. (Mark 4:9) When Jesus spoke about hearing, it was not about physical hearing, but spiritual hearing with discernment. To hear the Word of God means to understand it and put it into practice.
- So penetrating and personal are parables, that after hearing several of them, the religious leaders wanted to kill Jesus.

*When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them. They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.*

Matthew 21:45-46

## **2. Jesus unlocks the parable of the sower.**

When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, "they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!" Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? The farmer sows the word. Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop— thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown."

Mark 4:10-20

**Seed = the Word of God**

**Sower = represents the servant of God**

**Soil = the human heart**

**Birds = Satan**

**Path = hardened hearts**

**Rocky soil = shallow hearts, emotional hearer (joyfully accepts without understanding the cost)**

**Thorns = a heart crowded with the cares of the world**

**Good soil = fruitful heart, believing heart**

**Principle:** Each of the fruitless hearts are influenced by a different enemy. These are the enemies of every person even believers, the world, the flesh, and the devil. Not all true believers are equally productive, but from every genuine believer's life there will be some evidence of spiritual fruit.

### 3. Unlocking the parable of the lamp.

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." "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." Mark 4:21-25

Lamp = The truth of God in disciples' lives

The more we hear (understand and put into practice) the more we are able to share. Our spiritual hearing determines how much we have to give to others.

"Consider carefully what you hear,"... Mark 4:24

Therefore consider carefully how you listen... Luke 8:18

### 4. Unlocking the parable of seed growth.

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. He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

Mark 4:26-34

- We cannot make the seed grow.
- We cannot even explain how it grows.
- There is a mystery to the growth of the seed.
- A disciple could be discouraged because much seed falls on unproductive ground.

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Galatians 6:9

- From very small beginnings, the kingdom would grow in size and influence.
- The growth of the kingdom will not result in the conversion of everyone.
- Some growth will give opportunity for Satan to get in and go to work.

... I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Matthew 16:18