

Mark 4:21-34 – Parables Of The Kingdom

Leader's Guide

February 3, 2019

- 1. Read Mark 4:21-34 to familiarize yourself with the passage. How did these verses change your thinking about the importance of not just hearing but of applying the Bible? What truth did you learn that you did not know?**

A Lamp Under a Basket

²¹ And he said to them, “Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand? ²² For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. ²³ If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.” ²⁴ And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. ²⁵ For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.”

The Parable of the Seed Growing

²⁶ And he said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. ²⁷ He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. ²⁸ The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

³⁰ And he said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? ³¹ It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, ³² yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

³³ With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. ³⁴ He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.

- 2. Mark 4:21 says the gospel is like a lamp in a dark room. As Christians, we are repeatedly told to be lights in a world of darkness. What do these verses teach us about the way the light of Christ is to shine from our heart into the lives of others? (2 Corinthians 4:6, Philippians 2:15, John 2:7-11, Matthew 5:16)**

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:6 (ESV)

- Paul is borrowing from Genesis 1, when he talks about God creating light. Just as God created light at his word, he supernaturally created spiritual light in our lives so we can see the glory of God through Jesus. When it comes to sharing that light with others, one of the best things we can do is share about Jesus because he is the one God will supernaturally open eyes to see.

that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world. Philippians 2:15 (ESV)

- One way we shine the light of Christ in a dark world is through the holiness of our lives. We live in a world of corruption and lies. The purity of our lives should shine like a bright light in a world of darkness. Our light should draw others to Christ like bugs are drawn to a light on a dark summer night.

Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. 1 John 2:7-11 (ESV)

- John says one of the evidences that we have the light of Christ in our lives is that we love our brothers. We forgive them like we want to be forgiven. The challenging part of this command is we live in a world of revenge and alienation. In this world, when someone hurts you, you cut them out of your life forever. That is not the way of Christ. The forgiveness and restoration we have in our relationships with one another should make our lives shine like light in a dark world.

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:16 (ESV)

- While Mark talked about letting our light shine before others through sharing the gospel, Matthew quotes another time Jesus talked about letting our light shine. This time Jesus equated our light with our good works. While telling others the truth of Jesus is one way to shine our light in this dark world, the good works we do for others is another way to let our light shine in a world of darkness.

3. In Mark 4:24, Jesus taught the importance of paying close attention to spiritual truth so we don't just hear it, but we also apply it. The more spiritual truth we apply, the more spiritual truth God gives. If we ignore God's truth, we will lose what little truth we have. What do these verses teach us about the way the principle of the measure applies to other areas of life? (2 Corinthians 9:6, Galatians 6:7, 1 Corinthians 9:24-25, Revelation 22:12, Luke 6:37-38, Matthew 25:14-29)

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 2 Corinthians 9:6 (ESV)

- In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus reminds us that the measure we put into hearing and obeying the word of Christ will result in the measure God uses to reveal more of himself to us. In this verse Paul says the principle of the measure also applies to financial giving to Christ's kingdom. Those who are generous to the Lord find God blessing them abundantly.

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. Galatians 6:7 (ESV)

- Paul says the principle of the measure applies in all things, both good and bad. If we sow things that please God, we will reap a good harvest. If we sow things that are sinful, we will eventually reap that kind of harvest. The way things turn out in the future are usually a result of what we sow today.

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 (ESV)

- God promises he will give us eternal rewards in heaven based on how we live out our faith in him while on earth. We give our best for Jesus in this life, knowing Jesus will richly reward us in eternity.

"Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. Revelation 22:12 (NIV)

- Jesus can't wait to reward us when he returns, but his reward will be based on how we live for him today. The more energy we put into sharing the gospel, living holy lives, and learning spiritual truth will lead to a great reward from Jesus in heaven.

"Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you." Luke 6:37-38 (ESV)

- Luke reminds us that the principle of the measure also applies in relationships. If we are judgmental toward others, they will be judgmental toward us. If we are quick to condemn others, they will be quick to condemn us. If we are quick to forgive others, they will be quick to forgive us.

“For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master’s money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.’ But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. Matthew 25:14-29 (ESV)

- The parable of the talents is an application of the second part of the principle of the measure. Those who use what God has given, will receive more from God. Those who ignore the little God has given, will lose the little truth they have. In this parable, a talent is a unit of money. The principle applies beyond money to other gifts God gives such as artistic skills, musical skills, leadership skills, etc...

4. The parable of the growing seed provides great comfort. It reminds us that all spiritual life and growth finds its source in God, not in our strength. How do these verses change the way you think about spiritual life and growth? (1 Corinthians 3:6-7, Philipians 1:6, 1 Thessalonians 3:12)

I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. 1 Corinthians 3:6-7 (ESV)

- Don't let your life become centered around a gifted spiritual teacher that God used to help you grow in Christ. God is the one giving spiritual growth. God gets all the glory for our spiritual life.

being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:6 (NIV)

- Just as God began our spiritual life, he promises to continue to grow our life in Christ until we reach full maturity on the day we see Jesus face to face. This is a great comfort. At times, we feel spiritually dull. God's promise is that he will continue to mature us.

and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, 1 Thessalonians 3:12 (ESV)

- Paul credits God with the spiritual growth of the Thessalonians. Since God is the source of their spiritual growth, his prayer is for God to give them even more spiritual growth.