The Good News told by Mark

A Bible teaching commentary
on the Gospel of Mark
in easy-to-read English

Written by Fred Morris

Jesus and the parable of the sower

Mark unit 4 of 12

Chapter 4:1-5:21

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Unit 4: Mark Chapter 4 to Mark 5:21

The Parable of the Sower and the Seed

Many people followed Jesus so He again sat in a boat to teach. Jesus taught the people many things using stories of life, called parables.

In this parable, the sower means someone who shares the Good News of Jesus. The seed he sows is the truth or the message from God. It is the Gospel or the Good News of the Lord Jesus Christ. The person who shares the truth from God sows the seed in the world. He shares the truth about what he has seen and heard or witnessed. A witness who explains this truth is a teacher or messenger.

In the parable, the sower scattered the seed on the ground as far as he could. Some seed fell on the path and the birds ate it up. Some seed fell on stony ground and the plants did not live long in the hot sun. Some seed fell among weeds and the plants did not grow strong. But some seed fell on good ground. The soil was well prepared. It was open and ready to receive the seed. It produced a good harvest.

Later, Jesus explained this parable to His disciples. Some people are as hard as the path. Their hearts do not take in the Good News of Jesus. There is nowhere for the seed to grow. Satan quickly takes away the message that was given to them. Their hearts are not prepared ready to receive the Word of God.

- Some people have only a little room to take in the message of God. The seed grows quickly in between the rocks and stones. But there is little soil for the seed to grow. People receive the message of God but easily give up when trouble comes. Their faith in God is shallow, not deep.

- Some people have lives full of other things: worry, love of money and the things that money buys. These all weaken their faith. They love God but they also love other things. Their lives become unfruitful.
- Some people are open and ready to receive the Gospel. Then the Word of God grows and produces a good crop. The new life of true faith in God produces much good fruit. Hearts that are prepared well will receive and share the truth from God. Their lives will be fruitful.
- When we tell other people the Good News, some will understand. Others will not want to listen or they will not understand.
- Some will quickly follow Jesus but will get discouraged. They will quickly give up because of a weak faith.
- Some will follow Jesus but then go the wrong way in life because they also want to do many other things.

But the people who hear and understand these things will live fruitful lives in the Kingdom of God.

Jesus warned the crowds that if they did not understand this parable, then they would not understand the other parables. This is what Isaiah warned in the Old Testament. This is why Jesus warned everyone, "Those who have ears should listen".

This parable shows the difference between people who are saved and people who are lost. It shows what happens to people who do not listen carefully to the truth from God. Their hearts are not ready to receive the truth from God. They do not let the truth change their lives. Then their faith is not strong when troubles come. But those who are ready to receive the Word of God produce a good harvest at the right time. Their lives produce good things.

More Parables about the Kingdom of God

Jesus asked, "Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or under a bed? Or do you put it on its stand?" Jesus came as a light for the world. His light must be brought into the open. The light of Jesus is the truth from God.

Jesus said again, "Everyone who has ears should listen". He added, "Think carefully about what you hear." We must share with others the understanding from God that we have received.

The light of the truth from God will bless others. It brings gifts from God. It brings new life on earth, joy, peace, faith and eternal life in heaven. Jesus said, "As you give [to others], so you will receive. In fact, you will receive even more".

However, people who do not listen and do not receive these gifts from God have very little to share. Jesus warned, "If you have nothing, even what you have will be taken away from you". So let us listen carefully and understand the things of God. Then let us share what we understand to bless others. If not, we will lose the little understanding we have.

The disciples of Jesus did not understand the things He said about the Kingdom of God. So Jesus used more stories, or parables, to teach them.

Jesus taught them what the Kingdom of God is like. A farmer who sows seed is like a messenger who preaches the Word of God. He digs and prepares the soil. He then throws the seed on the open ground. He believes that the seed grows by itself. He does not know how it happens. He believes that it will produce a harvest with many more seeds.

The growing seed from the messenger of God is the work of the Holy Spirit. It grows in the lives of the people who open their hearts to the truth from God.

A farmer cannot produce the harvest. He prepares the soil so that it is open to receive the seed. He cares for the young plants. Then he waits in faith for the harvest.

Jesus told another parable about the Kingdom of God. It was like a tiny mustard seed planted in the ground. In less than a year it grew larger than all the other plants. Its branches were so big that birds could rest in its shade.

The Kingdom of God on earth began as a very small thing. The first followers of Jesus were not important people. They were ordinary men and women who went out preaching the Word of God. During their lifetime, the Kingdom of God spread across Europe, Asia and Africa, just as Jesus promised.

Jesus told many parables to help the people understand what would happen. Men and women either reject the truth of God or believe it and become followers of Jesus. The Holy Spirit produces more seeds and the people of God bring in the harvest.

When Jesus was alone with His disciples, He explained everything to them. The Kingdom of God needs teachers as well as preachers. It needs workers who will prepare the ground, sow the seed and bring in the harvest. This is all a work of the Holy Spirit.

The Disciples Cross the Lake during a Storm

Jesus asked the disciples to go with Him to the other side of the lake called the Sea of Galilee. While they were crossing the lake, a storm started. Waves covered their small boat.

The disciples were afraid. Jesus was asleep. They woke Him. "Teacher, do You not care if we drown?". Jesus got up and ordered the wind to stop. Then He said to the waves, "Be still!"

The wind stopped and the lake immediately became calm. Normally, it takes a long time for waves to calm down.

Some of the disciples were experienced fishermen from the region of Galilee. They had never seen anything like this happen before. They were very afraid. They asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him".

Jesus wanted to know why they were so afraid. He asked, "Do you not have any faith at all yet?". When our hearts are troubled, Jesus says the same thing to us, "Peace, be still! Calm down!" When troubles come, He is always there with us. He wants us to trust Him even when we are afraid. Jesus calmed the wind, the waves and the disciples.

Jesus calms the wind and the waves in a storm

Mark Chapter 5.

Jesus brings Peace to a Man with Demons

Jesus and His disciples travelled by boat to a region on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. The caves there were used for burying dead people. A man lived in the caves. Evil spirits lived inside him. They were demons that made him violent and angry. The people tried to put him in chains but he broke them. He screamed night and day and cut himself.

The man saw Jesus get out of the boat. He ran up to Jesus and knelt down in front of Him. The evil spirits knew who Jesus was. The man shouted, "Jesus, Son of the Most High God, what do you want with me? Promise before God that You will not hurt me!". Evil spirits know who Jesus is. They know that Jesus has authority over them and they fear Him.

Jesus ordered the demons to leave the man. The man begged Jesus not to send them out of him.

There was a herd of pigs nearby. The demons asked to go into them. Jesus allowed it. The pigs ran down into the lake and were drowned. There were about 2000 pigs. Then the man knew that he was free from all those evil spirits.

The men who looked after the pigs told everyone what had happened. When the people heard this, they went to see for themselves. They found the man at peace, sitting quietly with Jesus.

The people were afraid. Before, they were afraid of the man with the demons. Now they were afraid of the power of God. So they begged Jesus to go away.

The man wanted to go with Jesus and the disciples. Jesus did not let him. He said, "Go home to your family. Tell them how much the Lord has done for you. Tell them how He has been kind to

you". Now he could witness to his family what Jesus had done for him.

The man also witnessed to people in the Ten Cities on that side of Sea of Galilee. They were amazed. These people were not Jews but gladly they received the Good News of Jesus.

Jesus returned to the other side of the lake where the Jews lived.

Often envy, witchcraft, drugs, alcohol or gambling destroy family life. These things make people cruel. They allow evil spirits to control their lives. Only the power of Jesus can drive these demons out. Evil spirits are not afraid of us. They are afraid of Holy Spirit power in us. Only Jesus can cast out evil and give a spirit of love and self-control.

This man came freely to Jesus. But he was only truly free when Jesus cast out the demons.

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