

Let the Seeds Loose! – Mark 4:21-34  
Series: Look and Live #16

There are some things which, if you're not going to say them right, you're better off not saying them at all. *Example*: complimenting your wife. Some might think that the Gospel is one of those things. "Well, since I can't say it right, I'm better off not saying anything at all."

Truly though, the Gospel is not one of these things. Jesus is going to encourage us in this text: *fumble away*. Do a far-less-than-perfect job, but just *spread the seed* of the Gospel. Sow the seed by telling people about Jesus, about who he is, what he does, and how they should respond to him. Sow the seed knowing that you'll mess it up as often as you get it right, and let God give the growth.  
**Read Mark 4:21-34.**

Mark puts these three parables here in chapter four because they are related to the last parable of the farmer sowing the seed. Jesus was saying in that parable, "God's Word, when it is read or preached, is like a seed being planted in soil. The Word of God enters into the heart of a man, and depending on what his or her heart is *like*, the Word will either produce the fruit of change and Christ-likeness in that person's heart, or it will not. And *ultimately*, the condition of that person's heart is in the hands of God. God is the one who changes a person's heart." And that is why most don't believe Jesus' preaching, and why some, like the disciples, do. So *now* Mark puts Jesus' next three parables here because they deal with issues that the first parable raised.

**The Parable of the Lamp. "Let the seed loose!"**

This first parable is a little clearer if you read it as it is literally written: "A lamp does not come so as to be put under a basket or under a bed." That's strange because a lamp doesn't "come" at all. That suggests to us that Jesus is actually talking about himself. Jesus is elsewhere called the light that illumines the dark world. He is the light shining in the darkness. He is the *light* of the glory of God. We live in darkness. Jesus is the one who brought light (much like a lamp).

So Jesus and the new reality that he brought (the Kingdom of God) *is* the lamp. When Jesus came, God was beginning to truly save a people for himself. They would be his true, eternal adopted family. He would reign over them and they will dwell with him in fellowship forever under King Jesus. Jesus' coming *made that* a reality. And that is what Jesus is referring to when he says, "The lamp came."

But what about this lamp coming? I 30 A.D., they didn't walk into their living room and reach over to flip on the ceiling fan light switch to illuminate the whole room. They used earthen oil lamps much like we would torches or flashlights. So if you go through the trouble of lighting this lamp, when you bring it into your house, the *last* thing you'd do is put a cover over it or set it in a place where its light couldn't reach the rest of the room. No, you'd put that lamp up *high*.

That's what Jesus is saying about himself. The purpose in coming as the light is so that people would *see* him. So as messengers and heralds of Jesus, we thwart the intentions of Christ by keeping

our mouths shut. The message of who Jesus is and what Jesus did in living, dying, rising, and now adopting us, that has been entrusted to us in order to *shine forth from us*.

Why is it that Jesus teaches this to the disciples now? What does this have to do with his other parable about the sower going out to sow his seed? Perhaps he wants to make *absolutely certain* that they don't misunderstand what he just taught them. He told them that ultimately, only *God* is the one who can give a lost person a heart to believe in the Gospel. Unless God does that, all is in vain. Someone could take that and reach a *bad* conclusion, so Jesus makes sure here they don't go down that road.

People often challenge my understanding of Scripture by saying that if God is the one who is completely in control of saving people, there is no place for me (or need) in evangelism. But this one chapter of Scripture confirms both that God is *completely* in control over and the accomplisher of our salvation **AND** that we *have* to share the Gospel (evangelize). Both are true.

Jesus is telling his followers that this message of his is designed to shine! His purpose in entrusting the Gospel to them is for them to *plant*, to *sow*, to *shine*! So LET THE SEEDS LOOSE!

This is helpful for us today when we have a very individualistic understanding of our salvation. Since when did this all become so personal? The Kingdom of God didn't come just so that I would trust in Jesus, and now that that has happened, everything is okay. Jesus' Kingdom came to the world and has come upon me so that I would now let the seed of the Gospel loose in my life like a farmer sowing his wheat. That's how the message of the Kingdom was designed to be published.

The truth is, if we were all sowing the Gospel like *this*, we'd probably see random stray seeds laying all over the place. Planting seeds is a mess! I could be wrong, but I have to conclude that since I don't see much of this "seed-planting messiness" in our church, our hearts have probably told us that since we believe, everything is alright. That is the most important thing.

But Christ says that it's just as important that those of us who believe continue declaring the Gospel, letting the seeds *loose* in the fields of our workplaces, families, and community. If there's not currently some seed planting going on in your life, *something's wrong*! That's not what it's *made* to do.

### **The Parable of the Growing Seed. "Trust the seeds work."**

In verses 26-29, Jesus appeals to something they were all very familiar with: farming. The main point is that, without the farmer seeing or controlling what's happening once he puts his seeds in the ground, the seed nevertheless does continue to work. The farmer is just sitting there, and the seed is doing things the naked eye can't see, but soon it will sprout and be ready for harvest.

We learn two things: (1) if the seed has been planted then things *are probably happening* in that person's heart, even things that you cannot see, and (2) beyond planting and replanting and planting again, what is happening in them is *beyond us* and beyond our control.

When you put your little tomato seeds into those tiny cups of dirt, you trust that things are happening to that seed. It is germinating, growing roots, interacting with the soil, and it will soon begin to sprout. But you don't do those things. So it is with our evangelism.

**Illustration:** my own personal testimony. People planted the seeds of the Gospel in me for a long time before I was ready for harvest.

So *plant the seed*. It works! You might not see it working today, but believe that God uses his Word spoken by your mouth to bring people from death to life. God will use his Word in your mouth in invisible, behind the scenes ways to germinate and produce spiritual life.

And your testimony doesn't have to be tip-top perfect. Tell people God is reconciling a people for himself in Jesus' name. Tell them that God punished the sins of his people in Jesus on the cross. Tell folks that God saves, forgives, adopts, and preserves anyone who comes to him in Jesus by repenting and trusting in Christ. Do it over and over, and realize humbly that that's *all* you can do.

Beware of taking too credit for yourself. You were successful in evangelism if, by God's grace, you had the courage share the Gospel (to sow the seed). If you did proclaimed the Word, you *did* evangelism. Now do it again, and again, even in the same person. Don't define success by how many people are changed by your sowing. That's taking the work of God and claiming it for yourself.

### **The Parable of the Mustard Seed and Plant. "Watch the seeds grow."**

I love verse 30 because you can see so clearly in your head as Jesus speaks these words; he's walking along with his disciples through the market perhaps, and he's teaching them about God's Kingdom which he brought into reality. Out of all the things surrounding him, he lands on a tiny mustard seed as the thing that is most like God's Kingdom. He's saying, "Yes, today the Kingdom of God is like this seed. It seems very small and insignificant. But stick this in the ground and wait, and in due time this simple little seed will be the biggest thing in your garden!" That's what God's Kingdom is like.

Think about this from the disciples' perspective. Some random young man has called a rag-tag group of 12 fishermen and tax-collectors to follow him and to change the world. Sure, they're pretty excited about him, but they have to be wondering, *What all's going to come of this? What's going to be the end of all this? Are we going to get a big following in Israel? Will Jesus become King of Israel? Will we try to go around and get people to follow Jesus, only to have all this just die out in a couple years?*

Jesus is telling his disciples, "Trust me, this is going to work. And this is going to be *huge*. Yes, the Kingdom of God seemed small and insignificant right then. But that ***small insignificant Kingdom is going to grow up; God's Word is going to redeem an entire people for himself; multitudes and multitudes will come under the reign of God by repenting and trusting in Jesus.***

So all the more incentive to *preach the Word!* Share the Gospel. Sow the seed. Even though it starts small, it *will* grow. God's Kingdom will be massively successful, and here Jesus stamps his guarantee on that.

If we get one thing out of this today, make it this: *don't despise small beginnings*. As a small country church, I'm so thankful that Jesus decided to pick up a mustard seed and say, "Yeah, the Kingdom is like *this*." I'm so thankful he didn't pick up something massive and complex. A small seed, that's how it starts. It doesn't always start *huge*.

There are people here longing to see this church grow up and thrive. That's a start. And again, don't despise small beginnings. Amazingly, God's blueprint for growing his Kingdom *is* his local church. So God has placed true, hungry believers here in this community, and he has promised to see the mustard seed that Jesus planted continue to grow up through us as the branches of the Kingdom of God stretching through Hickory Hill reach out more and more to touch more houses and more people. It might start small. One member here and one there. But the mustard seed is planted, and it starts to grow. May God be pleased to give the growth as we scatter his seeds.

### **Conclusion**

We close with a quote from our beloved 19<sup>th</sup> century Baptist preacher, Charles Spurgeon.

"If Jesus is precious to you, you will not be able to keep your good news to yourself. You will be whispering it into your child's ear. You will be telling it to your husband. You will be earnestly imparting it to your friend. Without the charms of eloquence you will be more than eloquent: your heart will speak, and your eyes will flash as you talk of His sweet love. Every Christian here is either a missionary or an impostor... You either try to spread abroad the kingdom of Christ, or else you do not love Him at all. It cannot be that there is a high appreciation of Jesus and a totally silent tongue about Him... [T]hat man who says, 'I believe in Jesus,' but does not think enough of Jesus ever to tell another about Him, by mouth, or pen, or tract, is an impostor.

...If thou knowest Christ, thou art as one that has found honey. Thou wilt call others to taste of it... [So then Christians] speak of Him in fitting ways and at fitting times, and so in every place proclaim the fact that Jesus is most precious to your soul."  
(Charles H. Spurgeon, "A Sermon and a Reminiscence," *Sword and the Trowel* (March 1873), as cited on [http://www.spurgeon.org/s\\_and\\_t/srmn1873.htm](http://www.spurgeon.org/s_and_t/srmn1873.htm).)

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