

# The Kingdom Parables

**Mark 4:26-34**

## Introduction

This passage records Jesus telling two more parables about seed to illustrate that the kingdom of God would grow in unexplainable and unexpected ways. This teaching was not only a warning to those who opposed Him but also a challenge to His disciples who understand the parables and are receptive of His teaching.

## For Study and Discussion

### 1) The Story of the Kingdom...Thus Far

- a. Jesus did not invent the concept of the kingdom. What did the OT teach about it? (Isa 43:15; Jer 10:7; Ps 103:19; Dan 4:34-35; Jer 23:5-6)

- b. If Jews in Jesus' time were familiar with the OT's teaching of the kingdom and even expecting it, why do you think Jesus had to teach (and somewhat indirectly) about the kingdom?

### 2) The Secret of the Kingdom

What is the kingdom like? How does it operate? Jesus uses simple, familiar images drawn from the agriculture of His day to reveal unfamiliar spiritual truths about the kingdom (4:11).

- a. If you were to liken the kingdom to an image or symbol of your choice, what would it be?

### ***Parables in parallel:***

Growing seed

Seed scattered on ground

Sprouts and grow

Full grain in the ear

Ripe for harvest

Mustard seed

Seed sown on ground

Smallest of all seeds

Largest of all plants

Shade for birds

- b. From germination to grain (vv26-29). The sown seed germinates, grows with a life of its own, continually, gradually, apart from human effort, supervision or comprehension, until it matures into grain ripe for harvest. What truths can we draw with respect to the kingdom?



## Discipleship Pointers

Many Jews expected a political and military Messiah who would defeat Rome and restore the kingdom of Israel quickly. Ideas of revolt and greatness accompanied those hopes. Jesus' vision of the messianic kingdom shattered those stereotypes and went beyond them. He could not have chosen more jarring images to picture something as glorious, powerful and universal as the kingdom of God.

- Do not judge a seed by its size. The kingdom Jesus inaugurated and preached seems small, unnoticed, insignificant, weak and readily rejected. Yet it will grow beyond expectation into the universal reign of God over the earth and bring blessing to all nations.
- "Slow" does not mean "no". The kingdom's growth in the world, the church, the human heart, is progressive but will certainly mature into a harvest filled with Christ-like people under God's rule. It is a kingdom where God Himself gives and guarantees the increase (c.f. 1Co 3:6-7), not human manipulation, wisdom, effort or strategy.
- Hence, the secret of the kingdom is that it already comes in the presence of its King (and the good news of salvation He offers) but not yet in its fullest manifestation of His absolute reign.
- The secret of the King is that He is the Servant. He will establish His world-wide kingdom by first riding on a donkey in meekness, suffering persecution and murder, serving instead of being served, and ultimately taking up the cross before the crown. Jesus lived out exactly the way He described of His kingdom in His parables.

Ultimately, Jesus' kingdom is radical and subversive because it is not of this world, not fought in flesh and blood (John 18:36), not built by human hands (Dan 2:44-45), not conformed to human standards.

As servants following the Servant, how will we respond?

- Kingdom lens. Let Scripture challenge and correct any unbiblical expectations and attitudes we may have of God's kingdom or any other aspect of our Christian faith and walk.
- Kingdom schedule. Do not despise the day of small things or beginnings (c.f. Zec 4:10) or doubt, or be discouraged when God's work is slow, opposed, and involves sweat and sacrifice.
- Kingdom strategy. Trust and follow Jesus' way of building and expanding the kingdom through faithfully sowing, scattering the gospel of the kingdom – and trust that God will give the results. Our gifts, skills, experiences on their own do not build God's kingdom. Rather, use them to support and advance the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation.
- Kingdom hope. Look forward with hope and confidence to the day when Jesus will come again, bringing with Him the ultimate fulfillment of the coming of the kingdom of God.

## Family/Group Moments

- Reflect on some aspects of the Christian life or movement: E.g. personal spiritual growth, a cell group, a new church planted, a para-church org (like Campus Crusade, OMF), or developments in a particular mission field. How do they illustrate and affirm that the kind of kingdom growth as Jesus taught is still true today?
- How does Jesus' teaching motivate us as a church towards "kingdom-mindedness" (as the church bulletin advertises)? How does it affect us when we pray "Your kingdom come...For Yours is the kingdom...."?