

Four More Parables

Mark 4:21-34

June 2, 2024 Pastor Jeremy Cagle

Good morning, everyone. I want to say thank you to Robert for his announcement. And just to brag on the elders for a moment, you may not know this, but I counted up in my head as he was making the announcement. But the elders have probably spent about 12 hours this past month, just working through things with a candidate in process, it does take a little bit of time putting a job description together and putting questionnaires, the whole process itself is quite involved. And they worked very hard at that. And I appreciate that about them and just to encourage you guys, I'm very confident you will get an excellent man of God to come here because he'll show up and he'll fall in love with you; it won't take long. And he'll also see the great foundation that we've laid and be very encouraged by that. So, I'm very optimistic about the future of our church; we just want to share that with you.

I invite you to open your Bibles to the Gospel of Mark because that is the book we're in today. Please open your Bibles to the Gospel of Mark and as you're turning there, I just want to share this with you. But several years ago, I had the privilege of talking with the head of the placement department at the Master's Seminary and I asked him the one question that was really burning in my mind as I was sitting with him, and that is, "Why did you let me in?" Because I didn't have the best academic background and I wasn't the smartest guy in the room. And he told me, "It was because you listened." He said, "You wrote on your application that you wanted to learn the Bible and that's why we accepted you." He said, "We won't accept a man who doesn't do that we turn a lot of them away, but for any man who is teachable, there's hope."

And I tell you that story because that's what you find in the passage we're looking at today in Mark 4. Mark is going to continue his account of the life of Christ by giving you several parables that Jesus taught, which have one thing in common, and it's found down in verse 24 in your bibles there, when it says, "Take care what you listen to." Because that's how you get into heaven. You don't have to be the smartest guy in the room or have the best academic background, but for any man who is teachable, there's hope. Amen? Isn't that good news? Doesn't that take a load off your shoulders today?

And if you're wondering why Jesus even says this to begin with it is because back in Mark three in the middle of the chapter, He warned us about the danger of committing the unforgivable sin. Remember that story? And that sin was the sin of not listening or trusting in Christ as a result of just being hard hearted. The scribes committed an unpardonable act when they saw what Christ was doing and ignored it. They compared His works to Satan's works. And they said, "He's not the Messiah." And Jesus told them a man can be forgiven of anything, but that you can't be forgiven of your ignorance. God does that all the time. And you can be forgiven if you don't come from the best world; that's not an insurmountable obstacle to Him. But the Lord will never save the person who does this with their ears. It just won't happen. That's where He draws the line.

And that's important to remember because a lot of people do that, don't they? They love to put their fingers in their ears and tell God they know it all already because they've been a Christian their whole life. And they've grown up in a Christian home, come from a Christian family, gone to a Christian church, attended a Christian school, went to a Christian college, seminary, grad program, that's the end all be all for them. But in this passage, Jesus says all that's fine, but the question is, "Were you humble as you did that?" That's what matters to God. He wants to figure out, did you pay attention to the things He showed you in your work in His Word as He went through all that? If not, it's all for nothing. That's what our passage is about.

In this text. Jesus gives you four parables back-to-back, which might seem disconnected when you first read them, but they're not because they all go back to the need to hear the message of Christ and take it in. In another part of the Bible, Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice." Why? Because they're My sheep. and that's what they do. They follow the Shepherd. They don't have to go to a Christian college. It's fine. If you do, it's fine if you don't. They don't have to be raised in a Christian family. That's a secondary thing, really, but they do have to obey the message of Christ when it's presented to them. It all starts there. And that's what we're going to talk about this morning by looking at four parables that address this issue of listening. So if you're taking notes, this is our outline for today. But in Mark 4:21-34, we're going to look at four parables that address the issue of listening.

The first one is the parable of the lamp. The first parable that addresses the issue of listening is the parable of the lamp, which discusses the need to listen to Christ and be a lamp or a witness for Him.

And before we get into that, like I told you last week, Mark gives you the setting for the parables back in chapter 4:1, where it says that Jesus began to teach again by the sea, see that we're there. Mark tells you that because that's the background for this event. Jesus taught these things when He was out in the Sea of Galilee. It's a body of water that's thirteen miles long, eight miles wide, located in the northern most part of Israel. The significance to it is that it's the largest body of fresh water in the country, which explains why so much happens there. It seems like every time you turn around in the gospel of Mark, you're going back to the Sea of Galilee. Next week He'll stop a Storm on the Sea of Galilee. It's a very common place in the book because the Jews like to catch all kinds of fish there. They had sardines, carp, and tilapia on the sea of Galilee, they had catfish, barbells, and herring. They even had a fish they called *musht*, it's a fun word to say. But it's Aramaic for the word comb because of its conelike shape. And the idea is that people were passing through this area to conduct their business.

Verse one says Jesus gave them these parables from a boat out on the lake because the crowd was so large at the time, He couldn't address them all from the land and so He goes out on a vessel of some kind, and He does it from there. And as He does, He tells him the Parable of the Soils in verses one through 20. That's what we looked at last time. It culminates in these words in verse 20. It says, "The good soil are those who hear the word and accept it." In other words, the thing that makes a good soil

good is the fact that they listen to the Word of God. They don't slide it or snub it, or ignore it and say, "I know this all already." They're much more humble than that.

And after telling them that the next verse in the passage says, "And Jesus was saying to them, a lamp is not brought to be put under a basket, is it?" Now when you read that, you might be wondering, what is He talking about? What does a lamp have to do with soils? And the answer is that whereas the soil emphasizes the need to grow as you hear the word of God, lamp emphasizes the need to grow as you do that and shine a light for Him. Just like you would go into a room and turn a lamp on, and it would be light to the entire room, Jesus says you're supposed to do the same thing for the world, as a Christian.

And in order to really understand what He's saying, it might be good to compare this verse to a parallel passage in Matthew 5:14, if you just want to write that down, Jesus says, "You are the" what? "Light in the world." That could be translated in a sense, you are the lamp of the world. It's a similar idea anyway. Which means there's only one lamp the world has achieved. There's only one place they can go to get help with spiritual issues, and that's the church. They can't get it anywhere else. They cannot get help from the Muslims. They can't get spiritual light from the Buddhists. They can't, this is very countercultural, they can't get it from the Sikhs or the Hindus. They can't get it from Simon Fraser University down the road. It is found right here with you.

The reason is because if you want to write another verse down, John 8:12, Jesus says, "I am the light." Which means that whatever light you have is derivative of Him. Jesus is the source, fountain, cause, and origin of all spiritual light upon the earth. He's the spring, root, core, and essence of it. The closer you are to Jesus, the more light you have; the farther you are away, the less light you have. That's why those other religions are completely in the dark. He's the fire. He's the sun; you're the moon.

Which is why He goes on to say here in verse 21, "A lamp is not brought to be put under a basket or under a bed." Because the lamps at this time were not the great big ones some of us have in our houses that go from floor to ceiling, they're very small; they actually look like this. I've shown you this before, but I just gotta show it to you again because it just summarizes what the verse is saying. I got this lamp in Israel several years ago; I paid four shekels for it. He wanted eight, but I argued him down. But it's a replica of the lamp from the first century. And as you can see, it's small. It's not meant to put forth a lot of light, right? It was made to be portable so you can take it with you wherever you want. The way it works is that the Jews would put oil in here and some kind of candle, and then they would light it and carry it around with a flashlight. And when they got home, they would stick it on a lamp stand in their house as the end of verse 21 says, so everyone could see it. And it would just stay there until they didn't need it anymore, for the evening.

And the point of the parable is that this is what you need to do with the gospel. Keep it high upon a stand instead of hiding it. I mean, there's something unnatural about a man who hides his light, isn't there?

And there's something wrong with a person if you have the word of God, you have the truth, but you refuse to share it with anybody. You shouldn't do that either.

The next verse says, that "Nothing is hidden except to be revealed, nor has anything been secret, but that it would come to light." And in the context of the passage, that seems to be a reference to the parables because the meaning of the parables was hidden from them. Jesus says a time is coming when the meaning would be revealed, brought into the light, when it does, I want you to tell everyone, don't keep it to yourself.

I think it goes without saying this can only be applied if people can see you, right? As a Christian It can't occur if everyone goes and hides in a corner everywhere, which is what some Christians are doing today, aren't they? They don't want to be seen by the world; they want to avoid it. And we've talked about this before, but I want to remind you what I'm talking about. You see a lot of people leaving the Lower Mainland leaving Vancouver or the U.S. they're leaving the West Coast, they were running out of U-hauls in Los Angeles a couple of years ago because of all the wickedness there. They think it's no longer safe because the Liberals are taking over, the drug users and alcoholics, and LGBT are running the show. So there's just this mass exodus from dangerous places, but when you look at a passage like this one, you see that's backwards. Jesus says you're not here to be safe in the world; you're here to be a light. And the darker the night, the brighter the light. And I'm not saying it's wrong to leave those places. It's not. You have the freedom to do that. Some people have to because of job situations and things like that. I'm saying it's wrong to do it because you'd rather be comfortable; you don't have that option. If you want to be comfortable, you picked the wrong religion, you have a higher calling than that. You're here to share the good news of Christ with the lost, but that will not happen if everyone puts their light under a basket.

Now I understand why this is hard for people. I talk to you guys. A lot of you told me how much B.C. has changed over the past 50 years. I mean, this is not what used to be around here. Some of you said it wasn't that long ago, you prayed in the public schools. Now you're just as likely to do yoga and quote from the Dalai Lama. But friends, don't you see? That's what you're here for. You're here to tell people there's something better than the Dalai Lama. And if you say, "I can't do that Pastor Jeremy because I'm not strong enough," well, that's not true. The command here is not to be something extravagant. Tell me, does this look extravagant? It's not extravagant. The Lord is calling you to be the normal person you are with the light of Christ coming out of you. This thing is little, it's breakable, and it was very common in Israel. It's common now. You can go in any souvenir shop, and you will find it.

The verse I just read to you from the Gospel of Matthew says, "Let your light shine before men in such a way they may see your good works" because that's what you shine with. And that is your works. You shine with the word; you shine with your works. You do it with the gospel; you do with your testimony. That's something anybody can do. An old Christian can shine with their testimony; a new Christian can

do it. A strong one can do it; a weak one can do it, but either way the Lord is telling us you have to make this a priority. That's the first parable; the parable of the lamp.

Let me give you a second parable that addresses the issue of listening and that is the Parable of the Measure. A second parable that addresses this issue of listening to Christ is the Parable of the Measure, which discusses the need to listen and measure out your work for Him in a generous way.

If you look in verse 24, it says that “And Jesus was saying to them.” Well He said a couple things, if you look in verse 23, “‘If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.’ And He was saying to them, ‘Take care what you listen to.’” And you can just see the theme of the passage coming out there. It hasn't changed from what we saw in the previous section. This is all about listening. And now He goes on to say, “By your standard of measure it will be measured to you.”

And as you came to that verse, I want to point out that some people don't think that's a parable and others do. There's a little bit of debate about that; some of you may have different views on it. In fact, from what I can find, scholars are almost split right down the middle on the issue because the word “parable” is not found in this verse from what I can tell you, it's not found in the surrounding context until you come down to verse 30. And so there's some freedom in interpretation about it.

Personally, I think it is one because it looks to me like Jesus is giving us an illustration of what takes place on a farm where a man drapes a bag of seed on his shoulder, and he goes out into the field to spread it. We talked about that last week, because the Sea of Galilee was surrounded by farmland and it was very common to see a man out there planting his crops by doing this, and just scattering it everywhere like some people do when they feed the chickens, because the goal was to get as much of it out as possible. And the Lord's point here is that if you use a good standard of measure to do that, you could expect a good measure back. But if not, you're wrong because it says, “For whoever has, to him *more* will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away.” Because if you don't work hard on a farm, the farm suffers. And in a similar way, Jesus says if you don't work hard in the Christian life, your soul will suffer too. Now again, like I said, there are some different interpretations on this. But I think there is a principle that most would agree on that if you're not careful to take the word of God and apply it and spread it like we've been talking about, the Lord will take it away from you.

Now again, this is where another passage might help in understanding this because Luke 8:18 in a parallel passage, where Jesus is communicating the same idea, it does not say, “What you have will be taken away.” But listen to this, “What you think you have.” Do you see the difference? See why it's important? The idea is that if you're not careful to take the word of God and apply it, it could be an indication that you're lost and eventually the Lord will take away the facade. He's not taking away your salvation; God won't do that, once saved, always saved. He's taking away the false assurance of it.

Because I think if you could summarize this parable into one word, it would be the word responsibility. And Jesus is looking at His audience here, and He's telling them you're responsible for I'm telling you. The other parables are hard to understand. Yes, some of this is difficult, but that doesn't get you off the hook. Every time you hear the Gospel, I want you to do something with it.

Might have been hard for the Jews to hear because they were Jews. And a lot of them had heard hundreds of sermons, maybe thousands of them. For so long. They saw the synagogue as a spectator sport, where they just showed up and said, "Good job, Pastor so and so" or "Bad job. I didn't like the sermon today." And that was it. That was all they did with it.

Or some of them would come every week and say, "I know." You need to repent. "I know." You need to believe, "I know." You need to turn away from sin. "I know I know. I know." What Jesus says is maybe you do know those things, but the issue is you need to hear and obey because this is what you'll be judged by, "For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you." And what that means is that the measure you use to spread God's word and obey it will determine what kind of harvest you see in your life. Again, the image is of a man doing this with his seed and Jesus says that for the man who does this generously, God would give him more access to the word, more wisdom, understanding, fruit, blessing, assurance, all that. But for a man who does this, it'd be the opposite.

Let's be real applicational here. I tell you this because I need people who tell me they're not happy in church, not just our church, other churches, too. So I ask them, "Are you serving?" And they say, "No." Well, that's why you're not happy. You're holding back the seed and God does not bless that. On the other hand, I meet other people who tell me they're very happy. Happy in this church, happy in other churches, I ask them why, it's because they are serving; that's not random either. Because they're being generous with what God has given them, and the Lord is reciprocating.

Again, I know some people struggle with this, because when you talk about spreading the seed and evangelism and that type of thing, it makes them nervous. It's not easy to go up to strangers and do that and be a light like we're talking about. But if you feel that way, let me remind you Jesus is not telling you to go to strangers. He's just telling you to go to anybody. Strangers, neighbors, coworkers, family members. If you work at a desk job, then spread the word of God at a desk job. If you work in a shop or a store, then do it there. Find someone who knows less about Jesus than you do and tell them what you know. They don't have seed; you have the seed; you give it to them. That's the idea here

That brings us to another parable that the Lord gives in the list here, and that is the parable of the seed. So if you're writing all these down, or you're just following along in the passage, the third parable that addresses this issue of listening to Christ is the parable of the seed. Which talks about the need to listen because God is in control. This whole issue is going to be talked about from another other angle. When it says this in verse 26, "The kingdom of God is like."

And I want to stop and say a word about that because this phrase, “kingdom of God,” this is the first time it appears in this section. It refers to God's rule over the universe, or His governance over mankind. It's expressed itself in different ways throughout history. For example, in the Old Testament, the Kingdom expressed itself one way through the people of Israel. And then in the New Testament, the kingdom of God expressed its way through the church. But Jesus says either way, you have to listen to get into it. That's the connection here. Whether someone lived in the time of Israel, whether they're living in a time of the church, God always expects His people to do the same thing in the kingdom. And that is to hear the Word of God and obey like we're just talking about through this section. And as they do, verse 26 gives you some insight into what happens behind the scenes. When it says this, “The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; and he goes to bed at night and gets up daily, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he himself does not know.”

Just by looking at that, you can tell this is another reference to farming. In my estimation, it's the third farming reference in the chapter so far where a man drapes that bag of seed on his shoulder, he goes to the field doing this, except this time, the Lord does not focus on the measure of seed, but the development of it and the process of growth. Because He's wrestling with the question, how does the seed grow? Jesus has already told you if you sow the seed with good measure, it will grow. People will believe. Now the question is how? What makes that possible? And the answer is the farmer doesn't know. He has no idea what causes the seed to grow up like that. It's a mystery to him. I've met a lot of farmers in Illinois, Tennessee, Indiana, Chilliwack, smart men, most of them. And they knew a lot about the process, but at the end of the day, there was a mystery there, right?

So what did he do in the parable? Trust in God. What's his response? Verse 26, says he cast seed upon the soil, and he goes to bed. And Jesus says that's all we do. When we sow the word of God, and we tell others about it, we have no idea what causes it to grow do. It's a mystery to us. So how do we respond? Trust in God. Put your head on the pillow. Go to sleep.

As we do that, verse 28 says the soil produces crops by itself, *automaton* in Greek, automatically bursts the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. While it goes on to say, the farmer just puts in the sickle because that's his only contribution to the process. He comes down to the ninth hour and reaps the harvest while the Lord does the rest. The farmer doesn't make people believe; he can't. he doesn't cause anyone to repent. How on earth would he do that. He didn't make the church grow. All that something that the Lord accomplishes in His own sovereign will, which is hard to understand. Isn't that what the parable is saying? This is difficult to get your mind around. People have wrestled with this stuff for thousands of years, but tell me the truth? How many of you have doubted the issue of God's sovereignty and salvation before? Anybody? Come on? Every hand in the room should go up. Don't you wish you knew more about it? Sure you do. We all want to peel back the veil of eternity so we can understand what's going on and why the Lord chose this person and not that person. Why did this person come to faith and that one didn't? Some of you have even told me, “I'm a terrible person, how did I get saved and my parents didn't?” Here's the thing. You can't know that. Jesus says it's not your job to figure

that out. It's His job. Your job is to put your faith in Him, sow the seed, preach the Word, and that's it. Leave the results in His hands.

There's a balance here. And that is that in the previous parable, you're responsible for sowing the seed and being generous in that, and doing this all over the place, and shining your lamp and being a light in the darkness. But at the same time, you're not responsible for what people do with it. That responsibility belongs to God alone. Takes a load off you.

I think it was John MacArthur who said, "I could not stay in the ministry, if I thought people's salvation depended on me because that's too much of a burden. Thankfully, I don't it. It depends on the Lord."

And we all need to see that this morning because there are times in ministry, whether you're in full time ministry or laymen's ministry, when no one gets saved for a while, and there's very few converts. And there's very good things happening. And it makes you feel like a failure. But in moments like that, you got to ask the question, did I preach the word? Well, then I'm not a failure. Did people hear the Gospel? Then it wasn't fruitless. Now I have to wait and be patient to see what God wants to do with my process of scattering seed. That's why this picture of farming is so helpful. It's so humble.

My ancestors were cotton farmers in Tennessee. Have you ever heard the phrase Cotton Pickin before? Yeah, I know what it means. They told me. It's a miserable process, but it's so modest. So you just go out there and you know. The picture of farming is helpful because it reminds you what sowed in the ground today may take months to come out of the ground, but that doesn't mean it won't come. I just have to give it time instead of trying to manipulate the process. That's what some do, depending on who you listen to. There are pastors who will tell you, you can rush the process of evangelism if you use a designer seed bag right? Or they say you can make this go faster if you wear a cooler t-shirt, play some rock and roll, put a fog machine on stage. The problem is that that's all wrong. That's not gonna help at all. That has nothing to do with this. Farming is very basic. When you farm, you just farm. You put the seed in the ground, that's all. Bag doesn't matter, t-shirt doesn't matter, music doesn't matter, fog machine doesn't matter. The only thing that matters is the power of God in the life of the sinner.

And friends, if you're under the illusion that salvation is about any anything else, you're deceived, Romans 9:16 says, "Our salvation does not depend on the man who wills, or the man who runs but on God who has mercy." Amen. It all goes back to Him.

By the way, this is why you can look at a city like Vancouver, and still have hope for it. This is why you can look at a place like Los Angeles on the west coast and still be optimistic about the soul there. It's because of God. Not unto us, not unto us, but unto His name, be the glory. He can bring a harvest even when you're asleep.

That brings us to one more parable that I think brings all this together, and that's the parable of the mustard seed. Not just any seed in general, but the parable of the mustard seed which talks about the need to listen because not only is God in control and able to save sinners, but hear this, He is saving them. He's bringing the harvest. It's not just that God can do it, but He is doing it. He's taking the tiny little seed planted in the ground and producing a great big crop out of it.

I believe Jesus put this one at the end here because some people listen to the previous parable, and they might be tempted to say, "Well, sure God can save sinners Pastor Jeremy, but is He doing it? If so, how many? A few? A handful? A large number? A couple of souls? How many? Jesus says there'll be a lot.

Verse 30 says, "How shall we picture the kingdom of God? By what parable Shall we present it? It is like a mustard seed." Which is a small seed. It's only about one to two millimeters in diameter; you can hold it in the palm of your hand. And nevertheless, Jesus says though it's smaller than all the seeds upon the soil, yet, when it's shown goes up and becomes larger than all the garden plants. And I need to point out that when Jesus says the mustard seed is smaller than the other seeds, He's not saying it's the smallest seed on planet Earth. It's not. There are seeds that are smaller. He's just implying that the mustard seed is the smallest one that Jews would have been familiar with at the time. It was smaller than the barley seed, which was about eight millimeters in diameter, or the wheat seed that was common in the fields of Palestine. Yet in spite of that, it grows into a great big tree, which is a good illustration of the church. Jesus says the kingdom, or the church age will start off like this, small and tiny, and it will end up towering over everything.

Because if you think about it, when Christ came, He was born in a manger. That is small. I don't think you could have a smaller birth than that. And then a few years later, His family moved to Nazareth, which was small as well. Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Then He grew up working as a carpenter, small job. Around Jews, small people. In Galilee, a small province. In Israel, small country. Then He called the disciples who were small men. And they went out and called other small men. And they went out and called other small men. And they went out and called slaves, Gentiles and foreigners and outcasts. And all the while the church just kept expanding. To the point that verse 32 says, the birds of the air would eventually rest under its shade.

Now, depending on the version of the Bible you have, some of you have that phrase in capital letters because it's a quotation from the book of Daniel. And the reason that translators capitalized it is they thought it was the reference to the time when King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream in which he saw a tree that had become large enough that the birds found nest in the branches. Because under his leadership, people from all over the world found refuge there with him.

And by way of comparison, the Lord says this is what the Church will do. It'll be a place of refuge for people from all over the world. Because the rest of the parables is this: the work Christ is doing here will

not stop until it reaches epic proportions like that. Even though the road is narrow, and few there are who find it, one day it will touch every corner of the globe.

It's good to see in light of the context, because at this point in the Gospel of Mark, if we go back to a big picture of it, some people were trying to stop the work of Christ, aren't they? Do you remember that? Like the scribes in chapter three, they were rejecting Him. They compared Jesus' words to Satan's words and said He's not the Messiah, which would be hard for the Jews to hear. Because they would have wondered, was anyone gonna listen to Jesus now? If the scribes reject them who can be saved? Jesus said a lot of people will because one day my followers will look like this.

Not only this, but this parable also sticks out for another reason in light of the context. And that is because Jesus said these things to the people while He was sitting on a boat on the Sea of Galilee. That's a humble surrounding. It's not an impressive place. He didn't say it in the steps of the temple, or Caesar's Palace so people might have been wondering, "Is this going to amount to anything?" Jesus says it will because of the power of God. As the people listen to His word and respond, God's power will be unleashed for all to see.

And I say that because maybe some of you need to hear that this morning because when you look around this room, it looks pretty humble, doesn't it? We're in a gymnasium. People play basketball and sweat in here. Were in Chilliwack, it's a small town; it has some standards. In front of an audience of 100 people or so, that's a small number. You might be wondering, is this going to amount to anything? Well, the answer is that yes, it will, for the same reason. As you guys listen to His word and respond, God's power will be unleashed. Now, to be clear, our local church may or may not grow, I don't know God's will. And in a crowd of 100 people who may or may not get bigger, that's up to Him. But the church with a capital C will grow. And that's where our hope is found. The Lord is building his kingdom and adding new souls to it every day. In another place the Bible says, "The Word of God is living and active." It's not dead. And we know every time it's proclaimed, He can do awesome things for the glory of God. Amen? Amen. It's why you don't have to grow up in a Christian home to be saved. You don't have to go to a Christian college, it's fine if you do, fine if you don't. But you have to listen to the message of Christ and as you do, the Bible says, there's hope for you.

And I don't know about you guys, but when I read stories like this one in the Bible, I always try to put myself into the shoes of the original audience because this wasn't preached to us first, it's preached to them. And as you do that, I found myself thinking it would take a lot of faith to believe all this. I mean, Jesus says, "You're the lamp." That probably would have caused the Jews to think, "Yeah right, is that what you feel like? We're a mess. We're a spiritual disaster." But He said, "It's your job to sow a seed." "Are you kidding me? How are we gonna do that? Who's gonna listen to us?" "As you do that, it will grow." Now this is getting ridiculous. Jesus says it will happen through the plan of God; this is not about you; this is about Him. And it will take place because He's in it.

In fact, to show you how powerful God is, just to give you a little preview of the next passage we're going to look at in the Gospel of Mark, next week, we're going to go past this section and into the next miracle Jesus performs, which is when He stops a Storm on the Sea of Galilee. Which is the very sea that He's sitting in at this moment, possibly from the same boat. Which explains why the disciples say in verse 41, "Who is this?" Not what is this? "What matter of man does such a thing." The 12 disciples knew the Sea of Galilee, they spent their lives fishing in it, they knew how dangerous it was in a storm. Jesus stops it like that, to show this man could do anything. Stop a storm, He can do it. Grow the kingdom, He can do it. Sow the seed, He can do it. Spread the word, use people like you and me as He shares it, He can do all of that.

It's been said that the waves of life are small when God Himself is in the boat. And that's what we're going to talk about next week, so please come back for that. But for now, let's close in a word of prayer and thank the Lord for this great God that we serve.

Heavenly Father, we come to You this morning, thanking You for these parables that are mysterious, we've already talked about that. And they do take a lot of digging and searching and careful study to draw out the meanings. But Lord, the message is just so clear at the end, and that is that we serve a great God. Father, all You ask us to do to be saved is to believe and trust in You. Lord, I pray for those who are here this morning that they would do that. For those who have not, they would see that the door of salvation is open to them. The kingdom is open. They can come and be a part if they would repent and give their life for the Lord Jesus Christ.

For those who are converted, who are saved, Father I pray they would not be downhearted anymore. You know this life can be discouraging at times, it can be hard. There's a lot of storms in life that beat up on us and cause us to fear for the future of the church. But there's no reason to feel that way in light of all this. You're a God who's over all of that. You grow Your seed; You build Your kingdom. Father, we thank You for that. Thank You for this reminder. May we be optimistic, hopeful people that we will not look to the future with any dread. May we look there and see the face of our Lord Jesus Christ standing over at all. May He be glorified. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.