

FG Midweek

The Gospel of Mark

Class 4: Mark 4:1-34

Two Truths and a Lie:

1. I once nearly cut my own leg off with a machete and was rushed to the hospital.
2. I once shot a 39 on nine holes of golf and won the high school city championship.
3. I once spoke in front of nearly 2,000 people at a conference in New Mexico.

Good evening! Welcome back to our Midweek gathering. This time on Wednesday nights focuses on equipping you to do the work of ministry. God calls you to do more than just sit on the sideline—He has a plan and He has a purpose for you in His mission. Wednesday nights serve as an opportunity for you to learn, be built up, and to be equipped to the ministry that God has called you to.

Reminder: study in spring, share in fall

REVIEW

In the first three chapters of Mark, Jesus is introduced as the long-awaited Messiah and divine Lord. Following Jesus requires repentance and faith, but also requires counting the cost. We will face opposition because Jesus faced opposition. And still, we are called to live with faithfulness, boldness, and perseverance in the face of opposition. Amidst examples of false disciples, we see that the mark of a true disciple is one who is both with Jesus and sent out by Jesus.

The fourth section in Mark emphasizes the identity and essence of a disciple.

The Gospel of Mark

- Mark 3:7-35

- This section centers on the definition of a disciple. We see positive and negative examples of what it means to be a disciple. There are two main scenes in this section, each with a few subsections:
- 3:7-19
 - 3:7-12: crowds follow Jesus, but it seems they follow Him because of what they can get from Him. Demons also rightly identify Jesus, but do not submit to Him.
 - 3:13-19: in this passage, we see that disciples are both with Jesus and sent out by Jesus, in that order. Followers become companions and companions become missionaries.
- 3:20-25
 - 3:20-21: Jesus' own family does not recognize His divinity. Genetic proximity does not make one a disciple.
 - 3:22-30: Physical and "religious" proximity does not make one a disciple.
 - 3:31-35: Mark picks back up on Jesus' family from 3:20-21 and emphasizes that His real family are those who obey and follow Him.
- Application & Takeaways
 - A true disciple is an individual who is both with Jesus and sent out by Jesus.
 - Often, Christians gravitate toward one or the other—but being a true disciple requires growing in your walk with the Lord and sharing the good news by living your life on mission.

Read Mark 4:1-34

HIGHLIGHT

- What is the context within the book of Mark? What is the context within the entire Bible?
- What is the author's main intent? What is Mark trying to get us as readers to understand?

EXPLAIN

- What is the author saying?
- What words or phrases are repeated or emphasized in the passage?
- What themes in Mark do you see recurring in this passage?
- What does the author reveal about God? Man? Redemption?
- Does this passage connect to other passages in the Bible?

APPLY

- What does the text teach about mankind and how we differ from God?
- Is there a sin that I am convicted of and need to confess after reading this passage?
- What kind of gospel-fueled obedience does this text call me to?
- Is there a sin to avoid? Is there a promise to hold onto?

RESPOND

- Journal your response to the text by writing down your key takeaway of the text.

The Gospel of Mark

Mark 4:1-34

The section introduces parables and why Jesus uses them to teach. At the heart of these parables is the reality that the kingdom of God is made up of those disciples who respond faithfully and fruitfully to the message of the gospel. Jesus speaks in parables in order to conceal His message from outsiders and to reveal His message to insiders.

This passage has six sections:

Text	Description	Summary
4:1-9	Parable of the Sower	In the previous chapter, we saw several responses to Jesus—demons, religious leaders, disciples, and even Jesus' own family. We now see the various responses to Jesus and His message in parable form.
4:10-12	Purpose of Parables	Parables serve as a warning to outsiders and a lesson for insiders. True followers respond with pursuit of the Lord and growth in the gospel. Outsiders will be frustrated by these parables and will be shown to be unable to understand their meaning without divine intervention. Parables reveal the heart of the individual—those to whom God has made Himself known will understand the parables, those to whom God has not made Himself known will not understand them. Those who have truly followed God will understand the parables, those who have not truly followed God will fail to understand the parables.
4:13-20	Explanation of the Parable of the Sower	<p>The sower is primarily Jesus in this text, but can, by implication, refer to a faithful witness to the gospel message.</p> <p>There are four soils, or responses to the gospel. First, those who are uninterested in the gospel. Second, those who seem opportunistic with the gospel—only accepting it when it benefits them. Third, those who are very interested, but ultimately care more about the world than the truth. The final soil is that soil who hears the Word, receives it, and bears fruit. The key to good soil is bearing fruit!</p>

4:21-25	Parable of the Lamp Under a Basket	The coming of the Messiah is like a lamp coming into a room. Seeing was formerly difficult, but now one can see the truth. And yet at the same time, the light reveals all secrets—all sin, all shortcomings. Despite everything being in the light, not all will respond in repentance and faith. So, be warned that to whom much is given, much will be required.
4:26-29	Parable of the Growing Seed	Fruitfulness comes not from mere effort, but rather from an openness to God’s Word and the power of the Holy Spirit. We cannot cause the growth. Rather, we are called to rely on the Spirit and respond with faithfulness.
4:30-32	Parable of the Mustard Seed	Where most first century Jews expected the coming of the Messiah to be quick and all at once, the kingdom of God has inconspicuous beginnings—much like the rest of Scripture, God uses the weakness of His people to shame the strength of the world.
4:33-34	Conclusion	Parables function to warn hard-hearted outsiders, while teaching lessons to Christ’s insiders. Jesus spoke in many parables, but explained them to his true disciples.

Mark 4 is a challenging passage. And yet, as we read it, the structure and meaning become clear—Jesus faces opposition because his opponents cannot see or understand the beauty of the gospel. God must open blind eyes to see this glorious gospel, and when God opens eyes, those who were once blind respond in repentance and faith. Likewise, for those who have heard and understood the gospel, Jesus calls His true followers to respond with faithfulness to this message by pursuing growth in the gospel.

Conclusion

This can be a difficult passage to read with someone who is not a believer. But there are many features worth emphasizing. First, it is helpful to explain the mystery of parables—why Jesus spoke in them, why they were understood by some and not others. Second, we see many depictions of the kingdom of God. This is a great time to talk about the kingdom of God and how it confounds the wisdom of the world. The kingdom of God is far greater than we could

ever imagine. Third, despite the mystery of parables, the fact is that even those who do not understand still have the opportunity to turn from sin, trust in Jesus, and become those who understand. Once again, we are called to respond to the call of discipleship with repentance and faith. Fourth, the parable of the sower is a great evangelism conversation. Ask them what kind of soil they believe their own heart to be and follow that conversation where it goes.