

Kingdom of God
Week #2
Mark 4:26-29
“The Parable of the Growing Seed”

Introduction

Welcome to the second Sunday **after** Easter. As we get further away from our Easter Celebrations and festivities, it’s amazing how real life begins to set in and how quickly we discover what it’s like to choose to live in the Resurrection Power of Jesus Christ after all the exciting feelings of Easter have faded.

You know, we aren’t that different from the Disciples and the other followers of Jesus. They witnessed the Crucifixion and then the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Talk about an emotional roller coaster ride, but even for them the reality of real life would come calling and they would have to decide how to live after Jesus returned to Heaven.

To help His Disciples, and us, know how to live, Jesus taught about the Kingdom of Heaven.

As we said last week, Jesus was on the earth for 40 days **after** the Crucifixion and **before** His ascension into Heaven. Jesus spent this final time with His Followers making sure they knew **He was alive** and teaching them about **the Kingdom of God**.

Acts 1:3, records this for us.

³ During the forty days after he suffered and died, he appeared to the apostles from time to time, and he proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. And he talked to them about **the Kingdom of God**. ^(NLT)

Knowing about **the Kingdom of God** was important enough for Jesus to spend His limited time focusing on this one topic, so it is important for us to spend some time making sure we too understand **the Kingdom of God**, because we too will have to choose to live out the reality of the Kingdom with our lives.

As we continue, let’s **pause for prayer** and ask for the LORD’s help to understand more about **the Kingdom of God** today.

Prayer

“Heavenly Father, thank You for revealing your Kingdom to us through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to understand more about Your Kingdom and how we can live in the reality of it everyday and into eternity. Lord, give us **the eyes** to see, **the ears** to hear, and **the hearts** to respond to You and Your Kingdom today. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Turn with me today to the **Gospel of Mark**. It is the second book in the New Testament. We will be looking at a parable Jesus used to teach His Followers about the **Kingdom of Heaven**. The Parable that we are going to look at today is **unique** to Mark’s Gospel and not one of the more popular ones we might be familiar with.

This parable is called “**The Parable of the Growing Seed**,” and whether you are familiar with this parable or not, I want to ask you once again to listen with **AFTER EASTER ears** and listen to it as if Jesus was telling you this parable today...because He is. He wants YOU to understand the Kingdom of God too.

Listen and imagine that the Risen Jesus is teaching YOU about the Kingdom of God.

GOD

Mark 4:26-29

²⁶ Jesus also said, “**The Kingdom of God** is like a farmer who scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷ Night and day, while he’s asleep or awake, the seed sprouts and grows, but he does not understand how it happens. ²⁸ The earth produces the crops on its own. First a leaf blade pushes through, then the heads of wheat are formed, and finally the grain ripens. ²⁹ And as soon as the grain is ready, the farmer comes and harvests it with a sickle, for the harvest time has come.” (NLT)

Jesus uses this parable to teach His Followers how **the Kingdom of God** grows and develops. Last week we looked at the seed of the Kingdom of God that is planted in the hearts of everyone who hears the message of the Kingdom. Now Jesus is going to explain how that seed begins to **grow and develop** in the life of those who receive the Kingdom message into their hearts.

As we grow in our understanding of **the Kingdom of God**, we must understand that the **Kingdom principles** work on **both** the **personal level** and on the **collective level** for the **Kingdom of God** as a whole. I will point out a few of these distinctions as we look at our passage today.

As we continue, let me also state that there is some “**mystery**” in how **the Kingdom of God** grows and develops. In these verses, we heard Jesus say that **the farmer** scatters the seed and sees it grow until it is ready to be harvested, **but he does not understand how it happens**.

Let me clarify that Jesus is **NOT** the farmer in this parable. He is represented as the farmer in other parables, but **NOT** in this one. We know that Jesus cannot be the farmer, because **the farmer doesn’t** understand what is happening. Jesus, however, is keenly aware of how **the Kingdom of God** works, **first**, because He is the King and **second**, He has to know how it works, so He can correctly teach everyone else.

So, it is best to say **the farmer**, who **does not understand how** the seeds **grow and develop** is the one who hears the parable. For today, **we** are the hearers who don’t yet understand how **the Kingdom of God works**, but we are here to learn from Jesus.

We don’t fully know exactly how or why the **Kingdom of God** grows and develops in the way that it does, but Jesus is going to explain parts of it to us. There will remain a certain “**Mystery**” to **the Kingdom of God**. I **do not** use the word “**Mystery**” to imply that there is some “**dark force**” or “**unknown being controlling**” how God’s Kingdom works. I use the term “**Mystery**” to signify that it is **left to God’s knowing and will**, but beyond the understanding of humanity. **Isaiah 55:8-9** – remind us:

⁸“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the LORD.
“And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.
⁹For just as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so my ways are higher than your ways
and my thoughts higher than your thoughts. (NLT)

So, for us, it is a matter of “**faith**” to believe that God is in control of His Kingdom and will bring about His intended outcomes.

Jesus doesn’t specifically explain the meaning of this parable about **the Kingdom of God** as He does with some of the others, yet I believe we can understand what Jesus is teaching us if we look closely at this passage and join it with other teachings Jesus has given.

As we hear Jesus teach us this parable, I believe there are **four foundational aspects of the Kingdom of God** that He wants us to understand.

1. Kingdom growth and development is **on-going**. (Advancing)

Verse 27 – tells us ²⁷ **Night and day, while he's asleep or awake, the seed sprouts and grows, but he does not understand how it happens.**

The farmer plants the seed in the ground, but then the nature of the seed begins to work and it begins to grow – Night and day, it grows. Whether the Farmer is asleep or awake, it grows. The farmer isn't making the seed grow...it seems to be a “mystery” to him how it could happen...yet grow it does.

Personally:

Once the message of the **Kingdom of God** is planted in our hearts, it will continue to grow and develop. It won't stay just a seed, and it won't just stay in our heart. It will grow and develop until it permeates every aspect of our life.

SEED:

Think again about how a seed grows. Once it starts to grow and develop, it grows in many directions. It begins to produce roots that grow **DOWN** into the soil. It also begins to produce a stem that grows **UP** toward the air and sunlight. It's a “Mystery” that this seeds knows which way both of these things need to grow. It never gets the **UP** and **DOWN** mixed up! How amazing is that! Its growth is on-going in many directions!

Collectively:

The Kingdom may have started with Jesus' Disciples and a few followers, but the Kingdom has grown numerically and spread geographically since that time. Jesus tells us **the Kingdom of God** had been **forcefully advancing** in:

Matthew 11:11-12

¹¹ “I tell you the truth, of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John the Baptist. Yet even the least person in **the Kingdom of Heaven** is greater than he is! ¹² And from the time John the Baptist began preaching until now, **the Kingdom of Heaven** has been **forcefully advancing**, and violent people are attacking it. ^(NLT)

My friends, be assured that the Kingdom of God is **on-going** and **advancing** even when we cannot see all that is happening with our human eyes, nor understand all that God is doing with our human minds.

2. Kingdom growth and development brings **new life**.

Verse 27 – says **of the seed** that was planted – **the seed sprouts and grows...**

The seed “**Sprouts and grows**” – there is now visible **new life** where there once wasn’t any life. The potential life within the seed is now **being revealed** as the formation of the stem begins to sprout through the ground...visible for the first time.

Personally:

The message of **the Kingdom of God** begins to bring forth **new life**, and we begin to see and experience **Spiritual life and growth** for the first time. The belief we have on the inside is now beginning to be evident to ourselves and others.

Romans 6:4 – speaks of this new life.

⁴For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may **live new lives.** ^(NLT)

This **new life** brings real results in our daily life.

2 Corinthians 5:16-17

¹⁶So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! ¹⁷This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; **a new life has begun!** ^(NLT)

These verses give us two quick examples of the results the **new life** has in our daily life.

First, this **new life** begins to inform and change the way we think and respond to **others**. The verse says, **we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view.**

The **new life of the Kingdom** helps us begin to see others as Jesus would see them. He sees them through the lens of love.

Second, the **new life of the Kingdom** helps us **KNOW** Jesus differently. We can say that we **KNOW** Jesus, not just as a historical figure or a curse word, but we **KNOW** Him as our living King, Savior, and Friend.

It takes time for this **new life** to grow, but once it begins, it continues to reveal more **Spiritual life and growth** than we even knew existed before.

3. Kingdom growth and development leads to **maturity**.

Verse 28 – ²⁸ The earth produces the crops on its own. First a leaf blade pushes through, then the heads of wheat are formed, and finally **the grain ripens**.

The seed is planted, and its growth is nurtured for a specific intended outcome...a mature plant that will produce a good harvest.

For Example: Wheat seeds **grow for the purpose** of producing heads of wheat that ripen to the point that they can be harvested and made into flour for bread.

In the same way, the message of the **Kingdom of God** is planted in our hearts, then the **new life** is nurtured and develops until we grow to **maturity**.

How do we know what maturity looks like?

Do we measure our maturity by other great Christians? – NO

Do we measure our growth by our Pastor? – NO

We measure ourselves by one standard...Jesus Christ.

Our King, Jesus Christ, is what a mature **Kingdom of God** person looks like.

Ephesians 4:13 – helps to explain this standard of maturity to us.

¹³ This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be **mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ**. ^(NLT)

The Kingdom of God will produce a specific intended outcome in each of our lives. This outcome is the maturity of a heart and life that looks, acts, and responds like Jesus Christ.

4. Kingdom growth and development produces a **harvest**.

Verse 29 – ²⁹ And as soon as **the grain is ready**, the farmer comes and harvests it with a sickle, for the **harvest** time has come.” (NLT)

After the seed develops into a mature plant, it isn’t done and its purpose hasn’t been fulfilled until it is harvested.

The whole reason seeds are planted and tended is for the Harvest at the end.

The reason the Kingdom of God is planted in us, and the reason that we want to grow into maturity is because there is going to be a harvest.

We spoke briefly about the bountiful harvest that a Kingdom life could produce last week when we looked at what Jesus said in:

Matthew 13:23

²³ The seed that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God’s word and produce **a harvest** of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!” (NLT)

The Apostle Paul speaks about the different things that we will harvest in:

Galatians 6:7-8

⁷ Don’t be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. **You will always harvest what you plant.** ⁸ Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will **harvest decay and death** from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will **harvest everlasting life** from the Spirit. ⁹ So let’s not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap **a harvest of blessing** if we don’t give up. (NLT)

There is a **harvest of blessings** in this life, if we live out the reality of the **Kingdom of God**. There is also a **harvest of everlasting life** that will begin now and continue into eternity. This is **the intended Harvest** and the reason that Jesus has taken time to plant the Kingdom Seed, the Message about the Kingdom of Heaven, in the heart of every hearer.

My friends there is **a final harvest** coming...is your life ready for it?

YOU

Let me ask you today, how is the message of the **Kingdom of God** doing in the soil of your heart?

Is it growing to maturity, and are you enjoying a harvest of blessings while you await the final harvest?

Here are **three things you can do to get ready for the Kingdom Harvest.**

1. **Thank Jesus for the growth and development** of the Kingdom of God in your life.

The “mystery” of God is at work in your life more than you know, and we need to be grateful for it daily.

2. **Keep the weeds pulled** in the soil of your heart, so the message of the Kingdom of God can continue to grow and mature.

Ephesians 4:31 – tells us what some of these weeds are.

³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. ^(NLT)

3. **Add these fertilizers** to enhance the growth of the Kingdom of God in your life.

Ephesians 4:32

³² Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. ^(NLT)

WE

If we will do these things, the Kingdom of God will continue to grow and develop in our lives!

Imagine what your Kingdom Life will look like as you prepare the soil and trust God to continue the growth of the Kingdom in your life!

My friends, we must get ready because the harvest time is coming!

Close in Prayer and Blessing!

Sermon written by Pastor Mike Martin for the Central Fellowship Church for Sunday, April 26, 2020.
Sermon to be filmed and recorded for posting on internet so people can Multiply their worship at home during the Coronavirus restrictions.