

Kingdom Parables

Mark 4:1-34

Introduction

At times in life it is difficult to understand what is really is going on and whose story you should believe. We might see things changing in our world but not really understand what people are doing and what's going on behind the scenes. What things do you find difficult to understand right now with all that's going on in our world?

There are times that we all need help to understand what is going on. In chapter 4 Mark records several parables about the kingdom of God that the Lord Jesus used to explain to his disciples exactly what was going on as he preached the good news in and around Galilee. In verses 3 to 25 Jesus told the disciples what was going on with the people who heard the message and verses 26 to 32 he explained what was going on with the kingdom of God. In verse 33 to 34 Mark tells us about how Jesus taught the crowds in contrast to his disciples. Please read verses 1 to 34 of chapter 4 to understand what was going on.

The people of God

The first parable explained what was going on with the people of God in and around Galilee as the Lord Jesus preached the good news. The application that the parable makes is about hearing. It begins and ends with an exhortation to hear or listen (4:3, 9). The explanation of the parable makes it clear that there are different kinds of hearers and that the hearer needs to be careful how he or she hears. Please read verses 1 to 25 to understand what was going on with the people who heard Jesus preaching the good news of the kingdom.

Unfruitful hearers

The first three hearers all have something in common. They bear no fruit. They are unfruitful hearers.

1. Why was the seed that fell on the path unfruitful?
2. What prevented the rocky ground bearing fruit?
3. In what way did the thorns pose an obstacle to the seed bearing fruit?

Think about it

What the parable of the sower highlights is that there are different reasons why people refuse to listen to Jesus and repent. Three different categories of unfruitful hearers have been mentioned. As Jesus went about Galilee preaching the gospel all these different types of hearers would have been present.

What type of hearers do you think the crowd were that flocked around Jesus was?

What type of hearers do you think the Pharisees (2:23-3:6) and the teachers of the law (3:22) were?

Out of the first three types of hearers are you better off being one of them over another or are they all as equally as bad?

Fruitful hearers

The first three types of hearers explained why so many who flocked to hear Jesus didn't respond to the gospel and eventually fell away. But not all who heard the message of the kingdom did fall away. Some seed did fall on soil that bore fruit.

4. What are fruitful hearers like?

5. What is this parable urging you to do?

Think about it

Who are the hearers that are fruitful?

Why weren't many in Jesus day not fruitful?

Why do you need to be careful how you hear? What is the danger of not hearing (24-25)?

What kind of hearer are you? What are the signs of fruitfulness? What are the signs of being unfruitful?

The kingdom of God

In the last two parables the Lord Jesus revealed to his disciple what was going on with the kingdom of God. Please read verses 26-34 of chapter 4.

6. What point does the Lord make in the parable that likens the kingdom to a seed that grows

7. Why does Jesus compare the kingdom to a mustard seed?

8. Who did Jesus speak to in parables and who were those who came to understand them and why?

Think about it

How ought we expect people to respond as we preach the message of the kingdom? What should we expect to see as the gospel is being preached?

Why aren't we to be discouraged even though in this world what we do might appear insignificant or unproductive?

Conclusion

We all need help to understand what really is going on in our world. It is not obvious at first sight, but the Lord's work is going on as the good news of the kingdom of God is preached.

Think about it

Why is it not obvious to everyone?

What work God is doing in the world (c/f Col 3:6)?

What work is going on in your life and the lives of those that you know?