

Three kingdom parables

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[0 : 00] All right, everyone, well, we're going to jump into the book of Mark, and we've been looking at the life of Jesus and His ministry, and so we're in Mark chapter 4, the last, well, I guess we skipped Mark a few weeks or a couple weeks in a row, but we've been looking at Jesus' parables, and specifically the parable of the sower, which was really the first major parable, anyway, that Jesus shared, and today we're going to look at a few more.

So Jesus told this parable of the sower, and then He explained it. He explained it not to the whole crowd, but He explained it just to His disciples, and as we've talked about in the last few weeks, Jesus told parables, which are illustrations, stories, not to make things more clear for people, but actually to keep things somewhat hidden, and we talked about why He did that.

He's looking to provide important content to those who are really interested, to those who really want to know, but for those who aren't really interested, then it's kept hidden.

The parables acted somewhat like a riddle, so when He told this parable of the sower, He gave no details. Well, what do all these things mean, and the seed, and the soils, and the sower?

But when His disciples came to Him and they asked Him, what do these things mean? He was more than willing to go into the details to describe what it was that He was talking about with that story.

[1 : 44] Today, we're going to look at three other parables. One is about a lamp. The other is about a seed and how it grows. And the last one is about a specific kind of seed, a mustard seed, and about the nature of a small seed growing into a big tree.

You know, Jesus taught lots and lots of parables. I can't remember, I think I shared when we did an overview of parables how many, but it's actually surprising. It's more than you typically think. Dozens of parables He told while He was teaching His ministry.

Many times, you'll actually find a parable repeated, or sometimes a portion of content from one parable repeated in another parable. So you can imagine Jesus has an itinerant preaching ministry.

He's going around preaching, teaching, and He has different audiences, and He is sharing, a lot of times, the same story over and over again, the same parable to a different audience, and maybe a different location.

Now, with the three parables that we're going to talk about today, we're at a little bit of a disadvantage. Because with the parable of the sower, or the parables of the soils, however you'd like to title it, Jesus gave a detailed explanation about what it was about.

[3 : 03] Now, with these other three, it says at the end of this section that He told His disciples what these three parables meant.

But we don't get to listen into that conversation, unfortunately. So we have to try to discern, based on the rest of Scripture, what these parables are all about.

So I've got my work cut out for me today. And because of that, I think it's important with parables like these, because they are meant to be riddles, and we have some information on how to interpret them more than the people of the day had, because we get to see some of the private conversations that Jesus had with His disciples in explaining other of the parables.

And what did Jesus say about the parable of the sower? He said, if you don't understand this, how will you understand all the parables? And so understanding one of them can provide insight to all of them.

So at a little bit of a disadvantage here, so I think it's, when it comes to the parables, especially the ones that are not explained, as we interpret them and try to understand them, hold those interpretations a little bit loosely.

[4 : 20] Don't get too, don't become too convinced, I think, about the meaning. And so that's kind of the approach I'm going to take today. Let's see what else.

So what do we know about the parables in general? And so to provide a little bit of a context for these three parables, what do we know about parables in general?

Well, the most important thing that we know about all the parables, not just some of them, but all the parables, is what Jesus said here in Mark 4, verse 11. And He said this, And He said to them, to the disciples, To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to those who are outside, all things come in parables.

So what is the fundamental foundational subject matter of every parable? It's the kingdom. It's the kingdom. It's the kingdom.

It's the kingdom. And it's important as believers that as we consider the kingdom, what is the kingdom, what's it like, and these parables interpreting them, to have a little bit of an idea about, well, what kingdom are we talking about?

[5 : 31] One of the things that we have to deal with as Christians, we have to try to put ourselves in the shoes of those who were there in the day. Today, as Christians, in the kind of broader Christian culture, the term kingdom or kingdom of God is used very loosely to talk about God's general ways of doing things in the world.

God's program for today, even. And so it's important that we understand that this kingdom that's being talked about is a very specific thing.

A kingdom has, I think, three important things that relate to a kingdom. A kingdom. It has a king to rule over it, a land in which the kingdom is domained, and then a people, right?

If you just have a king and a land, is that really a kingdom? No, you need to have people in the land to rule over. And so the kingdom being discussed here is the kingdom that had been prophesied by the prophets for thousands of years.

It was a kingdom that was going to be established through the throne of David, through his lineage, and would be one that would, where Israel would be the top dog.

[6 : 59] Not the tail, but the head over all the other nations. And so that is the context in which these parables are told about the kingdom, this kingdom that is coming, and that Jesus said is at hand.

It's right around the corner. It is right here. So, but as we read this, we shouldn't just dismiss it as well.

Here's, because as grace believers, the kingdom is for the nation of Israel. And so we know, and we've talked about in the past, how for us believers under this dispensation of grace, the kingdom is not the kingdom for Israel, that land among those people, the Israelites, is not God's plan for us.

But we shouldn't just breeze past this and think, well, then none of this really applies to me, so why should we even study it or read about it? We can still have certain applications, even if they may be indirect applications.

So with all that as kind of a context or a foundation, let's jump into the first one. The first one is about a lamp, and there's discussion of a basket.

[8 : 19] So let's read it. Mark 4, 21. Also he said to them, is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand?

For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret, but that it should come to light. And that's it. That's the story.

He just talks about a lamp and how when you have a lamp, what's a lamp for? Is a lamp to be put in the closet? Or as he says, under your bed? Or under a basket?

There's a great kid's song. Anybody know what I'm talking about? This little light of mine, right? What are you going to do with it? I'm going to let it shine. And then hide it under a bushel.

No, I'm going to let it shine. It's based on this. Lights are meant to be put out because they have a job.

[9 : 19] They have a purpose. A light has a purpose. Light is to shed its light on everything. In a dark room, it's supposed to expose everything, to make everything easy to see, make everything clear.

And so we have the lamp. Now, back then, lamps were not... We think about a lamp where you have a light bulb in there today. They didn't have light bulbs back then. So we either had a candle or some kind of oil lamp, right?

And they had stands that you would put them on. You don't want to stick it on the floor. That's not going to produce as much light as otherwise. You want it up high or maybe on a table where it can broadcast the most light.

So is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lamp stand? Now, the word bed here is... That's kind of weird. Why would anybody put a lamp under a bed?

But the word bed is the same as a couch. And I'm not sure what kind of couches they had. If you put a lamp under a... Especially one that has a flame on it, under a bed or a couch, you're going to be in big trouble.

[10 : 29] So the question is here, what's he talking about? What is this light that he's talking about that you don't want to hide? And I think the light that he's talking about here is this message of the kingdom of God.

This message that he is sharing with his own disciples about the kingdom. So he says in this second verse here, in verse 22, is the most mysterious.

For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret, but that it should come to life. What is this secret that's being referred to?

You know, some people, as you read this, you might think, well, maybe he's talking about the sins of men. You know, people do things in secret that they don't want anybody to know about. Things in the dark that they hope nobody discovers.

And the Bible, actually, there are verses that talk about that, where it says that those things done by men in secret will one day be revealed to everyone.

[11 : 38] Don't think that you'll get away with your sins without being found out. Of course, God knows, but even the whole world will know about those things.

But that doesn't seem to fit this context, does it? The sins of men. So what is it that's hidden, that's secret, that's going to be revealed?

For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret, but that it should come to light. And I think what he's talking about, again, we know the context. It's the kingdom is the context.

This word of the kingdom. And I think that's what he's talking about. There's information about the kingdom that in the past, some of it was revealed. The prophets talked about a kingdom that was coming.

And there were certain amount of detail about that kingdom, about who would sit on that throne. It would be from the line of David, about the land.

[12 : 42] It would be, Jerusalem would be the center. The king would sit on the throne in Jerusalem, and it would be a land that God had promised to Israel. And the people in that kingdom would be the Israelites.

But that was just some of the information. Some of it was revealed in the past. Others was kept secret.

It was hidden until a future time. And that time is now, the time of Jesus. He came to reveal certain secrets that had not been revealed until now.

And now is the time where these secrets, these mysteries, were important to be revealed to anyone who's interested, to anyone who's willing to ask.

We've talked in the past here about the difference between prophecy and mystery. In the Bible, there are several places where it talks about a mystery.

[13 : 45] And a mystery sounds cool. It sounds like a detective novel or something like that. Anybody like a good mystery? Oh, yeah. And so when you read a book, there's a mystery to it.

Who done it? You know, who committed the crime? But in the Bible, when you read mystery, the mystery is about something that's been unrevealed, hidden. And prophecy is the opposite of a mystery.

So you can think of those two words as opposites. You have prophecy. Prophecy is when God reveals something. And the mystery is when God keeps it hidden. And so, like we said, in the past, God had revealed certain things about the kingdom through prophecy.

Certain things were hidden. Now there's a new prophet in town, Jesus himself, who has come to reveal certain things that until now have been hidden.

Again, to those who have ears to hear. That's what he says at the end of this. If you have ears to hear, anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.

[14 : 51] If you don't have ears to hear, then, well, just be confused along with everybody else. So as recipients of this message, the disciples, they received this message of the kingdom.

Jesus explained the details in private to them. And so this is a message to them. If you've been given the light, let's spread it around.

I want you to go out and share this with others. We need to shine that light around. This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine. Don't hide it under a bushel.

We see this later on. There's two passages I'm going to share. One are both from the book of Matthew. But in Matthew 5, verse 14, I'm going to read a passage here.

This is from the Beatitudes. Matthew 5, verse 14 says this. Jesus speaking to the people, You are the light of the world.

[15 : 57] A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

I have given you a message, which is a light, and a light should be set on a hill. It should be put on a lampstand. So I want you, he's talking to his disciples, not just the 12, but many other disciples, to go and share this message with those who are willing to hear.

Later on, Matthew chapter 10, after he's done a lot of teaching, he sends out specifically the 12. And he tells them about what it's going to be like when he sends them out and how they're going to face difficulties and trouble.

People are not going to like the message. But he says this when he sends out the 12. He says, Matthew 10, verse 26, Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing covered that will not be revealed and hidden that will not be known.

Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light, and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. He said, even though there's going to be resistance, there will be others that want the message.

[17 : 27] They'll want to hear it. And you need to share it. Don't be intimidated by the persecution. Don't be intimidated by those who resist. Continue to share the message.

And some will come to you and they'll ask you, what does that mean? And for those who are really interested, spread the light. Make sure they know and understand what it is that you're telling.

Because there is nothing about the kingdom that will be kept secret now. It was in the past. There were secrets that were hidden. Now, during this time, Jesus said, everything about the kingdom, not everything about everything, but everything about the kingdom is ready to be revealed because the kingdom is at hand.

And it's important that people know. So, whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light. And what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops.

His disciples came to him privately, in private. What does this mean? And he told them. He says, now I want you to share it with all those who are willing. So, that's the message of the kingdom.

[18 : 39] But can we take away some lesson when it comes to us in the age of grace and the message that we have that Jesus has died for the sins of the world, for all of our sins?

We know that the message of grace is also a mystery, right? It was something hidden. It says that Paul, Paul says that it was, I've been given this mystery to reveal it to you, especially to the Gentiles.

That same message is the message of the grace of God. Is that meant to be hidden? No, that message is meant to be revealed too, to be shown all about.

I saw a t-shirt once and it made me laugh and the t-shirt just said, Jesus is not a secret. And it's like, well, that's funny.

Why would you say that? Well, so many people are intimidated to just let people know about Jesus. And Jesus is not meant to be a secret, his life, what he's done for us in dying for our sins that we might have eternal life.

[19 : 43] It's not a secret. It's something that's been revealed and is available to anyone who will ask, anyone who is interested. And we need to share that message every opportunity that we can find.

And again, that message, it's offensive to many people. It's foolish, it's foolishness to the wise, as Paul says in Corinthians.

It's weakness to the powerful. Oh, that Christianity stuff, believing on Jesus, that's just a crutch because you're kind of a loser. Those people, they don't have, you know, any wealth or power.

Me, I've got everything that I need. So I don't need that Jesus. But to those who are willing to humble themselves, that message that Jesus died for our sins is everything.

It's eternal life. So we're going to scatter the seed, that gospel of grace, scatter it everywhere, even with resistance, because some are willing and interested to hear it.

[20 : 50] He ends this passage about the lamp. He says, if anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. If you're really interested, if you want to know, if you have an ear to hear, that kind of ear, then here, listen up.

This is for you. Then he says this, Mark 4, 24. Then he said to them, take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you.

And to you who hear, more will be given. For whoever has, to him more will be given. But whoever does not have, even what he has, will be taken away from him.

Now that's very interesting. And it sounds kind of unfair, right? He who has, more will be given to him. That doesn't sound very fair. But again, he's talking about how you hear.

He says this, take heed what you hear. Now, there's another passage, a parallel, to this same account. But it's in Mark. And it's almost exactly the same.

[21 : 53] If you read the passage in Luke, Luke chapter 8, I think it starts with verse 18. It says almost the exact same thing, word for word.

But there is a one little word that's different. And instead of saying, take heed what you hear, Luke says, take heed how you hear. Take heed how you hear. And I think how is probably, probably the better way to, way to phrase it.

Though what, what you hear is also important. But I think when the context here, with what Jesus is saying, he's talking about how you hear. What kind of ear you hear with.

Are you hearing with a critical ear? I'm just, like the Pharisees, right? When they were listening to Jesus, they listened to everything that he said, didn't they? The scribes, the Pharisees, the leaders, they listened to what he had to say.

They heard, but with what kind of ear did they hear with? It was a critical ear. It says they were looking for something that he said that they could catch him with something that they could accuse him of.

[23 : 02] That was the kind of ear that they were using. Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you.

And to you who hear, more will be given. This phrase, the same measure that you use, will be measured to you. That sounds kind of funny.

I don't think most of us are familiar with what that might mean. But during Jesus' day, that was somewhat of a common proverbial phrase.

And it really comes from the marketplace. If you think about a measure, you use measuring, well, with baking, right? You might measure, you know, a cup of sugar into your brownies or whatever it might be.

Two cups of flour, rice. You're taking some kind of ingredient or grain, and you're measuring it and using it for something. But I think this context is the marketplace.

[24 : 06] When you go to a market, we're used to going to Walmart and Kroger and those kinds of places. You just buy things. They're prepackaged, and you just walk out the door with them. They have a price on them.

But if most of the world's history, and even today in most of the world, if you want to buy some wheat or rice, you go to the market. And you find somebody, you find out what their price is, and they might say, well, it's this much per bushel or this much per cup or pint or whatever it might be.

You say, oh, great. And so you might buy two bushels of grain. Well, a bushel of grain, you have a basket that measures a bushel, but how many of you know that when you measure out a bushel, it could be a generous bushel or it could be a stingy bushel, right?

It could be a generous cup or sometimes we call it a heaping spoonful of something, right? It's heaping. You don't like make sure it's exactly a spoonful or a cup or whatever.

You just heap it on. It's overflowing. And so that's where this proverbial phrase comes from. If you are extra generous when you're measuring things to sell, to give out, then you'll get the same in return.

[25 : 32] Other people will be generous back to you. But if you're stingy, if you kind of only maybe fill up the bushel of grain, maybe two-thirds or three-quarters, it's kind of full.

It makes me think about the bags of chips that we get. They're like full of air and you open it up and it's like, wait a second, it's like a quarter full. But if you're generous with how you, you know, sell your goods in the marketplace, then that generosity will be returned to you.

And so, what is Jesus saying here with how you hear? If you're generous with your hearing, if you're hearing with the right attitude, with a desire for more of God, to know Him, to know what His will is, then God will respond to that and He'll give you even more information, more data, more info that is critical to know about the kingdom.

But if you listen with just a critical ear or maybe it's just kind of, you're just not, you're just not that interested. You have other more important things that you're interested in.

So, I guess I'll listen, but I don't think it really applies to me too much. Then, less will be measured to you. To you who hear, more will be given.

[26 : 59] And then it says this in verse 25, for whoever has, to him more will be given. But whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. And if we think about this in terms of a message, even those things you learned, like for example, from the prophets about the kingdom, that thing, it won't even stick in your mind.

You'll forget even about those things. The thing that you heard Jesus said, it'll go in one ear and go right out the other. And so, in the kingdom context, these secrets, these mysteries of the kingdom are for those who are willing to hear with an ear of understanding.

Jesus said something in the Beatitudes about righteousness. He talks about those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. That's the kind of ear that he wanted people to hear with.

Those who are hungering and thirsting for the truth. We have a similar thing, I think, in the age of grace in which we live.

If you hunger and thirst for the truth, you'll find it more readily. We're saved by grace. We don't have to have all that hunger and thirst that Jesus described here and endure to the end to make it into the kingdom.

[28 : 23] but still, if we want to grow as Christians, our pursuit of that truth of how to grow in grace of what God has done for us and what he's accomplished in us, who we are in Christ, all of those things, we will grow more and faster the more we pursue those truths.

Whatever you give your time and attention to, it will be measured back to you. If you are giving generous time and attention, studying the scriptures, then you'll receive a generous amount of knowledge and understanding about those things that you look into.

So before we continue on in the last two parables, I want to ask this question. Why is all this so important? I mean, I know the kingdom's coming, but why is it so important to know the secrets or the mysteries of the kingdom?

I mean, the kingdom's coming whether you know the secrets or not, right? So why is it so important? Well, the number one reason is because not everyone's going to enter into the kingdom.

Not everyone's entering in. So do you want to know how to enter? Yeah, that's important. urgent. Also, it's important to understand the urgency of the hour.

[29 : 52] This isn't something that's a hundred years away, a thousand years away. It's not something that's even ten years away. This is at hand.

And so you need to know the urgency of the hour because there's a different way that you live when something's at hand, when there's an urgent situation that's at hand. For example, the Bible says in the Old Testament under the law of Moses to Israel that a wise man leaves an inheritance to his children's children.

And that's good. You should build up wealth for yourself and then pass it on to the next generation. That's good. That's a wise thing to do. But when the kingdom is at hand, is that what you do?

No, you throw all that out the door. You sell everything that you have. And you put all your time, attention, wealth, resources into entering into that kingdom. That's what you do.

Also, as part of this kingdom, one of the requirements is to go through a period of tribulation. We'll talk about that in a second. Go through this period of seven years of trouble.

[31 : 04] And so it's important to know how to navigate that. How do you go through that? Also, how long is that going to be? Different circumstances, seasons in life require different, you might call them rules of engagement, how we engage.

I think we understand this probably best when it comes to wartime and peacetime. Do you live differently when your nation is at war? You do. You live differently. If you want to win a war, it's not business as usual.

You have to change how the whole nation lives their life. You stop building cars in the factory and you start building tanks. You stop selling shoes and you pick up your gun and you go to the battle lines to fight the battle.

It's different. And it's the same way here with the kingdom. There's the kingdom is at hand and we need to live differently. Matthew chapter 24 and 25.

I want to kind of go through this. Matthew chapter 24 and 25. But in these two chapters, there's a lot revealed about what's going to happen. Specifics about the kingdom.

[32 : 23] This is something that Jesus shared in secret with his disciples. We get to look back at this secret conversation that happened. Like Jesus said, he speaks to the public in parables, but to his disciples, he shares mysteries, secrets.

And he gives a lot of detail about what's going to happen with this kingdom. So let me turn here myself. Matthew 24 and 25.

There's a lot here. We're not going to read chunks, whole chunks of this scripture, but the whole thing. But we'll just kind of do bullet points about what he talks about here. Let's see.

24. Matthew chapter 24. He predicts the destruction of the temple. That the temple is going to be destroyed and they ask him for more information about that.

Verse 3. Now as he sat on the mount of all of his disciples came to him privately. Remember, all this is said in private. Saying, tell us when will these things be and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age.

[33 : 37] So he tells them lots of things and you can go back and read through all the details, but he says, there's going to be deceivers come. They're going to claim to be me. They're going to claim to be the Messiah. Don't believe them.

He gives them a warning. There's going to be nations rising against nations. There's going to be persecution of Israel by the other nations. There's going to be lawlessness that will abound.

And then he says in verse 13 and 14, he says that, but he who endures to the end will be saved. That's important to know. if you want to enter into the kingdom, you have to endure through all of this.

You can't give up. You have to endure. And then he says this in verse 14, and this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, that's the Gentile nations, and then the end will come.

He's saying, listen, the kingdom is at hand, but you're going to have to go through this difficult time. It's going to be intense. In fact, he says later on that there will be more intense tribulation than has ever been in the history of the world, before or after.

[34 : 56] He says, it will be more difficult during this time than any other time in history. I need you to be prepared. I need you to be ready. I need you to endure faithfully through it.

And so it's important to know those things. Otherwise, you might just give up. He said in another place, do not love your life unto the death.

Be willing, if it requires it, to even be killed. And if you do that, you'll get a reward greater than you can imagine. Then he says later on that at the end of this time, at what he calls the end of the age, Jesus is going to return with his angels.

And he's going to gather the faithful, those who endured, and he's going to grant them entrance into the kingdom. These are all details that the rest of the people were not privy to.

This is something that he only shared privately with his own disciples. To the others, he told stories that alluded to these things, but they were said in riddles.

[36 : 12] But to his disciples, he gave the details. So with all of that in mind, we have, again, the opportunity to look back and to see what Jesus shared in private with his disciples.

So as we listen in on Jesus' other two parables, we have a little bit more insight than they did. So now let's look at this parable of the seed that grows.

Mark 4, verse 26. And he said, the kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground and should sleep by night and rise by day and the seed should sprout and grow.

He himself does not know how. For the earth yields crop by itself, first the blade, then the head, and after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle because the harvest has come.

And that's it. And you might, you know, you imagine the people listening to this are like, well that's, okay, he just told us about farming. Why should we care about that?

[37 : 18] But there were some with ears to hear that might go to him or to his disciples. Could you tell us more, what does this mean? I'm interested. I want to know.

And to those who are willing to do that, they would shine the light. They would spread the light. They would reveal those secret things. Those things that were said in secret.

So this is another seed parable. And so we've got a seed, and basically it goes, well somebody plants a seed, and then he kind of doesn't really do anything about it, and it grows.

It grows through a careful process. Right? It doesn't just immediately turn from a seed into a crop. It takes some time. There's a growth process.

And then at the end, what happens? There's a harvest. That's how seeds work. So here's the question.

[38 : 16] What is the seed? What's the seed? Again, the seed is, it has to do with the kingdom. And I think there's two main points that we can pull from this.

And again, I hold this kind of loosely because it is a little bit, there's not a lot of detail here. But I think two main points. One, the seed in the good soil, anyway, the seed in the good soil, right?

Because we know about the seed in the bad soil. But the seed in the good soil will grow over time. It will grow. It won't, it won't immediately be harvested, I think, is the idea.

And so, when it comes to the message of the kingdom, there requires a certain amount of time for growth and then there will be a harvest.

And then two, the harvest will eventually come. And Jesus tells us later on in Matthew chapter 24 and 25, when is the harvest?

[39 : 22] The harvest is when Jesus returns with his angels. We call that today the second coming. And you might think, well, you might have incremental harvests and sometimes you have that with certain crops, right?

We'll have tomatoes, for example. We'll grow tomatoes and we'll just go out every day for weeks on end and gather in tomatoes as they're ready. But I think he's making the point here that's not how it works in the kingdom.

The seed will grow over time and then finally at the end there's a final time when the harvest will be done all at once. Jesus actually tells another parable called the parable of the wheat and the tares.

And that's one of the other few, in fact, I think there's only two or three where he explains what they mean in the scriptures. The wheat and the tares is another one where he explains what it's about.

And the wheat and the tares is about you have good seed planted and bad seed planted and they grow together. And instead of trying to figure out who's who while they're growing, let's wait until the end, wait until harvest time and then is the time where we'll separate them.

[40 : 40] And that's what's going to happen when Jesus returns for his kingdom to establish his rule on the earth.

There will be good seed or good plants and bad seed and bad plants and it's at that time where he's going to make the separation. So Jesus is, I think, explaining here, you know what, the good seed is going to have to live among the bad seed for a while and there will be a time, there will be a process of growth and then the harvest is coming.

The harvest isn't coming incrementally. It's not like some people will be rewarded with the kingdom now and then others later. It's all going to happen at once. I think that's the general idea. The next one is about the mustard seed.

Mark 4, 30. Then he said, to what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Again, all the parables are about the kingdom. Or with what parable shall we picture it? It is like a mustard seed which when it is sown on the ground it is smaller than all the seeds on earth.

But when it is sown it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs and shoots out large branches so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade. So this is a general story or account about a tiny little seed that grows into a big plant.

[42 : 02] And some people have criticized this because, well, didn't Jesus know that the mustard seed is not the smallest of all the seeds? I mean, isn't that what Jesus said?

The Bible's not really reliable. Jesus didn't even know that. The Bible's not inspired. And I think that's a pretty silly thing to focus on because it's pretty common, isn't it, for us to use kind of exaggeration or hyperbole when we're talking about something.

There are some seeds, I think, two that come to mind or that I looked into. One is a celery seed. Has anybody ever seen a celery seed? Probably not many people have seen celery seeds because they're very, very, very tiny.

And then I think the orchid seed is really, really small as well. But, of course, with celery and orchids, that's not going to really make a point. They don't grow all that big.

But the mustard seed, I mean, mustard, it does grow into what we would today call a tree, but it's more like a bush. But they can get pretty tall, taller than a person.

[43 : 10] Tall enough, big enough for, what, birds to take shade in them. And so Jesus is trying to make a point and he's saying, hey, listen, of all the seeds, the mustard seed is one of the smallest.

But it turns into this great big tree, this great big plant. And so what's he trying to say here?

Basically, small seed can turn into a big plant. So how does that relate to the kingdom? I think it's a message of encouragement. Hey, guys, we're a small group right now.

It's just me and we got 12 and we got a few other stragglers kind of coming in. And it might seem like, is this going to go anywhere? And even over time, right?

As they get more disciples, there's a lot more persecution than there is people who are receiving the message, it seems. But the numbers will grow.

[44 : 18] That seed, that little tiny seed, will continue to grow, especially as the message is preached. And Jesus said, I want you to get the message out. Keep spreading the message. You keep spreading that message and the numbers will grow.

And it might seem impossible now that such a small little movement will grow into anything. But eventually, what's going to be the outcome of this kingdom?

In the end, there will be a kingdom that will cover the whole earth. that kingdom, which will start with a small group and other people will believe and eventually, that kingdom will be established on the earth and it will rule and reign.

That kingdom will rule and reign over all of the world. And I think that is probably what he's talking about here with the birds maybe nesting underneath the branches of that mustard tree.

Israel will be a nation in which other nations will take refuge during that millennial reign, during that thousand years. So that's, I think that's the context of the immediate context when it comes to the kingdom.

[45 : 37] Some people think that this growth, this seed, is talking about the church, talking about the church us as members of the body of Christ. And I don't think that's the direct reference or the direct application but I think we can use it indirectly.

Is the church the body of Christ? Did it start small? It did. Has it grown over time? It has. It continues to grow. And so, you know, we can see a similar kind of thing happening with this group of people called the church the body of Christ.

Jesus ends with this, or the scripture, the passage ends with this, verse 33, and with many such parables he spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it. But without a parable he did not speak to them and when they were alone he explained all things to his disciples.

So again, just reiterating that same thing. He spoke in parables, he spoke in riddles to those in public. But when it came to his own disciples in private and to anyone really who came and asked him questions, he was willing to share what those things mean.

I think anyone could have walked up to Jesus or to his disciples who were in the know and just asked, what do these things mean? And Jesus, according to that parable of the lamp, what did he say to do with that light?

[47 : 14] Shine it all around. Shine it all around. So what about us? How does this apply to us? Is this anything we can apply this to ourselves?

Having an ear to hear, I think, is the message that we can take for ourselves today. How we listen. If we want to grow, we have to take heed to God's word.

Let's talk first about unbelievers, unbelievers in this age of grace. You know, the way to eternal life is found in the scriptures. It's not, it's not something that you find, like it says in Romans chapter 10, I think, somewhere, somewhere in Romans chapter 10, Paul says, this message of eternal life is not something that you have to go up into the heavens to try to find, or you have to dig down to the depths of hell to try to find this message.

The message of eternal life, how to live forever, it's right there. It's near you. It's even in your heart, it says.

that message that Jesus Christ died for your sins, that if you're willing, you can trust in what he did for you, and have eternal life, and live forever.

[48 : 41] You just have to be willing to humble yourself, and believe it. It's a story, it's an account, that Jesus died for the sins of the world, that many people call the greatest story ever told.

It's a story that has been spread all across the world. It's not hidden. It's a story, it's an account, it's a message that is found in a book that has been printed more than any other book in the history of the world.

The most popular book in the world. It's not hidden in some obscure cave somewhere. It's right there for anyone who's willing to look. If you're willing to look for that message, for that eternal life, it's right there.

Jesus said, and elsewhere, he said, seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened. For God is more than willing for those who are looking for the answer.

If you want eternal life, you'll find it readily available. The message, what you must do to be saved, it's right there for those who are looking, for those who are seeking, for those who are knocking.

[49 : 54] And then, growth as believers. You know, once we have found that message, that simple message that Jesus Christ died for our sins, then, as Christians, we ought to grow, right? And, the same thing applies to growth as Christians.

Do you really want to grow? Do you want to grow in your faith? Keep on seeking. Dig in. Look. Ask questions. Questions. And, as we are generous in how we, in how we seek, in how we look for the answers, God will be generous in how he responds to us in giving us everything that we're looking for.

Amen? All right. We'll finish there. Let's, let's take questions. Do we have, can we pass around a microphone? and, and then we can close in a word of prayer, if there is anything.

Any comments or questions? Yeah, we have one right up here in the middle. Go ahead and raise your hand, Joe.

He's coming. He's coming. Testing one, two, three. Yeah. Not a question, but a comment.

[51 : 18] Yeah. When you were in Matthew 10, I believe it was, sharing with us there about them going out, the apostles going out, right, versus right after you stop there, he points out the difference between your body and your soul.

and the idea that man can kill your soul or kill your body, but not your soul. Oh, right. He's making the point that your soul is what's really important.

You know, the soul is the key thing. Don't worry about the body. They can kill them. The, the body, God can do both, the body and the soul. Careful.

And then, in Paul, in the grace, in the grace period, dispensation, obviously we know what Paul suffered for getting out the message.

So I think the message for me, I see from that is, Joe, don't worry about the body and embarrassment or, or somebody getting mad at you, hitting you if you're going to share the gospel.

[52 : 26] You know, it's just the body. It's that soul and it's important. He wants, he was telling them, get that message out. Shine. Shine. Yes. And I, and I, and that's, that's, that's a great application for us to, to not be afraid.

That's what he was telling. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid to witness any way and any time you can even though you're afraid that, or you're afraid that you're going to get hit back or something or something to slug you for trying to tell me about Christ and, and that will happen.

That will come close to that at least and more so. Yeah, yeah. Thank you for sharing that. Yeah, our, there's, our spiritual, our spiritual being are, are what many people call the soul.

Our soul, our, the eternal part of us is more important than anything. Jesus, or Paul said that our bodies are decaying anyway, right?

They're decaying. but the inner man, the inner man, our heart, our soul is being renewed day by day through what God is doing through us. And so, don't put as much emphasis on what Paul calls the flesh, that fleshly part of us.

[53 : 39] You know, pay most attention to the spirit, to your spiritual life and other people's spiritual life too, the souls of all those around us. In the back?

Yeah, you mentioned earlier at the beginning that your sins would be brought to light. Yeah. And how is that contrasted by, where it says your sins are forgiven and further from the east is from the west?

And how does that apply to the body of Christ today? Yeah, so I think that we have a judgment day that's coming in which God will judge people according to what?

According to their works, whether they've done good or evil. But, there's an escape that we can have.

For those who trust in Christ, we can escape that judgment day. And Jesus already received that judgment on himself. Isn't that amazing?

[54 : 47] And so, we can find forgiveness and grace through him and the judgment that we deserve that will happen to the rest of the world if we trust in him.

Then we will escape that judgment. And so, our sins will already be dealt with. They won't need to be shouted from the rooftops. That's for those who have failed to trust in Christ and put their faith in him.

So, that's kind of my view. Does that answer the question? Okay. Any others? Over here.

When Susan and I went to the fair there one night, I tried to speak to the adults while she was doing the quiz.

Yeah. And, I asked the guy, I said, do you have any spiritual beliefs? He said, yeah. I said, but when you die, will you go to heaven? He says, I think so.

[55 : 50] And I said, why? He said, because I've been a good person. Yeah. And I waited a little bit and I said, if what you believed was wrong, would you want to know?

He said, no. So, that was the end of the conversation. I mean, I wanted to slap him and you just got to let it go. But, that's going to bug him, I hope. I pray that that bugs him.

that's what we, that's what, that's where Jesus was talking about with having an ear to hear. Did he have an ear to hear? Nope. Nope.

I don't want to know the truth. I mean, that's what you asked him. If you, if you could know for sure, if you could know the truth, would you want to know? No. At least he's honest. Not everybody's honest, right?

Some people won't tell you. I guess that's probably a step in the right direction if you're at least honest about it. But hopefully he can, because he still has an opportunity. While he still has life and breath, he can still change his mind and decide, I'm going to have a willing ear.

[56 : 52] I want to listen. And God will be more than willing, more than happy to show him the truth, how to have eternal life. Thanks for sharing that. Anyone else?

All right, let's close in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for your word that you've, it sits right in front of us. It's on bookstores all around us, this message of the gospel of the grace of God that we can have eternal life by trusting in what you accomplished for us on the cross.

Pray that you would make us bold, embolden us, Father, in getting that word out in different ways as we have opportunity. That we might be like a light shining everywhere, not hiding our basket under a bushel.

We would shine that light of the gospel of grace everywhere we go, in Jesus' name. Amen.