

The Kingdom Illustrated

Mark 4:21-34

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Let's start at the end...

Jesus used many similar stories and illustrations to teach the people as much as they could understand. In fact, in his public ministry he never taught without using parables; but afterward, when he was alone with his disciples, he explained everything to them.

Mark 4:33-34 (NLT)

The Kingdom was best described through Jesus' many, many parables. It was just too _____, too _____ and too _____ for any less vivid and dynamic means of description.

Then he added, "Pay close attention to what you hear. The closer you listen, the more understanding you will be given—and you will receive even more. To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them."

Mark 4:24-25 (NLT)

The Key to Understanding the Kingdom
is _____.

THE KINGDOM IN ACTION

February
17
2013

THE PARABLE OF THE LAMP

Then Jesus asked them, "Would anyone light a lamp and then put it under a basket or under a bed? Of course not! A lamp is placed on a stand, where its light will shine. For everything that is hidden will eventually be brought into the open, and every secret will be brought to light. Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand." Mark 4:21-23 NLT

What is the Kingdom of God Like? _____ is Part of the _____

Scriptural theme of the _____
(Genesis 1; Exodus 25; Psalm 104; Isaiah 9/42; John 1; Revelation 22)

The Parable of the Lamp is fulfilled:

- Mark 4:21-23 – The Parable of the _____
- Mark 9:2-4 – The _____
- Luke 24 – The _____
- Acts 9:3-9 – On the Road to _____
- Revelation 21:22-23/22:3-5 – The _____

We hear the parable – but are we listening?

Are we seeking to put Jesus, the light, _____?
Making him our point of _____ in every aspect of our day-to-day?

THE PARABLE OF THE GROWING SEED

Jesus also said, "The Kingdom of God is like a farmer who scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, while he's asleep or awake, the seed sprouts and grows, but he does not understand how it happens. 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. And as soon as the grain is ready, the farmer comes and harvests it with a sickle, for the harvest time has come." Mark 4:26-29 NLT

What is the Kingdom of God Like? _____

1. Power that is _____ (v 27)
2. Power that is _____ and _____ (v 28)
3. Power that will _____ (v 29)
 - a. Scriptural theme of the _____
(Joel 3:13; Revelation 14:14-20)

We hear the parable – but are we listening?

Are we trying to make things, even good things, happen in our lives by our own _____? By "_____?"

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 2 Peter 1:3 NIV

THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

Jesus said, "How can I describe the Kingdom of God? What story should I use to illustrate it? It is like a mustard seed planted in the ground. It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of all garden plants; it grows long branches, and birds can make nests in its shade." Jesus used many similar stories and illustrations to teach the people as much as they could understand. In fact, in his public ministry he never taught without using parables; but afterward, when he was alone with his disciples, he explained everything to them.

Mark 4:30-34 NLT

What is the Kingdom of God Like? _____ gives way to _____

Scriptural theme of the _____

(Genesis 2; Ezekiel 17:22-24; Daniel 4:10-12; Revelation 22:1-2)

1. It is a Tree of _____
(Exodus 17:23; Daniel 4:21)
2. It is a Tree of _____
(Daniel 4:20-21)
3. It is a Tree of _____
("the birds of the air"; Ezekiel 31; Psalm 104; Daniel 4)

We hear the parable – but are we listening?

In a world full of self-promotion and people clamouring to show themselves as significant, will we follow Jesus when apprenticeship leads us into _____?
_____?

A FINAL THOUGHT...

...all of these descriptions of the kingdom of God are most vividly illustrated in the climactic act of Jesus Christ:

1. _____
Hiddenness to the max – looks, from the outside, like total defeat
2. _____
Inherent power conquers death, itself
3. _____
Seeming insignificance gives way to a glorious, returning king

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The Kingdom Illustrated

Mark 4:21-34

- 1) What from this passage and Sunday's teaching stood out to you?

The Key to Engaging the Kingdom of God is Listening

- 2) Do you agree there is a difference between hearing and listening? What do you understand the difference to be? Based on this have you ever caught yourself hearing what Jesus may be saying, but not really listening to Him? What possible causes for this might there be? How could we grow to be better listeners?

The Parable of the Lamp: Hiddenness is Part of the Reveal

- 3) Is there an area in your life where the work of Christ seems hidden? That is, as you look at your life, are there areas where God seems absent, uninterested or silent? How does this shape the way you feel and think about God and his love for you?
- 4) Keeping in mind that 'spiritual formation is always happening,' what might Jesus be seeking to form in you in seasons where He seems hidden?

The Parable of the Growing Seed: The Kingdom's Inherent Power

- 5) Where are you most likely to try and 'make things happen' in your own strength, with your own wisdom, in your own timing? Practically speaking, what are some steps we can take to stop striving and release our own efforts to the Kingdom's 'divine, orderly and prevailing power'?

The Parable of the Mustard Seed: Insignificance Gives Way to Glory

- 6) In this world of self-promotion, people do all kinds of things to try and prove their significance and worth – this is not what the kingdom of God is like. What might Jesus be calling you to do that may seem insignificant from a Lower Story perspective? How might this seemingly insignificant act of obedience lead to glorious kingdom results?
- 7) Share some examples from your own journeys where you have been profoundly impacted by something that (to others) may have seemed to be insignificant.