

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
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The Stories of Our King
Mark 4:21-34

Over the last year or so, a word has been circulating among our pastors that seems to resonate with almost everyone we have conversations with about it. That word is MORE.

There is a hunger in every heart for something more. Something that isn't satisfied by the experiences we have at school or work or our hobbies or the stuff we order from Amazon. It's a hunger that may die down a bit while we occupy ourselves with work or entertainment, but it flares up when our minds are disengaged as we lie down in bed or drive our cars or mow our lawns or watch a sunset. It's there. We want more. More than this. More than what we have. More than what we are. More than what this world has to offer.

We want our lives to matter. We want something more significant than a promotion at work or a championship in our sport or our political candidate to win the next election. We want something that is real and won't fade away. We want to live for something that's worth dying for, something so wonderful and meaningful and long-lasting that, if we had to sell our houses and lose our jobs and give our lives to have it, we would gladly make those trades and never look back with regret.

We want more. We want more. Whether we realize it or not, we want Jesus and His kingdom. He is what we are made for, and our hearts will not be satisfied with anything less. Not our homes or careers. Not the American Dream or a political party. Not these buildings or our broken concepts of Christianity or church. It's Jesus, only Jesus. He is our King, and we were made for His Kingdom. He is the "more" that our hearts are longing for.

And that is the heart of this study of the Gospel of Mark. Jesus came into this world to give Himself to us to be our King and make a way for us to live in His Eternal Kingdom. He calls out to us, "Follow me, I'm the *more* your heart is longing for." And that's not only at the heart of this study of Mark, but that's the heartbeat of our text for this morning.

Jesus tells three stories in a row. Each story is like a piece of a puzzle that tells us a truth about Jesus and His Kingdom. And the pieces fit together to form a bigger, clearer picture of what God's kingdom is like and how it works. And the picture that we see is that Jesus promises to give us more, more significance, more meaning, more direction.

As a matter of fact, let me go ahead and give you the big idea that I see in the picture Jesus paints through these three parables.

Big Idea: The Kingdom of God will Grow by the power of God's word as Jesus is known and made known by His followers.

Now, let's take a look at these three parables and I'll show you how I arrived at that big idea and how it relates to our hunger for more. I'm actually going to start with the last story because it forms the first part of our big idea.

Mark 4:30-32

³⁰ And he said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? ³¹ It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of

all the seeds on earth, ³² yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

Jesus says His kingdom is comparable to a mustard seed. For the farmers of Jesus' day, the mustard seed would have been the smallest seed they would have been familiar with. But it wasn't the smallest plant in the garden. Ironically, it would become the largest plant in their gardens.

So, as a Palestinian farmer would hold a mustard seed in his hand, he would be struck by the reality that this tiny, little seed was destined to be the greatest thing he would plant. It was destined to grow. And that's what Jesus is saying about the Kingdom of God. It is destined for something. It's destined for greatness and glory.

You can just imagine what it must have been like for the original band of disciples to think about what they were part of. Like that mustard seed, they must have felt small and insignificant. Jesus had been born in a manger. He had no wealth or influence when they met Him. The disciples were 12 ordinary men. Mostly uneducated and unknown. The Kingdom that Jesus inaugurated started with unthinkably humble beginnings.

But it's destined for something. It's destined to be the greatest thing God has ever planted in the soil of His creation. That's the point of this parable: The kingdom of God will grow. It will become more than this world as we now know it can contain. The more we are longing for.

Habakkuk 2:14 (ESV)

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. Those who are in the Kingdom will be swimming in the glory of God for eternity.

Matthew 16:18 (ESV)

...I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Revelation 21:1–5 (ESV)

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth...2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” 5 And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”

The Kingdom of Jesus is destined for glory and greatness and so is everyone who is part of it. He is making all things new, including you!

I live in the same world you live in. I read the same headlines you read. I hear the same stories and see the same brokenness. And I know how demoralizing it can all be. It seems like darkness is on the rise, and it is. It seems like evil men are going from bad to worse, and they are. It seems like this whole world has largely lost its mind and has plunged off a moral and spiritual cliff, and it has. Righteousness is under attack and righteous people are experiencing persecution. But can I let you in on a not-so-little secret? Jesus wins. If you are part of His Kingdom, you are on the winning side. Do not despair and do not give in. Jesus wins.

And there are lots of points of application for this, but one thing this means is that if you want your life to count, if you want your life to be invested into something bigger and greater and more glorious than any other thing, there's only one way to do it – follow Jesus and live for His Kingdom. Make your life and your home and your career about Jesus and His Kingdom. His Kingdom offers more than this world can ever offer.

So, is that what your life is all about? Does Christ's Kingdom define your marriage and your parenting and your career choices and your financial plan and your retirement and your strategy for friendship? All of those things can become eternally significant if they are part of advancing God's Kingdom agenda as you live like Jesus is the King over all those areas in your life, but none of those things will be eternally satisfying otherwise and will leave you hungry for more.

The Kingdom of God will grow and that leads me to the second parable from our text.

Mark 4:26-29

²⁶ And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. ²⁷ He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. ²⁸ The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

So, the Kingdom of God will grow. But how will it grow? That's what Jesus is addressing here. This parable connects with the parable we saw last week where Jesus says that the seed is the Word of God that reveals the gospel of Jesus.

And what is the point of this parable? Well, just think through it. A farmer scatters seed. But what happens next? He goes to sleep. His work is done. But, one morning he wakes up and the seed has sprouted and grown. Jesus says the farmer doesn't know how. So, Jesus is highlighting that the growth of the seed isn't because the farmer is smart and savvy or hard-working with innovative methods.

And, to bring the point home, in verse 28 Jesus says the earth produces fruit "by itself." That phrase is translating a word from the original language of the Bible. The word is "automate." Does that look familiar? It's where we get the word "automatic." It means "on its own." So, get what Jesus is saying here. The word of God that reveals the gospel truth about Jesus produces fruit on its own. It isn't the result of human effort or intelligence or ingenuity. The word of God is sufficient to accomplish the work of God.

So, when you put that together with the first parable we discussed, it teaches us something about the Kingdom of God: Namely, the kingdom of God will grow by the power of the word of God.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 (ESV)

16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

It's through the work of God's word that the people of God are equipped for the life God desires them to live.

Hebrews 4:12 (ESV)

12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

When we come to the Scripture, we aren't working in the word, the word is working in us! The word of God is powerful and at work to accomplish God's purposes in a way that doesn't depend on us. That means if we want to live for the Kingdom and see true, kingdom growth, then we need to sow the word of God into the lives of people and depend on His power and not our own.

Church, if we want to grow as a true church, then we have to be a church that is rooted and grounded in the Bible as the Word of God. That's why we preach the Bible the way we do. We go verse-by-verse, book-by-book. We preach the most well-known passages and the ones few people have ever read. We don't shy away from cultural topics, but that's not the basis for what we say. We preach the Word of God because only the Word of God is sufficient to accomplish the work of God.

You can build a crowd with entertainment and programming and self-help. Disney World is packed today, but a Kingdom Church cannot be built on anything but Jesus Christ and His Holy Word, the Bible. So, by God's grace, no matter how dark the days may get and no matter how much our culture may pressure us to do otherwise, I pray we will never back away from boldly and unapologetically preaching, teaching, believing, obeying, loving, singing, and living out the truth of the Bible, God's Holy Word, no matter what.

But, that commitment for us as a church will not hold strong unless we hold that commitment as individuals. We won't be a Bible-saturated church unless we as individuals are bible-saturated people. If you want to grow as a Kingdom Person, then saturate your life in the Word of God. Read, study, memorize, and meditate on the Word of God. Only the word of God is sufficient to accomplish the work of God in your life.

Parents, if you want your children to grow up as Kingdom People, then sow the Word of God into their lives today. Read the Bible together. Do family devotions and prayer. Talk about the Scriptures and help them see their world through a biblical worldview. Because only the Word of God is sufficient to accomplish the work of God in their lives.

Friends, if you want your friends to grow as Kingdom People, then sow the Word of God into their lives. Share Scripture. Study the Bible together. Speak the Word to one another. Only the Word of God is sufficient to accomplish the work of God in their lives.

*Illustration...Niece, Jamie – after dinner: What is God showing you in His Word? What are you learning? How is that changing your day-to-day life?

If you want to learn how to study the Scriptures, join one of our Connection Classes. You can call the church office, or look on our website, or talk to a pastor after the service. We want everyone to be engaged in the study of God's word and to be growing in their ability to read and study the Bible on their own. The Kingdom of God will grow by the power of God's word.

That brings us to the final parable for this morning.

Mark 4:21-25

²¹ And he said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand? ²² For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. ²³ If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." ²⁴ And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. ²⁵ For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away."

This parable is a little bit more difficult to interpret than the other two, but I think we can get it if we take it a little bit at a time. In the first part, I believe Jesus is saying that He desires for people to know Him and make Him known. And in the second part, I believe He is incentivizing people to be careful to get to know Him because of what happens when you do. Let me show you why I say that.

In verses 21-22, Jesus says that people don't go to the trouble of lighting a lamp just to hide it under a basket or a mattress. A lamp isn't lit to be hidden. It's lit to shine light in whatever space it is in. And, in verse 22, He says that nothing is secret except to come to light. What's He talking about? Well, jump back a few verses.

Mark 4:11 (ESV)

11 And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables,

What is a secret? The truth about the Kingdom of God. And what is the truth about the Kingdom of God? Well, what have we seen so far in Mark? It's that Jesus is the King, the Savior, the Redeemer, the Forgiver, the Son of God! So, I take the light that Jesus is talking about in this parable to be the light of truth about Jesus. And that makes a lot of sense with what we've already seen in the book of Mark. Over and over again, Jesus has been careful in the way He is revealing the truth about who He is. That's because He is on a journey to the cross where people will despise and reject and deny Him. So, He isn't making Himself known in all of His glory just yet. When Jesus is telling this parable, the light of truth about Jesus is hidden from most people.

But Jesus is saying that's not the end goal of His coming. He didn't come into this world to stay hidden any more than someone lights a lamp to hide it under a bushel, no! He's gonna let it shine. He came into this world to be known. And by the end of Christ's life on earth, He will send all of His disciples out on a mission to make Jesus known to the entire world.

So, ultimately, Jesus is saying that He wants people to know Him and to make Him known. That's why Jesus came. Our sin separated us from God. We are lost and will be eternally separated from God. But, in grace and mercy and unimaginable love, Jesus laid down His life as a sacrifice for our sin at the cross so we could be forgiven and restored to God as our Father. He rose again from the grave to raise us up to an eternal, abundant life with Him. And that new life in Christ comes when we know and believe the truth about Jesus and trust Him as our Lord and Savior. That's why Jesus came. That's why Jesus is the centerpiece of the Bible, so that we can know Him and make Him known through His word.

And when you put all these parables together, you get our big idea:

The Kingdom of God will Grow by the power of God's word as Jesus is known and made known by His followers.

So, look to Jesus. Seek to know Jesus. Seek to grow in Jesus. Because, when you do, there's an amazing promise attached.

Mark 4:24-25

²⁴ And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. ²⁵ For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away."

Jesus says, "Pay attention." In other words, don't disregard what He is saying about knowing Him and following Him on His mission. Why? Because with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and more will be added.

For those who measure the truth about Jesus and His kingdom to be true and embrace it fully as true, more will be added. He'll give you more. More of Himself and more of His kingdom blessing.

For those who do not receive the truth of Jesus, even what they have will be taken away. In other words, they'll have nothing in the end.

- Those who don't know Jesus through faith in the gospel will lose it all in the end. They'll have nothing to show but everlasting separation from God.
- Those who do know Jesus through faith in the gospel will have more and more and more added to them, to the point that they will get it all in the end.

Romans 8:16–17 (ESV)

16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

If you are trusting in Jesus, you are a child of God. That makes you an heir that is set to inherit what belongs to your Father. Now, quick question: what belongs to God? Everything!

1 Corinthians 3:21–23 (ESV)

21 So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, 23 and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

If you will trust in Jesus and follow Him into His mission, knowing Him and making Him known through His word of the gospel, you will inherit everything that belongs to God. All things will be yours. That's God's kingdom destiny for followers of Jesus. That's why our hearts aren't satisfied yet. We were made for more, more than this world and more than this world can offer. And our hearts won't be completely satisfied until the day we stand in glory, beholding Jesus face to face and being held by the One who loved us enough to die in our place.

That's why you were made. And that's why your heart is hungry for more. So, please do not settle for less. That's why careers and cars and earthly pleasures and treasures aren't fulfilling your heart's desire. You were made for more. You were made for Jesus and His mission. And you will never be fulfilled until you are living as part of God's Great and Glorious Kingdom on a single-minded mission to know Jesus and to make Him known. And that only happens through personal faith and trust in Jesus that follows Him as your personal Lord and Savior. And if it costs you your job, your home, your comfort, your convenience, your version of the American dream, it will be worth it all when we see Jesus.

So, are you living to know Jesus and are you living to make Jesus known? Are you seeking Him in His word each day and are you sharing the truth about Him to those around you?