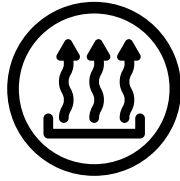




The Gospel of Mark



WARM-UP

If you were any plant, what would you be and why?

Pray for your time together as a group.

Read out loud as a group

MARK CHAPTER 3

In Mark chapter 3, Jesus actively challenges the beliefs of the Pharisees by healing a man with a shriveled hand on the Sabbath. His act of compassion reveals their hard hearts and the growing divide between them culminating in the first plans to kill Jesus. Despite the opposition of the religious leaders, Jesus continues to preach, remove demons, and heal those who come to him. He also establishes and appoints the twelve apostles which speaks to a new spiritual family. This is reinforced when Jesus' own family tries to stop him from teaching and he redefines what it means to belong, saying those who do God's will are his true family.

Read out loud as a group

MARK 4:1-9 (NIV)

1 Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. 2 He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: 3 "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times."

9 Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."



In the Parable of the Sower, who is the sower? What is the seed? What are the different soils?

Possible Answers: God is the sower, the seed is the word and according to John 1, Jesus is the Word, the different soils are people's circumstances and responses to Jesus. There are various kinds of human behavior offered in response to the kingdom.



Verse 11 refers to the secret of the Kingdom of God. What is the secret?

Possible Answers: Jesus was God.

Read out loud as a group and compare with your answers above

MARK 4:10-20 (NIV)

10 When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. 11 He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables 12 so that, "they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!" 13 Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? 14 The farmer sows the word. 15 Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. 16 Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. 17 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. 18 Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 19 but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. 20 Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."



This is a parable many are very familiar with, but putting yourself in the shoes of the people hearing this for the first time, how would this have been counter cultural/differ from their expectation of the kingdom?

Possible Answers: Jesus doesn't mention anything about Jews or Gentiles. He likens the kingdom to a seed which in itself does not display power or might.



What changes in each soil scenario? What are the implications for us?

Possible Answers: It's not the seed that changes, but the environment that is receiving the seed. Jesus and his power stay the same. Our role is to not get in the way of what he is doing. The word is important and we should treat it as though it has power.

"The biggest difference made by responses to the Word is the difference they make to us, for us, and in us. They decide not whether the Word will achieve his purposes but whether we will enjoy his achievement - or find ourselves in opposition to it."

- Kingdom, Grace, Judgement: Paradox, Outrage, and Vindication in the Parables of Jesus by Robert Farrar Capon, pg 73



In your own life and story, what circumstances and environment made the soil good for the seed to grow?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary.

Read out loud as a group

MARK 4:10-20 (NIV)

21 He said to them, "Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don't you put it on its stand? 22 For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. 23 If anyone has ears to hear, let them hear."

24 "Consider carefully what you hear," he continued. "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and even more. 25 Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them."



The lamp on a stand refers to the light of Christ shining, revealing, and giving benefits to those around Him not being contained for just one person. What does it look like to let the good news of the gospel shine in your life?

Possible Answers: Answers will vary: not letting shame control you, sharing sin more openly because it does not define you and that is an outward way that others can see how the gospel and changed you, being open about what you're learning and what God is doing in your life, sharing your testimony often, etc.

DISCUSSION FOR ACCOUNTABILITY



- The Kingdom of God is here now, not just something we're looking forward to someday in the future. How would living like we believe this impact our lives right now or change how we live now?
- How can you avoid getting in the way of the power and work of what Jesus is doing in your life?
- Think and pray about this week - Do you have an expectation/preconceived idea about the kingdom of God that He's asking you to reconsider or think differently about?