

“The Parable of the Seed”

Mark 4.26-29

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Introduction – Turn to Mark 4.26-29

I. There are many things in this life that most of us probably don't understand

→**ILL:** I recently read an article about how the microwave oven was invented - a scientist had a chocolate candy bar in his shirt pocket, and he happened to walk past a radar tube that was turned on, and he noticed that the candy bar suddenly melted in his pocket – so it occurred to him that this might be a way to heat up food

I have learned how to use the microwave oven, but I cannot explain how it heats up food

-probably there is someone here this morning who can explain how it works, but for that person there would be other areas of life where he would not have a clue why something works

Old saying: "We are all ignorant, just about different things"

→**ILL:** There is an interesting program on TV called "How Stuff Works"

-I went to their Internet site (10/26/09), and the article for the day was "How Southern Food Works" – very interesting

-I asked my wife how southern food works, and she said, "A pinch of sugar here, a pinch of salt there, a pinch of something else next, plus lots of butter"

-the article on "How Southern Food Works" talked about fried chicken, barbeque, biscuits, gravy, collard greens, black-eyes peas, grits, fried green tomatoes, sweet tea, peach cobbler

-I had to stop reading it because I was getting so hungry

-I guess the secret of cooking all those things gets passed down from mother to daughter to granddaughter, and men are sort of left out of the loop

There are many other things that we may not understand in this life

II. There is a parable of Jesus that talks about not understanding something that is very important: the Parable of the Seed (Mark 4.26-29)

-many people confuse this parable with the Parable of the Sower (*Matt. 13.1-23*)

The Parable of the Seed is found only in the gospel of *Mark* and is not well-known, but it contains a great lesson about world evangelism

-it is about a farmer who plants the seed and has to wait for it to germinate and produce a crop, but he does not know how all that happens

Read Mark 4.26-29

Three parts to this lesson: [1] The identity of the farmer, [2] The patience that he must have, [3] The role that God plays in the growth of the crop

Body I. V 26 - Who is the farmer?

-some people have tried to say that Jesus is the farmer in the parable, but that is just not correct

-Jesus is a part of the Godhead; he knows the secret of life

Genesis 1.1 – In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

-we know from *Colossians 1.16* which person of the Godhead *Genesis 1.1* refers to Jesus Christ:

Optional: *Colossians 1.16 – For by Him [Jesus Christ] all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.*

-so it was that in the beginning, God the Son created the heavens and the earth.

The identity of the farmer in the parable is not Christ, but it is every disciple of Christ, every man, woman, young person, who has made the good confession, who has repented of sins, and who has been immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins

The theme of this parable is that if we want the kingdom to grow, it will be up to us to plant the seed of the gospel in the hearts of as many people as possible

→**ILL:** Several weeks ago (c.10/15/09), two boys from our neighborhood came to our door and wanted to sell us popcorn to help their Boy Scout troop

I have a very soft spot in my heart for students who go door-to-door selling something, because when I was in Jr. high and high school, I was in the band, and we went door-to-door all over the south side of Nashville selling the "world's finest chocolate" – very nice candy bars

-with that drive every fall, we were able to buy several tubas and French horns and other instruments that the average student would never be able to afford

-we had a great band because of those sales

-so these two boys (they were twin brothers) were selling cans of popcorn for the Scouts

-well, I ordered a big can for \$9.00 – it was delivered a few weeks later

Would they have ever sold any popcorn if they had not asked people to buy it?

Likewise, would a farmer expect to have a crop in the fall if he never planted the seed? of course not

→**ILL:** Maybe some here have heard of a gospel preacher named Ralph Henley – he is one of my heroes in the Christian faith

-he was born in 1923 in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and attended a Christian college

-after that he and his wife began to do mission work for the Lord's church

-it was Ralph Henley who established the Church of Christ in Jerusalem, Israel, in 1960

-that congregation is still there

-he established congregations in Turkey and in Athens, Greece

For a time on one mission trip [to the Near East], he worked with tribes of Arabs in the desert and taught the Bible to over 6000 tribesmen

When he came back to the U.S., he made a survey of the state of Georgia and found that there were 106 counties in that state with no Church of Christ

-so he made it his goal to establish a congregation in every county of that state

-at the time of his death in 2005, there were only 10 counties left without a faithful congregation of the Lord's people

For many years in my office at the church building in Crystal Lake, I had an article from *Gospel Advocate* magazine framed and hanging on the wall entitled, "Who will plow the new ground?" – that article was written by Ralph Henley – he believed in plowing new ground with the gospel of Christ

His daughter has established an Internet site of his sermons and the details of his life

[Internet: <http://www.ralphhenleysermons.com/index.html>]

How was he able to accomplish so much in his life for the kingdom of Christ? Because he believed in the Parable of the Seed – that it was his responsibility to do all he could to plant the seed

Who is the farmer in this parable? Answer: every faithful Christian alive today

II. V 27a – What is required of the farmer? to be patient – let us think about the role of patience in world evangelism

-after planting the seed, the farmer went to bed at night, and he got up the next day and went about his work

-but suppose he got up the next morning and looked at the fields and said: "Oh no, this is terrible; nothing is growing in the fields; this year's crop is going to be a failure"

-suppose he got up each morning and just sat and watched the dirt all day?

Old Saying: "The watched pot never boils."

-the same with the farmer: he has to be patient, because it takes time for the seeds to germinate and break the ground and put up those first little leaves

-it takes time for the blooms to come on the plants and for the blooms to be pollinated and for the crops to finally develop

→**ILL:** You may have heard of the boy who bought some seeds at the store, but several weeks he went back to the store and asked for a refund

-the clerk said, "What was wrong with the seeds?" The boy said, "I planted them, I watered, and every day I dug the seeds up to see if they were growing yet, but nothing was happening, and they finally died"

-somebody might say, "That is a made-up story, isn't it?" – yes, it is, but it has an application to world evangelism

In the Lord's church, we must be patient in evangelism

-after we plant the seeds, what do we do in the meantime? we keep working in the kingdom of God

-we keep doing what the Lord commanded

-we keep planting more and more seeds

→**ILL:** In the early 1980's the Crystal Lake congregation supported John Murphee in mission work in Papua New Guinea – he came back regularly and reported on the growth of the church there

-eventually because of his advanced age, he and his wife had to retire and come back to the U.S.

-was his work there in New Guinea lost when he left? – no – I continue to read articles about the growth of the church in New Guinea

-one time he came back from New Guinea and brought a hand-carved face mask made by the tribesmen in New Guinea and gave it to our son, because John usually stayed in our son's room when he was visiting Crystal Lake

-my son still has that face mask from New Guinea hanging in his house today, 25 years later

-John Murphee is still having an influence today

CL: Many years ago someone established a congregation in Antioch, IL (near the Wisconsin stateline), but the little group thought that CL might be a better location, so they moved here and officially incorporated the congregation in 1964 and bought the land we are meeting on today

-There are 5 men's names on the original incorporation papers, but I have never met any of those brethren
-one of them called me about 10 years ago and wanted to know how things were going here – he was happy to know about the great progress of the congregation
-but I have never met any of those 5 men, but they planted the seed, and the congregation is going strong today and has done all kinds of mission work and has encouraged 6 men to go into full-time preaching

Ecclesiastes 11.1 – Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days.

→**ILL:** In 1989, the church at Crystal Lake was one of the founding members of the Jos School of Biblical Studies – i.e., we were in the first group of supporting congregations for decided that a school of preaching in Nigeria would be a good idea and that we would support it
-we have seen the incredible good that was done with that small beginning of a handful of congregations who had a vision for a preacher training school in the heart of the Islamic area of Nigeria

→**ILL:** Thought question: Which is the larger number: how many apples there are in a tree, or how many trees there are in an apple?
-answer: There are far more trees in an apple than apples in a tree
-because for those seeds in an apple, how many trees could eventually come from them?
-hundreds...thousands...hundreds of thousands...maybe millions – all from one apple

It is the same way with our evangelism

-whether we are passing out flyers in our neighborhood inviting people to come and worship with us
-or going on campaigns or mission trips – we are planting seeds
-how about visiting a friend who is in the hospital? ./.
-how about going to the funeral of a relative of someone at work? ./.
-how about taking some food to a new family in the neighborhood? ./.
-these are all examples of planting the seed of the gospel
-with a Bible correspondence course program: ...how many trees are there in an apple?

We continue to plant the seed of the gospel – we leave tracts at the doctor's office, we write letters to encourage missionaries, we can dedicate our lives to mission work, we can support mission works, we can encourage our children to go into mission work

But with all projects, God wants us to be patient

→**ILL:** Jessie and I have lived in the Chicago area since 1977 - I have known all kinds of guys who have moved there to preach for congregations, and most of them have washed out and gone home in less than 2 years
-because they expect a great revival in their area, and when it doesn't happen in a year, they get discouraged and leave

[Optional→**ILL:** The guy who came to Crystal Lake before me lasted 1 year and a half and then went back to Oklahoma – he was a good man and could have accomplished a great deal if he had had more patience

RECAP: This parable therefore teaches us that we may not know how seeds grow, but we are to plant the seed and then be patient

III. V 29 – God ultimately causes the growth

- the farmer can plant the seeds/he can keep the weeds from crowding out the plants
- he can fertilize the soil, but ultimately it is God who causes the growth

Think about all the different kinds of plants that God has made

- it is just amazing to me that we can plant a little black watermelon seed and get a huge watermelon that is green on the outside and bright red on the inside
- but we can plant carrots in that same soil, and they produce a orange crop
- or we can plant tomatoes in that same soil and they turn out bright red
- how can the exact same soil produce crops that are green, red, yellow, and all kinds of other colors? Because God causes the growth

We know about the tremendous power that God has placed in tiny seeds

→**ILL:** If you live in a neighborhood where there are sidewalks, you know that a tiny seed can produce a huge tree that can break up a seven-inch thick sidewalk

Opil: →**ILL:** In Crystal Lake, when the city is laying a new sidewalk and there is a tree in the way, they will pour the sidewalk around the tree, because they know the power of that tree
-the power of a tree will destroy the sidewalk

It is the same with the gospel – there is life in the gospel

Romans 1.16 – For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

How do words printed on a page of ordinary paper revolutionize the lives of people?

- I don't know, but I have seen it happen over and over again

I.T.: *1 Corinthians 3.6 – I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.*

Conclusion I. What a wonderful parable our Lord gave us here in Mark 4.26-29

- when we think about the Parable of the Sower in *Matthew 13*, let us also think about the Parable of the Seed in *Mark 4.26-29*

The theme of the Parable of the Seed: We must do our part with a sense of urgency in spreading the gospel, and God will cause the growth to take place (in his time and in his wisdom)

- the world seems to be growing darker around us, as Islam grows in strength, and Western Civilization's only answer is political correctness and not thinking about God

But as Christians we are the salt of the earth/we are the earthen vessels that God has committed the treasure to

We may never know exactly what caused a congregation to get started in a certain community

- the seed was planted, and God caused the growth

II. What are you doing to spread the gospel?

There may be some here who have not yet become members of the family of God...

RE: This passage was preached on at Crystal Lake on 9/30/07am (not this exact outline)

Marc 4.26-29 – 26. Il dit encore: Il en est du royaume de Dieu comme d'un homme qui jette de la semence en terre; 27 qu'il dorme ou qu'il veille, nuit et jour, le semence germe et croît sans qu'il sache comment. 28. La terre produit d'elle-même, premièrement l'herbe, puis l'épi, enfin le blé bien formé dans l'épi; 29. et dès que le fruit est mûr, on y met la faucille, car la moisson est là.