

THE RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WORD OF GOD

Mark 4:1-34

Key Verse: 4:8

"Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times."

Today's passage includes four parables: First, the parable of the sower (1-20); second, a lamp on a stand (21-25); third, the parable of the growing seed (26-29); and fourth, the parable of the mustard seed (30-34). There are four parables. But Jesus told the people these four parables so that those who hear the word of God might hear the word with a right attitude. Furthermore, Jesus taught these four parables to people who were coming to him so that they might understand the secret of the kingdom of God. Verse 11 says, "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....'" Jesus told them the secret of the kingdom of God so that those who can understand may understand, and those who don't understand may not understand. Jesus' parable is so deep and unfathomable that we cannot grasp the whole meaning of the parables. When we read this passage again and again we learn that Jesus introduces that the word of God gives abundant life on earth to all humankind and that the word enlightens us to grasp the secret of the kingdom of God.

I. Jesus teaches the word (1-2)

We only studied Mark's Gospel chapters 1-3. We learn that Jesus taught the word of God from the beginning to this point. Mark 1:15 says, "'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!'" This was Jesus' first message as the Messiah of the world. Jesus taught the word of God to the crowding people, because the word of God gives them the life of God. And the word of God nurtures them as children of God. The word of God is able to make them wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ (2Ti 3:14-17). Most of all, the word of God helps solve their sin problem and gives eternal life to those who believe in his word. Praise Jesus!

While Jesus was teaching the word, 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 lake. It was indeed a beautiful scene. The Messiah of the world came and taught the word of God to those who were sick both physically and spiritually. When the Messiah taught the word people responded to the word of God, saying, "Amen, Jesus!" If American people would respond to the word of God in this manner, America would be a paradise.

But to Jesus there was a serious problem. When Jesus saw them, they were coming to Jesus not to really listen to his word of life but to hear his beautiful voice and see his divine features. The majority of people came to Jesus for the healing of their sicknesses. Not many were really interested in listening to the word of life from Jesus. To Jesus they were just bustling around him not knowing what they were doing. To them, the word of life was given, but it was like decorating an oinking pig with a necklace of pearls. Many people watched Jesus' healing. But physical healing would not last long. For example, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, but Lazarus died again. Jesus' teaching the word had a clear purpose. It was to let them understand the secret of the kingdom of God.

II. The parable of the sower (3-20)

First, people like a path (3-4; 14-15). What did Jesus do? Jesus told them the parable of the sower so that those who had a right and absolute attitude toward the word would understand the meaning of the word and those who did not have a right attitude would not understand. The parable of the sower includes four kinds of people. Look at verses 2-8. "He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: 'Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times.'" When we read verses 9-20, we see that Jesus interprets the parable of the sower to his disciples one more time.

Here, soil refers to human minds. The size of the human mind is as small as a football. But the inner content of the human mind is like a small universe. It is bigger than any computer memory system. God has given us such a huge mind so that each of us may cultivate his mind and use it for the glory of God as well as for the blessing of his children. One young man said, "Last night I sinned against God greatly, but I am okay today." He acted as if he forgot everything about what had happened the night before. But what he did last night is stored up in his mind.

In this parable, the seed refers to the word of God. The word of God gives life to human minds. Without the word of God, everybody can be a kind of mental patient. Among the four soils, the path is the worst soil. Look at verses 14-15. "The farmer sows the word. 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." Why do they call America a melting pot? First, it is because the easygoing mentality is so strong that most American young people are melted by the easygoing mentality. One young man wanted to get a Ph.D. because he thought he was bright. But it took him 21 years to finish undergraduate study by the help of many Bible-believing people. Second, America is called a melting pot due to the pleasure-seeking lifestyle. The pleasure-seeking lifestyle seems to be fun, not so serious. But anybody who is used to a pleasure-seeking lifestyle becomes lazy and immoral. Those who are used to an easygoing mentality and a pleasure-seeking lifestyle have minds like the path. Even if God feeds them with the wonderful word of life, they never take it. They only think about how to be lazy and immoral. Then Satan comes right away and takes the words away from them.

Second, people like rocky ground (5-6; 16-17). Let's read verses 16-17. "Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. 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." If the path-like people are the worst sinners, rock-like people are worse sinners. They like the word of God because it gives the meaning of life and the Spirit of God and many promises of God. They love to hear the word of God. But, at the bottom of their hearts, they love the world more than God. As a result, they cannot commit themselves to God. They have

no love-relationship with God. As long as they get benefit from the word they remain. But if they have to suffer for the glory of God, they run away. They are those who enjoy the word emotionally, but they never commit themselves to God. There are many families that are broken up in this beautiful land. There are many young people whose hearts are broken into pieces. All these come from people who have a lack of commitment to God. When we commit ourselves to God, we can commit to others also.

Third, people like a thornbush (7; 18-19). Look at verses 18-19. "Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 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." They are those who love God. And at the same time, they love the world. In order to make money, they work hard. They think they would be happy if they made enough money for themselves and for their children. In the matter of time, the word in their heart soil is overpowered by the things of the world. In reality, they suffer enough to survive in this world. But when the word of life is choked by the things of the world, strangely, anxiety occupies their minds and hearts. They worry in the morning. They worry in the evening. They worry during the sleeping time. They believed they could serve God and at the same time make a lot of money. It is a great mistake. Thistles and thorns overpower the seed of the word in their souls. They cannot have the word of life in their hearts.

Fourth, people like good soil (8; 20). Look at verse 20. "Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop--thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown." These are people who obeyed and trusted God's word with an absolute attitude. In order to obey God's word, they had to live their lives with absolute obedience to the word of God. There is a story about an herb doctor. The herb doctor remembered his teachers' teachings without missing one all his life and kept them. In order to do so, he confronted many hardships. But when he did so, he could write the best book about herb medicine and he was promoted as the first man, next to the king in his country. It is not easy to obey God's word absolutely in this rebellious generation. But when we do so, God blesses us.

Those who obey God can bear fruit 30 times or 60 times or 100 times. Here the words, "can bear fruit" have a deep spiritual meaning. When we bear fruit, our joy is complete (Jn 15:11). God gave us great potentiality

and creativity and imagination to develop 30, 60, or 100 times. God made us great, both inwardly and outwardly.

III. The lamp on a stand (21-25)

This part teaches us self-evident truth. Look at verse 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?'" Here, the lamp refers to the word of life. The lamp gives light to those who are in darkness. It is self-evident truth that we should put the lamp on a stand so that we can enjoy the light. It is indeed stupid if anyone puts a lighted lamp under a bowl or a bed. Still, these days ungodly people are so bold that they identify themselves to be ungodly or homosexual. They are suppressing the truth of God intentionally. They are like little children who cover their eyes with their hands and say that there is no sky. But they cannot live in this manner forever. Ungodly people live double lives in this world for the time being. But someday they have to stand before the judgment seat of God. Everything will be disclosed. Verse 22 says, "For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open." This part urges us to live according to the word of God. This part urges us not to be foolish as one who lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl or a bed.

IV. The parables of the seeds (26-34)

First, the parable of the growing seed (26-29). Look at verses 26,27. "He also said, 'This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how.'" This part mainly tells us how the kingdom of God grows. Nature's growth is imperceptible, but inevitable. So it is with the kingdom of God. When we think about the present situation, only the power of sin is growing, and the kingdom of God is getting smaller. So we despair and sigh. But it is not true. Look at verses 26-27 again. "He also said, 'This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how.'" Likewise, the kingdom of God is expanding every day. For example, there are many young people. They say, "I am washed up. My habit of sin is stronger than a bulldozer." But this is not true. If we accept the word of God, the word of God defeats the power of sin in us, and the kingdom of God grows continually until we are happy all the time.

Second, the parable of the mustard seed (30-34). Look at verses 30-31a. "Again he said, 'What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed....'" In this part, a mustard seed is compared to the kingdom of God. In view of history, the kingdoms of the world rise and wane. No kingdom grew slowly and steadily. Once, the United Kingdom of Britain bragged that their country never saw the sunset because they had so many colonial countries around the world. But after World War II, it remained three pieces of a small island and as the factory of perversion. After the Bolshevik revolution, the U.S.S.R. invaded neighbor countries and occupied 12 time zones. Many historians said the U.S.S.R. would conquer the world. But they could maintain communism for only 70 years and they wobbled so quickly that we could not believe it.

The kingdom of Jesus started from a stable of an animal, but it has been growing slowly and steadily until it conquered the whole world. According to the book, "Russia," during the time of the communist regime, Russians knew the name of our King Jesus, but most of them did not know the names of their leaders, who died so frequently.

What could be the main point of Jesus' parables? When we carefully observe, we see that Jesus teaches people who were coming to him the basic attitude toward the word of God. Jesus also tries to teach the secret of the kingdom of God through the word.

May God help us to have an absolute attitude toward the word of God, knowing that the word of God gives abundant life and eternal life. May God richly bless you when you have a right attitude toward the word of God.