

Mark 4:26-29

26 He also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, 27 and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. 28 The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. 29 But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come (NRSV).

The people have a lot to learn from Jesus and Jesus has a lot to teach them. By the time we get to Mark chapter 4, Jesus has recruited the disciples, and embarked on a Galilean ministry. Large crowds gather around him and he began to teach them in parables. The parable of sower explains the nature of the parables and how they reveal the secrets of the kingdom of God. The disciples have difficulty understanding. Jesus challenges them. He doesn't just answer their questions directly, he answers the unknown not by giving the answer to their question but teaching them how to find the answers. This is the same principle as the popular proverb – give me a fish and I will eat for today, teach me to fish and I will eat forever. Jesus explains the parable and its significance. One of the problems that Jesus faces when communicating with the disciples is the high degree of disparity between the mental capacity of Jesus and the audience. The one in the know has difficulty explaining what is beyond normal human reasoning.

Jesus is teaching parables of the kingdom in Capernaum and today's Scripture is just one of the many examples of the kingdom of God. Jesus uses agricultural examples because the people can relate and understand. There is a realm of unknown in how biology works in the growth of a seed. What Jesus knows is in the realm of human unknown. God's design is beyond the realm of human understanding. The earth produces of itself. Seeds need water, heat, and fertile soil, the sprout needs sunlight, oxygen, and heat, the trees, flowers, and bush needs fertilizer, sunlight, oxygen, and heat. We cannot fully understand it.

The lesson is very serious. Jesus does not explain the details of the heavenly realm but he focuses on the harvest. It is God's plan of salvation. The parables from Jesus to the disciples are lessons from Jesus to us. A parable is the Lord's way of teaching difficult lessons and put them in a perspective that we can understand if we put the effort into understanding. God's plan is to weed out the self righteous, they do not care enough to make an effort to understand. The parables are lessons that require the audience to make an effort in order to understand. Jesus focuses on the harvest. The parables are about the kingdom of heaven. There is the urgency to keep watch and be ready because we don't know when the time of the harvest will be here. The consequences are harsh and serious, the self righteous are told to go away the Lord doesn't even know you. The contrast is between those that are ready and those that are not ready. Jesus gives realistic examples to demonstrate how those that are not ready is due to their own failures and own fault. When the time comes, you have to be ready. Jesus answers the unknown in the only way it can be known – through faith. There are things you do not understand and never will be able understand. Regardless of your understanding of the secret workings of the seed, the harvest is coming and you have to be ready for it.

Jesus addresses problems of attitude and bias thinking. The people that assume righteousness are unprepared due to their attitudes. What people really want to know is

whether or not they get in to the kingdom of heaven. Time is the unknown factor. The Bible is specific – no one knows the time, not even Jesus. Daniel has an interesting characteristic at the end of the book God tells Daniel to go his own way because some things are to remain secret and sealed until the time of the end (Dan 12:8). The Bible repeatedly addresses how our expectations, perceptions of righteousness, and judgment are in direct contrast with God's. People tend to skew God's requirements towards our own favor. The stakes are simply too high to get it wrong. You are either right or wrong, there is no gray area. God rejects those that reject the love of God.

When we follow Jesus, everything else comes together. When we study Jesus, we learn valid lessons for today's society. The Bible is always current because it deals with a righteous God and a fallen humanity. We are plagued with a detailed and complex problems in contemporary society. Fewer people have intimate knowledge of Jesus. They don't know the details of what he said and did and they rely on popular media for their information. Jesus cautioned against the blind leading the blind. It is extremely important to read and study the Bible and not rely on whatever is popular for the day. Jesus warns that there will be some that think they are ready, some will confess they know Jesus, and some will try to sneak in the back. Jesus is clear – you have to love others as Jesus loves us and be faithful to the end. Salvation is for all that accept God's love. This is very serious, you have to repent, change, and follow. If you really want to know what heaven is all about then you just need faith in Jesus.