

## Mark 4:12-34 | Kingdom Responsibility

Tyler Velin | September 29th, 2014

Before there was Ron Burgundy and the Channel 5 News Team, before there was Harry and Lloyd, there was Lucky, Dust and Ned. I am talking about the 3 Amigos.

I was raised on this movie, I loved it. Today I tweeted out the Buttercup Dance scene in the bar, and me and a friend had it choreographed and would do it for fun in High School. But one of the best and most genius scenes in the whole movie is when the three amigos are riding through the desert and they are all thirst. In it Lucky reaches down for his canteen and tilts it upside down and is trying to get the last drops of water out of it, then it goes to Ned, who tilts up his canteen and it is full of sand that pours into his mouth, and then it shows Dusty, who pulls out his canteen and starts to chug the water, and drinks so much that he then starts to pour it over his head, and then he ends up tossing the rest of the canteen on the ground and you see the water spilling out. Dusty then takes out lip balm, and puts some on and he turns and sees the other two staring longingly at him. And Dusty, blind to their need of water just says, "Lip Balm."

What this movie makes humorous, the gospel makes urgent, and today we are going to dive into the book of Mark and see we are in the same situation as Dusty, we have what others want, but I hope we also find a gospel motivation to share, rather than a foolish reason to be blind to the need around us.

Open your Bibles with me to Mark chapter four. And what we are going to look at today is three parables Jesus is giving to the crowds. And while each of these parables communicates different nuances and themes, there is one overwhelming theme that we are going to look at tonight and that is: the Bible has power to save from judgment and bring us into a new Kingdom. **Pray.**

Rather than spending a whole lot of time breaking down these parables as isolated teaching incidents, I am going to pick apart that theme I just gave you and show how these parables work together to communicate that.

Our first point tonight is that, **the gospel has power.**

Look with me at **Mark 4:21-22**. Now I am going to confess a flaw of mine and that flaw is that because I was raised in church I often read the Bible poorly. I often take for granted the themes and main points of the text, and in so doing, I do a pretty poor job reading the gospel.

So I heard this passage, and I thought, this is just like the similar recitation of the same parable in Matthew and Luke. "Do not light a lamp and put it under the basket." The subject of the parable is us, and we should not let our light be hidden. And that is a legitimate interpretation of those passages.

But Mark's passage is different: **Mark 4:21**. The subject of the sentence is a lamp. It is not us. It is the lamp. That's because in Mark's recitation of the story, we are not the lamp, Jesus is. And Jesus is saying, I may not be known as the savior yet, but I have come so that one day the world will know who I am.

You see this illustration isn't set up during the day time. When Jesus is talking about a lamp we automatically assume that it is dark outside. And what Jesus is saying here is that he is the light in an otherwise dark world. He is what the world needs. He illuminates our need and brings us into safety. Jesus and Jesus alone is unique in this world. Nothing replicates him, nothing comes close to him. Jesus is the light in this darkness.

Not only is Jesus the power, but he is an effective power. Skip down to the next parable in **Mark 4:26-28**.

I love this picture. We discussed a little bit of the Kingdom of God last week, those who were on retreat heard a lot more of it this weekend. But the Kingdom of God is place in which God rules his people according to his best and capable rule. In one sense we are in the Kingdom, but in one sense the fullness of this Kingdom is yet to come.

But Jesus says the Kingdom of God, the realm of the gospel is like this. A man scatters seed, and sleeps. He threw the seed, and he went to bed. He probably went to bed with anticipation that the seed would grow. He probably came back and made sure the seed was still safely in the earth.

But look at what we saw in **Mark 4:27**. It wasn't due to the farmers will or might that the seed grew, the seed grew because the seed was potent. Then look at verse **28**. Again, no reference of the farmer, instead this time it is the earth that is providing the growth.

What Jesus is saying here is that we labor with diligent and faithful gospel work in the Kingdom, but it is Christ who builds it. We sow faithfulness, Christ grows salvation.

This should be of relief to us in two areas: 1. It's ok if you are frustrated by your spiritual growth. It's ok, if you are wrestling with this idea and it hasn't clicked yet, you are struggling to read your Bible and make sense of it, and you are still a little freaked out by all these Christian folks here. Stay faithful and let the gospel grow in you. That doesn't mean you stop providing and effort, but it means you rest in the power of the gospel.

What Christ has started Christ will bring to completion, cling to Christ.

2. This eases our burden in evangelism. It doesn't ease our responsibility, it eases our burden. We are accountable for what? Throwing seed. It is the power of the seed that causes the growth. You will not save anyone. But you will share the ultimate power of salvation in the gospel. We know not how, or when God will choose the bring growth to our roommates or neighbors, but we know that we are responsible to sow. So sow.

The gospel is power. But this brings our second point: **The gospel has the power to save from judgment.**

We see this theme in the verse which closes the parable of the growing seed. **Mark 4:29**. I really wrestled with this verse because I was struggling to find what it meant. But anytime the New Testament authors speak of "the harvest" and use harvesting language, it is usually about God's coming judgment.

One day God will come, and he will take the sickle to the wheat, and he will take the wheat into his store house, but the chaff that hasn't produced, and hasn't responded rightly to the seed of the gospel, it goes into the fire to be burned.

The title of this sermon series is "Who is Jesus." And our culture likes to answer that question with Jesus is love, and that is true, but culture then wishes to disregard this aspect of hell and judgment because it is not loving. But no one talks about hell more than Jesus in the Bible.

How is that loving? Because Jesus is attempting to warn us out of hell, and back into his love. Look back at **Mark 4:21-25**. So here we see Jesus saying I am the light of the world, but then he says, pay attention to what you hear, because you will be held responsible for it.

Jesus is the light of the world, Jesus is the seed which grows, but you are held responsible for your response to Jesus. Jesus' message in this passage isn't, plug your ears, don't hear the gospel, and you won't be at

fault. Jesus message, is that the world through the cross will see the light, and you will be held responsible for your response to me.

And we see the two responses to the gospel in **Mark 4:25**. To one, more will be given, but to the other, even what he has will be taken away. Those who believe in Christ have everything in this world, and when the judgment day comes, more will be given to us as we see Christ as he is. But to the one who does not have Christ, all you have is this life. All you have is the vanity of this world, and when the judgment day comes, even that will be taken from you and the wrath of God will justly judge your rejection of Christ.

Ian Fleming's is the author of the James Bond movies. And people say that James Bond is actually based of Ian Fleming's life. A recent documentary was entitled: The Man Who Was Bond. He had the playboy lifestyle, the riches, and the popularity. But one day somebody in the crew asked Fleming what it was like to have what he had, and his response was: "Ashes dear boy, ashes." Without Christ, we lack everything here on earth, and without Christ we will lack even more in the age to come.

But the good news of the gospel is that **the gospel has the power to save us from judgment and bring us into the Kingdom.**

You see Jesus doesn't only save us from death, he brings us into a greater reality. The Kingdom of God.

Look at this last parable: **Mark 4:30-32**.

There has been no parable more fitting to describe the growth of Christ's church, and Christ's Kingdom than this parable.

The mustard seed is not the smallest seed, but the culture of the Middle East at that time had used it to that extent. Why, because from a small seed came a great bush.

When we talk about the Kingdom of God, people can, and rightly so say: Where is it. You are saying I need to repent from my sin, I need to give up my life and believe in the gospel so that I can be granted access to the Kingdom of God. Where is it?

Where is its might where is its power where is its splendor. My answer would be two fold. 1. Right now we can experience the Kingdom of God through his church. The church is not the Kingdom, but it is a place where we experience the Kingdom. It is the place where the center of our lives is the gospel of Christ, and we worship with one another, hold each other accountable to the gospel, and seek to preach the gospel beyond the walls of our church.

But the Kingdom of God is also coming. In one sense there has been no more rapid growth than the church of Christ. 12 men, 1 death of a savior, 2,000 years full of times of plenty and times of persecution, and yet the Church has only grown. Like the bush it's branches are reaching out to the nations and the birds of the air will take refuge in it. The church has grown here on earth, and the church will continue to grow. But our best days are still ahead of us.

The best days of the church will come through the faithful evangelism of the church, but it will ultimately come when Jesus comes back and he takes his church, his bride to be with him, and in that day people from every tongue tribe and nation will join together and sing that Christ is King to the glory of God the father. And in that day we hide our hope. Take hope in the mustard seed. Are you willing to work inside this humble kingdom? Are you hopeful to be brought through this time via the hope of a time yet to come?

The gospel has the power to save from judgment and to bring us into a greater Kingdom.

But what does this mean for us. How are we to apply this to our lives? I see two ways. First we need to hear the gospel.

Ten times in this one chapter Mark used the word “hear.” Those of you in here who are skeptical to the gospel, I encourage to you keep with it. Keep hearing it. There is no hope for salvation, there is no hope to avoid the taking of what you have, no hope to avoid the harvest of judgment outside of responding rightly to the light of Christ.

Church on Sunday’s and GCF on Thursdays are great ways to submit yourselves to the hearing of the gospel, but don’t stop there. Ask the person who brought you here more about it. Ask your community group leader, ask somebody here, but do not neglect hearing the gospel for it is the hope of life for all who believe. Trust that one day, in some way though you may not know how, God will produce the first blade of grass, then the ear, and then the grain in the ear.

You Christians in here, do you see the worth of what you have? If you claim to be a Christian you are one who has claimed to see the fullness of Christ, and you then are held responsible for what it is you know.

If you look back at Mark 4:25, Jesus says to the one who has, more will be given. The rhetorical question you should be asking yourself is, “What is it that I have?” Jesus’ answer: The Kingdom of God. You have the gospel of Christ.

In **2 Cor 4:7**, Paul says we have treasure in jars of clay. In a world based on self promotion and self-exaltation it is easy to lose the weight of this passage. But you do not have an inner spark of great potential inside of you. Your treasure is not your kind and beautiful heart. We are the clay, Christ is the treasure. The worth that we have is not our merit, but Christ’s. The hope we have is not our reality, but Christ’s Kingdom. The message we proclaim is not ourselves, but Christ and Christ crucified.

We have been granted Christ, so we have been granted new eyes which see the need. The reason why that 3 Amigos scene is so funny, is because it is so foolish. Do not be so foolish as to neglect an eternally minded view of college.

I love the aside that Mark gives at the end of this: **Mark 4:34**. Jesus explained to his disciples the implications of this passage which in God’s grace, he didn’t give us. But what he did give us, are books written by Peter, and John. The disciples who heard this. And in the Bible, there are few writers who stress the need for bold gospel proclamation and right response to Christ than these two, why? Because they were aware of the Kingdom they had been given.

John’s gospel and his letters are filled with a plea to believe. And in Peter we see a plea to preach. Both men understood the kingdom responsibility based in the gospel.

Look at **1 Peter 4:7-11**.

We have received a gift, and in light of the coming judgment, we better steward it wisely because the world needs our gospel. The world needs to respond rightly to our light in Christ. We have the gospel, we believe the gospel, so preach the gospel.