

2025-09-21

Growing the Kingdom of God

Mark 4:26-34

Every week as I drive along our streets I see vehicles, cars and trucks pulling trailers. When I have the opportunity, I like to see how they have connected the two safety chains to their vehicle. I would say that more than half of the people connect their chains the wrong way. When I do get the opportunity to talk with some of these people, they think they are right because no one has ever explained to them the full purpose of the safety chains. So far, everyone I have talked with has appreciated the knowledge I shared with them. Do you know how to correctly attach safety chains to a vehicle and why **they are connected a certain way**? Lots of people connect the safety chains in parallel, the right side of the trailer to the right side of the vehicle and the left side of the trailer to the left side of the vehicle. These people think that the purpose of the safety chains is to keep the trailer attached to the vehicle if the trailer tongue and hitch somehow become separated. This is not the only purpose of the safety chains.

These people have not thought through what would happen when the tongue of the trailer detaches from the ball mount. What happens? When the towing vehicle slows down, depending on how the weight is distributed on the trailer, that trailer tongue is going to fall between the chains that are connected in parallel and hit the ground and bad things will happen. The worst case is the trailer could flip onto the towing vehicle. That's very bad. The chains are supposed to be crossed. That is, the right side of the trailer to the left side of the vehicle and the left side of the trailer to the right side of the vehicle. This makes a cradle with the chains so that if the tongue of the trailer becomes detached from the towing vehicle, the tongue is caught by the chains and keeps it from falling to the ground. Though this is still not a good situation, the driver should have more control of his vehicle and trailer to pull over safely and fix the problem.

People can have an understanding or purpose in mind for some things, even life that can be the wrong purpose or at least, not the full understanding because they have not been told or taught the right purpose. Once things are explained to them so that they know the right purpose, then they can have a right understanding and hopefully make a better decision. Jesus has explained the Parable of the Sower who sows seed on different soils. That explanation helps us in understanding all the other parables. We know that Jesus explained all the parables He taught to those people who were committed to following Him and doing what He commanded. We finished our scripture reading today with "*He explained all things to His disciples*" (Mark 4:34).

We do not have those explanations though it would be nice if we did. I think that God intentionally left out all the other explanations so that we would put some effort into thinking through the parables He taught. We have an example of how to interpret the parables (Mark 4:13-20). We also have the Spirit of God living in us. He knows the mind of God. He can give us insight into all the parables that Jesus taught (1 Corinthians 2:11-13). Today, we have two parables on the kingdom of God.

Mark 4:26-27 *“And He said, ‘The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how.’”* One of the reasons I liked growing a vegetable garden was to watch the plants grow. As a child and youth, our mom would have us children do some of the planting in her garden. I was fascinated by growing plants. Do you remember growing plants from seeds. Sometimes we did it in a cup in the house. We would check on the plant before we went to bed and give it a little water. In the morning, we would check to see if anything was growing. Every night and day we checked on the plant. After several days, that first blade would shoot up. How did that seed know how to grow? How did that seed know how to get nutrients and water from the soil. It is still a mystery. God designed plants to grow. On the third day of creation *“God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth’ and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good* (Genesis 1:11-12).

In this parable, Jesus is giving us **a picture of one aspect of the kingdom of God**. We know that the seed that is sown is the word of God from the parable of the sower (Mark 4:14). This ground the seed falls on is the good ground. It represents the hearts of people who hear and receive God’s word. Those people who sow God’s word into other people’s lives regularly check on how the word of God is growing in a new believer’s life. Sometimes we are surprised to see in whom the word of God is growing. Then there are times we are disappointed when the word of God does not take root in other people’s lives. **How does the word of God grow in a person?** We do not know. All we can see are the results. We can see the word of God growing in a person or not growing in a person by the choices they make and the life they live. Again, how does the word of God grow in a person? I do not know. I know of some people who read their Bible and pray every day, at least that is what they tell me. Some grow. Some do not grow. In order to grow, I know there must be **faith** in God, **trust** in God and a **willingness to change** in a person. But I do not know how to generate those things in people other than by sharing God’s word with people and letting God do His work.

Verses 28-29 *“For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”* The earth, the good ground produces growth. The word of God slowly grows in the new believer. He or she does not produce fruit right away. They need to grow first. Though the ultimate **purpose of our growth is to produce fruit**. The purpose of our growth in God’s word is to do good deeds and glorify God (Ephesians 2:10). In this parable, when the plant has produced all the fruit that it is going to produce, it is harvested. So, when the follower of Jesus has completed their task on earth, God takes them home. Someone may think that Roxie must have finished her task on earth. She must have produced all the fruit that her life on earth could have produced. So, God took her home. That is a possibility. It is also possible that God has allowed the corruption and evil of this world to bring an end to life. That started when Cain killed his brother Abel (Genesis 4:8-10).

Because of our sinful nature, people do evil, stupid and unhealthy things. Too many people are **murdered** way too young. People of all ages die in various **accidents** every day. People die from many health-related problems including **heart attacks**. Cancer kills. Then there is war. Death happens to everyone and it can happen at any age. God can use a person’s death to produce more changes in other people. As we get older, we wonder, why we are still alive. What is our purpose? Why are we still here? God must have a reason to keep us alive. And He does! Don’t just sit around waiting for God to take you to heaven. Be busy and produce more fruit. Do good things towards others. Share God’s truth. Fulfill God’s purpose in your life. Somehow, influence the people around you for the kingdom of God. This parable teaches us that **the kingdom of God is growing one person at a time as the word of God is being spread**.

Verses 30-32 *“Then He said, ‘To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it? It is like a mustard seed which when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth; but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade.’”* Since the kingdom of God is growing one person at a time, what is a good picture of the kingdom of God? Jesus explained that the kingdom of God was like a mustard seed. It is a very small seed. **The kingdom of God will start out small**. It did! At its beginning it was just Jesus calling out to people to be a part of His kingdom. To be part of God’s kingdom a person had to repent of their sins and believe in the gospel of God’s salvation through Jesus Christ. Over time, over generations of people the kingdom of God, which began small like the mustard seed, has grown into the largest plant in the garden. **The kingdom of God has grown to be the largest kingdom on earth**. It has reached around the

world. Jesus does not explain who the birds represent. What this parable also teaches us is that the followers of Jesus, who are part of the kingdom of God, reach out and touch the lives of others who are not part of God's kingdom. Those people benefit from and enjoy the kindness and generosity of the kingdom of God.

Verse 33-34 *“And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it. But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.”* Jesus spoke in parables a lot of times when the crowds were around. There were times when Jesus taught the people in a straight forward manner. The Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5-7 is the best example. After that sermon *“great multitudes followed Him”* (Matthew 8:1). It was easy for Jesus to draw large crowds. But large crowds were not the goal of Jesus. He wanted obedient followers who were willing to endure persecution, hatred and death while still loving God. Jesus will call His followers to *“take up his cross”* and follow Him (Mark 8:34). He will call His followers to lose their own life for His sake and the gospel's in order to save their own souls (Mark 8:35). Jesus will want His followers to be like Him and confront the false teaching among the people. Jesus will want His followers to speak the truth about life and death and judgment. Jesus did not preach a prosperity gospel, that when you chose to follow Him, everything is going to be wonderful. No, Jesus told His disciples, if they hated Him, and they did, they will hate His disciples as well (John 15:18). If they persecuted Jesus, and they crucified Him, the world will also persecute the followers of Jesus (15:20).

As we get closer to the return of Jesus there will be an increase of hatred towards those who faithfully follow Jesus. Jesus said, *“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved”* (Matthew 24:9-13). Remain faithful to Jesus. Keep loving God and our neighbor. Don't get caught up in the hatred. At the right times, in the right places, to the right people speak, in the right way speak God's truth. People need to know God's truth. Some will not like it, but they need to hear (Acts 24:25).

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Our mission statement: **Spread the gospel of Jesus Christ;**
Teach believers to worship God; Foster growth in the Christian faith

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Questions to ask yourself:

What is a major purpose of a plant?

What is the purpose of life? Why did God create you the way you are?

Are you sowing God's word into other people's lives?

Do you believe that faith in Jesus and His sacrifice for our sins is the only way for everyone to be saved from their coming judgment?

How does the word of God grow in a person?

How do you know the word of God is growing in a person?

How does the kingdom of God grow?

How big has the kingdom of God become?

What type of person is Jesus looking for to follow Him?

Are you one of those people?

Actions to take:

As a follower of Jesus, keep seeking to understand His love for you and why you are alive.

If you are not consistently sharing God's word with anyone, ask God to give you, send you or show you at least one person He wants you to share His love and truth with.

Pray for those people who you are sharing God's word with. Ask God to give them understanding of His truth and their need for His salvation. Check on them regularly.