

Parables of the Kingdom (Lamp, Seed Growing, Mustard Seed)
Mark 4:21-34

A Lamp Under a Basket

v. 21

Sentence Structure

- It is interesting that most modern day translations use the phrase “Is a lamp brought in...”
- This is not how to Greek reads
- The Greek is more properly translated as “Does a lamp come in...”
- This would have been intentional by writers of the synoptic Gospels to place emphasis, not on A lamp, but THE lamp.
- The lamp becomes the subject.

A Lamp

- 1) What is the subject of verse 21?
 - A lamp.
- 2) What does a lamp do?
 - It gives off light.
- 3) What type of lamp is employed here?
 - The lamp of Jesus’ day would’ve been an oil lamp with a floating wick coming out of a hole in the front.
- 4) Why would someone put this type of lamp under a basket?
 - That’s just the point; they wouldn’t.
 - These lamps would have put off a very small amount of light therefore putting it under a basket or bushel would’ve impeded the light’s ability to overcome the darkness of the room.

- We use lampshades nowadays but our lamps are much stronger than the lamps of that day.
- In order for the lamp to function at its best it would need to be placed in a prominent position on a stand without obstruction.

THE Lamp

- Here we see a simile that isn't about any old lamp.
- This lamp in verse 21 is specifically talking about Jesus.
- He didn't come to be hidden but rather to give light to the world.
- This is the duty of every believer to take the Lamp and put it in a place where Christ may be elevated and people will see His light.
- This further clarifies the following statements that Jesus makes in verse 22.

v. 22-23

All Will Be Revealed

- In Jesus' time things were dark.
- What do I mean by that?
- The mystery of God had not yet been revealed.

John 1:1-5

- The Apostle John is speaking here about Jesus.
- He refers to Him as the Word of God.
- He refers to Him as God.
- Jesus came to be the light of the world.
- He did not come to be hidden.
- He came to break through the darkness of sin.

Light vs Darkness

- Darkness is defined as the lack of illumination or absence of light.
- By its very nature, darkness cannot coexist with light.
- Light will drive out darkness.
- Darkness cannot drive out light.
- This is physically impossible.

Ears to Hear

- Jesus repeats this phrase after He teaches in parables.
- This is referring to the spiritual ears that only the Holy Spirit can provide.
- People in their natural condition cannot understand the things of God.
- Only those whose hearts have been regenerated by the work of the Holy Spirit will understand.

v. 24-25

Be Faithful to the Task

- Jesus tells us that the future spread of the kingdom is directly correlated with the faithfulness at which we spread the message.
- Of course God is sovereign over salvation but He has decreed to use His people in the growing of His kingdom.
- The more faithful we are to share the mystery of the kingdom the more we are rewarded with increase in the kingdom.
- This may be immediately visible to us but most likely it will be something that is futuristic and someone else will see the fruit of our labor.

A Seed Growing

v. 26-29

Another Agrarian Parable

- Jesus oftentimes used agrarian themes in His parables because the society in which He lived was agrarian.
- These elements would have made sense to the people who heard it.

A Seed Grows

- Jesus grows through the process of a harvest.
- A harvest doesn't start when someone comes to collect the spoils.
- A harvest originates when a seed is implanted into the soil.
- This requires a man to scatter the seed.
- Then it requires water and resources.
- Then it requires germination.
- Then the first sprout shows up.
- The man who does the scattering doesn't know HOW it works he just knows that it DOES work.
- He scatters his seed and then he goes about his business trusting that it will work.
- It doesn't happen overnight.
- There is a process by which this happens and it is slow and deliberate.

The Process of Harvest

- 1) Seeds are scattered
- 2) Germination
- 3) Sprouts
- 4) The blade or stalk
- 5) The ear or grain
- 6) Maturation of the grain
- 7) Harvest

This process is what Jesus compares the Kingdom of God with.

- You and I are tasked with scattering the seeds of the Kingdom while entrusting the results to God.
- This will be very frustrating work but He has already said that He will bless our efforts with fruit.
- Will we see the fruit? Not necessarily.
- That's not why we strive.
- We strive to please our Master and He then gathers the fruit of His harvest.

The Mustard Seed

v. 30-34

The Third Parable of the Kingdom

- Jesus wraps up His teaching on the Kingdom of God with the parable of the mustard seed.
- Jesus says that the Kingdom of God can be compared to a mustard seed.
- Why this seed?

The Mustard Seed

- The mustard seed is one of the tiniest seeds that will grow into a tree.
- There are other seeds that are larger such as acorns and walnuts that can grow into massive trees but their size to begin with is rather noticeable.
- You will especially notice them if you step on one while walking through the yard.
- The mustard seed is one of the smallest, if not the smallest, seed that will grow into a large tree.

Did Jesus Make A Mistake?

- Many modern scholars will take this parable as justification to say that the Bible cannot be trusted.
- We know in the world of botany that there are many seeds that are smaller than the mustard seed so why does Jesus call it the smallest?
- Jesus uses hyperbole often.
- Many of the Bible authors used hyperbole to illustrate their point.
- Hyperbole is using an exaggerated statement to convey a point. The exaggeration is not to be taken literally.
- Jesus took one of the well known trees of their day and examined its origins so the people could understand His point.
- He tells them to examine the mustard tree.
- Look at what it does, how large it is, etc.
- Then He tells them to look at how it started.

The Kingdom is Like a Mustard Seed

- Knowing this, we can move forward with the parable.
- Jesus is teaching the people on what the Kingdom of God is like.
- He says that the Kingdom is like a mustard seed that, when sown into the ground, becomes a really large tree that puts out large branches.
- Some mustard trees look more like bushes but given the proper conditions it can grow into a really big tree in which birds can make their nests and find shelter.
- How does this relate to the Kingdom?
- We have to put ourselves into the days of Christ for this one.
- Was the Kingdom an earthly force to be reckoned with at that time?
- Humanly speaking, no.
- The number of adherents was low.
- The political influence was small.
- However, the seed had been planted.
- Once the seed is planted it begins to grow.
- It puts out shoots, then leaves, then full branches that reach upward toward the sun.
- Notice that Jesus doesn't say that the Kingdom is like the mustard *tree*.
- He says that it is like the mustard *seed*.
- It starts small with the odds seemingly against it but it turns into an absolute powerhouse given the time to grow.

Who is the Mustard Seed?

- Like with most other spiritual truths Jesus taught, there is a personal and real manifestation.
- The parable is about the Kingdom of God and its origins here on earth.
- Who is the origin of the Kingdom of God on earth?

Matthew 3:1-2

- John the Baptist preached that the Kingdom of God was at hand?
- Why is that?
- Jesus was about to show up on the scene.
- Jesus brought in Himself the Kingdom of God.
- He is the mustard seed.
- Someone who came out of obscurity, with no money, no political power, etc. brought the most influential entity that this world has ever seen or will see.
- In the way that the mustard tree grows from one small, seemingly insignificant seed, the Kingdom of God came from one seemingly insignificant man, Jesus Christ.