

Introduction

1. Growing up in WV and later in adult life, I have planted many gardens just as many of you have done.
 - a. In fact, you may be preparing to set out your gardens in the next week or two.
 - b. My dad always said, “Don’t set out your garden before Memorial Day to avoid late frosts.”
 - c. When we set out a garden, we do our part by cultivating, planting, fertilizing, watering, weeding, etc.
 - d. But God still performs the miracle of growing those tiny seeds into produce bearing plants.
 - e. I don’t know how God does it. Botanists and biologists can tell us some of the mechanics but not all of them. There is still a miracle in growing things.
 - f. So it is with God’s kingdom—We don’t know exactly how it works, but God is miraculously at work growing His kingdom in our midst.
2. All of the parables in Mark 4 focus a common topic: the kingdom of God.
3. “This is Mark’s only unique parable” (Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Mark*, 93).
4. Mark leads us to reflect on the how the kingdom of God is like a growing seed.
5. **Read Mk 4:26-29.**

A. Growing Seed and the Kingdom of God (26-29)

1. The kingdom of God is like seed that when planted miraculously brings forth fruit.
2. The kingdom of God is symbolized in the elements of this parable as follows:
 - a. man = one sharing the gospel message; The man is not the focus. The seed is the focus.
 - b. seed = the Word of God, the gospel; The seed has power in itself apart from the man.
 - c. ground = humankind; ones hearing the gospel
 - d. sickle = the harvest—the Second Coming of Christ

B. Four Insights from this Parable**1. Patience**

- a. Warren Wiersbe writes, “It takes a good deal of faith to be a farmer, and also a good deal of patience” (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Diligent*, 55).
- b. Our world wants quick results. We don’t like to wait around.
- c. Jesus was tempted to speed the coming of God’s kingdom in the temptation of Satan (c.f., Luke 4).
 - 1) “Tell those stones to become bread” – Be a miraculous bread king.
 - 2) “Throw yourself down.” – Use your power to awe the whole world now.
 - 3) “Bow down and worship me.” – Take the shortcut to power and glory.
- d. We cannot plant a seed and accelerate its growth beyond a certain point. “first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head” (28)
- e. We must plant God’s word and be patient as God brings the increase of His kingdom in His timing.
- f. This is part of the reason for Jesus demanding the silence of the demons (e.g., Messianic Secret).

2. Progress

- a. “night and day . . . the seed sprouts and grows” (27)
- b. Great things often come to be gradually over time.
 - 1) For most people skill and ability in music, math, and languages requires time, practice, patience.
 - 2) The New River Gorge bridge in WV was built beginning in 1974 and wasn’t completed until 10/22/77. At 876’ high and 3,030’ long, it is the longest steel arch span in the world and the second highest. It cut a 45 minute drive down to less than a minute.
 - 3) This is a parable to read when one is discouraged over the lack of results.
 - a) William Carey worked faithfully in India for seven years before seeing a convert.
 - b) We must be patient and work with God slowly and surely, step-by-step.
 - c) Progress will certainly come, if we remain faithful night and day.
- c. Daniel Akin concludes, “The coming of the kingdom of God is not contingent or dependent on human activity. The seed of the gospel prospers and grows of itself. Once it is sown, a process is set in motion that cannot and will not be stopped, even though its growth is a total mystery to us” (Akin, 94).

3. Power

- a. “whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how” (27).
- b. Akin observes, “Here the emphasis falls on the innate power of the seed. The Word of God has within it the power of its own success and triumph. Let the Word loose and watch it work” (Akin, 93).
- c. This parable puts us in our proper place. We cannot make the kingdom of God grow just as the farmer cannot make his plants grow.
- d. We must do what we can to prepare and care for the soil of people’s hearts, plant the word, and then wait on God for the growth.
- e. Consider the power of a seed which falls into a crack in the concrete. When it sprouts and grows it splits the concrete open.
- f. A seed is a seemingly small thing but the power of the plant is already in the seed.
- g. Likewise, God’s kingdom is present in all its power from the start in his Word, Jesus Christ, Son of God in flesh.
- h. As Jesus sowed His life in the world through His death and resurrection, limitless potential for powerful growth in God’s kingdom became possible.

4. Perfection

- a. “all by itself (Gk., *automate* = “automatically”) the earth bears fruit” (28).
- b. The growth of the kingdom toward an abundant harvest is as the growth of grain—slow but sure. Wheat fields in Texas have a long growth cycle of many months.
- c. The Word tries to grow the kingdom of God wherever it is placed as the seed tries to grow in the ground in which it is placed.
- d. The farmer plants and reaps but in between he must wait and trust.
 - 1) He doesn’t understand how the seed grows, but he trusts that it will.
 - 2) We don’t always understand how the kingdom grows, but we trust God that it will.
- e. God WILL, in his own perfect timing, bring the harvest (i.e., reference to the sickle) of the ripe kingdom at the Second Coming of Christ (29).
- f. William L. Lane notes, “There can be no doubt that the harvest in view is the coming judgment of the world, for the concluding words of verse 29 reflect the Hebrew text of Joel 3:13. The stress in the parable thus falls upon the working of the seed as a messianic work which unleashes mysterious forces which operate of themselves in the achievement of the sovereign purposes of God” (William L. Lane, *Mark*, 169).

C. Conclusion

1. Read Mark 4:26-29 again.
2. What have you learned from this parable?
3. How does what you have learned challenge you in your kingdom life?
4. What must you do now?
5. Akin challenges you and me when he writes, “Who would have imagined that starting with only a group of 12 men, Christianity would grow to where it is today? But it won’t stop there. It will continue to grow until every people group on the planet is found in the kingdom. God will ensure this growth. Are you certain you are part of it?” (Akin, 94)