



Life Guide/Closer Look

applying God's Word to life

The Word Works—to Grow God's Kingdom July 8-10, 2017

(Mark 4:26-34) He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. {27} Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though **he does not know how**. {28} All by itself the soil produces grain--first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. {29} As soon as the grain is ripe, **he puts the sickle to it**, because the harvest has come." {30} Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? {31} It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. {32} Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade." {33} With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. {34} He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

1. What is Jesus referring to when he uses the term "the kingdom of God"? **God's ruling activity in our hearts (kingdom of grace). How God works in our hearts and in our world.**
2. In the Parable of the Growing Seed, who does the man who scatters the seed represent? (Jesus? Christians? Someone else?) **What phrase argues against each option? Solution: don't push the parable too hard. Best option: God, through Christians.**
3. What does the seed represent? **The Word of God (from other Parable) which causes faith to grow and bear fruit.**
4. What does the soil represent? **Human hearts**

5. Agree/disagree: All by itself the soil produces grain. **V. 28 The point is not that human hearts, by nature, can produce good fruit. It's that the seed in human heart (apart from human efforts) "automatically" is an adverb modifying "produces".**

6. What parallels do you see between vv. 26-29 and the following passages?

(Isaiah 55:10-11) *As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, {11} so is **my word** that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but **will accomplish what I desire** and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*

The Word does the work that God intends it to do (conversion, etc) (1 Corinthians 3:7) So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.

Humans don't make faith grow; God does. Give him credit.

7. What is the basic message of the Parable of the Growing Seed? **God's Word has the power to grow faith (in hearts and world) without our help or complete understanding.**

8. Agree/disagree: Humans have no role in causing faith to grow in a person's heart. **Agree, we can't cause faith to grow. But we can have a role in instigating/preventing the spread of the Word which causes faith to grow.**

9. Agree/disagree: "The Word Works."

Not to heal headaches (by touch or command); mezuzah = blessing It works to accomplish what God intends: conversion, growth/fruits; or hardening. Effective re. its "proper use"

10. Agree/disagree: The Word works both supernaturally and psychologically. **S: The Word convinces me of truths that are illogical and incomprehensible (Trinity; God/man; grace); miracle Psy: using real language, logic (cf. Pentecost wasn't jibberish; Philip explained the word to the Eunuch); not magic.**

11. Agree/disagree: Poor communication makes the Word less effective. **Disagree, the power is in the word. But poor comm. makes it less likely to be heard/received. Qualification for ministry: able to teach. My sermon prep can't improve on God's Word, but it can create psychological barriers (boredom, illogical)**

Parable of Mustard: small to large (manger to universal church)