

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: June 14, 2009

The Spontaneous Life of the Kingdom

by Dan Trygg

“And He was saying, ‘In this way the Kingdom of God is like when a person might cast seed upon the soil; ²⁷ and he might go to bed and he might rise up night and day, and the seed might sprout and it might grow-- how, he himself does not know.

²⁸ Automatically, the soil bears fruit; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. ²⁹ But whenever the fruit might be delivered, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest stands ready.”

Mark 4:26-29

We have been studying the parables of the Kingdom that Jesus proclaimed to the multitude by the seashore. **He found it necessary to cloak His teachings in word pictures, because there were hostile listeners in the crowd.** These were not mere critics. They were well trained experts in the Law and the traditions of the Jews. **They were trying to discredit Jesus before the crowd, and, if possible, they wanted to catch Him in something He might say that they could use to legally accuse Him.**

The scribes and Pharisees were upset with Jesus because He had been exposing the hypocrisy and foolishness of their religious attitudes and traditions. He was not at all advocating anything that was in conflict with the *actual teachings of the OT Law*, but His words and example did fly in the face of the *legalistic interpretations* and holier-than-thou arrogance that many of these religious leaders exemplified. **His compassion for the poor, the down-and-out, and those who had made poor choices along the way, communicated the love of God in a way that most people had never seen.** The scribes and Pharisees judged and rejected those who were not high performers in the moral and religious sphere. Jesus welcomed them with acceptance and love, and invited them to a fresh start with God. The scribes and Pharisees looked at outward performance, where Jesus looked at the heart, and valued the person. The religious leaders tended to throw stones at those who were caught up in sin. Jesus affirmed their value and invited them to a new beginning. The scribes and Pharisees looked on the common people with disdain and condemnation, where Jesus viewed them with compassion. He saw them as harassed, lost, troubled and sometimes even stuck, but He offered them a message of forgiveness, freedom and rest. He defended them against those who would mock or exploit them. In addition to these differences, **Jesus also came with displays of supernatural power on a scale which no one had seen before.** The power of God was evident in His ministry, healing people from their sickness and diseases, and setting people free from demonic oppression. **The good news of the Kingdom of God, as exemplified by Jesus, was capturing the imagination and loyalty of the populace, and the leaders of the status quo were threatened.** Thus, they sent their most highly equipped experts at law and cross-examination to try to catch Jesus in a trap. This threat was so real and dangerous that **Jesus chose to limit what He taught to word pictures and stories.** These could embody important truths about the Kingdom of God that the spiritually hungry would ponder and benefit from, but were vague enough that these legal adversaries could find no basis for accusing Him of anything.

In all, there were ten parables spoken by Jesus on this occasion, as recorded for us in the gospels. Six were directed to the crowd, while four more were given only to the disciples. So far, Jesus had talked about seed sown on different kinds of soil, ...but only that on the good soil produced a crop. He also talked about how no one brought a lighted oil lamp into a dark room, only to put it under a bucket, or under the bed. No, he brings the lamp into the room and puts it on the lampstand so that it shines most effectively, illuminating the entire room. Without the comments Jesus shared with His disciples on the side, an average listener might conclude that *there is purpose to the work of the Kingdom of God. God is looking for a good and abundant return* in the lives of those who commit themselves to Him. **There are numerous things that can deter from maturity, but the end result of good seed in good soil should be a multiplication. Secondly, the light needs to be displayed openly. Hiding the light makes no sense.**

Now Jesus throws out another word picture. This one emphasizes the spontaneous, hidden and seemingly irrepressible nature of the life of the seed. **He said that the Kingdom of God was like when people plant seed in a field.** They throw the seed out there, and then go about their business. Days and nights go by, and then automatically, or of itself, the seed sprouts and begins to grow. The farmer had to do no more than get it into the right environment. The remainder of **the growth process is like a mystery. It just happens automatically.** It seemingly starts all by itself, and then it goes through an orderly process of development. **There is a pattern of growth which can be observed taking place year after year. The farmer doesn't understand it, but he expects it. In fact, he is counting on it!** His whole business enterprise depends on this mysterious, seemingly spontaneous and automatic growth process. If he couldn't count on this happening, he wouldn't bother planting anything at all!

Now, **Jesus said that the Kingdom of God is like this. What does He mean? He was referring to the dependable nature of the power of life contained within the word of God.** How do I know this? Because earlier, in

His explanation of the parable of the soils, He said that the seed was the word of God (vs. 14; cf. Lk 8:11). It is highly unlikely that He would switch from this meaning without some obvious indication. So, if the seed sown is the word of God, then the field is the world, the hearts of humankind (cf. Matt. 13:38). **One of the major points of this parable is that if the seed is sown, it will sprout and grow.** It will do this because it is designed to do so. **There is something predictable and dependable about getting the message out. It will be received. People will respond.** Sometimes it may seem as though nothing is happening, but in reality the seed is getting ready to pop open, take root and put up a shoot of new growth. This is an important part of what Jesus is teaching. **The Kingdom of God is comprised of people who know and trust that the seed will have an impact, ...it will produce life.**

This fits with the teachings of the Bible in other places. For example, in Isa. 55:10,11, the Lord says, "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; ¹¹ so will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; *it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.*" Sounds like a pretty close parallel to what Jesus was saying, doesn't it? Here, the word picture is slightly different. God's word is likened to precipitation, but *the principle is the same.* It will accomplish God's intent. What is His desire? James answers that for us in 1:18, "According to His desire, *He gave us birth by the word of truth...*" Notice in both these passages **the word accomplishes God's desires, which is to cause people to know and respond to Him.** His purpose is to bless them, but this blessing comes to those who believe in His message of good news, and trust in His plan to save them and change their lives, ...instead of trying to be "good enough" on their own. **God designed His method of salvation to bypass the proud and arrogant, those who trust in their own abilities.** Paul puts it this way, in I Cor. 1:21, "For since ...the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased *through the foolishness of the message preached* to save those who believe."

On a more personal level, **like a field without seed, our hearts are incapable of producing a crop of righteousness. We need an infusion of life from outside.** The good fruit of God's nature is only produced in us when the seed of His nature is sown in our hearts, *and is joined by faith* so that it sprouts. **The power of that life in us to transform the lifeless dirt of our hearts is as mysterious, wonderful and relentless as that of the seed in the field.** And, *where does that faith come from?* "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ," says the apostle Paul (Rom. 10:17). The first ingredient for faith is a hope, a word or thought of expectation and promise (Heb. 11:1). There is no room for faith if there is nothing to look forward to. Faith is *trusting in* what you do *not* yet have in hand, or what you cannot see or guarantee on your own (Rom. 8:24,25). **Faith is a choice to trust in the dependability of some expectation. But without a word or message from God to trust in, there is no rational basis for faith.** We need to know what things God has indicated He is willing to do for us, or what He is calling us to. **The scriptures are given to us to inform us of the plans and promises of God for us.** Moving on from elementary saving faith, *what is needed to grow as a Christian?* The apostle Peter, "...you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God. ...And this is the word which was preached to you. Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, ² *like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word,* so that by it you may grow unto salvation" (I Pet. 1:23,25; 2:1,2). So, **not only does the word bring the seed of salvation to our lifeless dirt, but also the seeds necessary for growth and change.** A big part of the growth process entails renewing our perception of reality (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23; Col. 3:10). *How is our perception of reality to change, if we do not get new insight or information from somewhere?* The scriptures are specifically given to us for this purpose, to teach us the truth and to help us get it into our experience (II Tim. 3:16,17). **Reading, studying and obeying the scriptures can be like planting good seed in the field of our hearts.**

In a final passage for our consideration, Paul wrote, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows *to the Spirit* will from the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹ Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary." (Gal. 6:7-9). This passage indicates that **there are other ways we "sow seed" into our lives.** Any ways in which we invest ourselves toward the things of God will be like planting seed in our lives. Here in this context, Paul specifically mentions doing good to others out of obedience to Christ. Again, as in Jesus' parable, **the promise is given that these seeds will sprout, grow, mature and bear fruit in our lives. We may not see or understand how, but we can count on it!** It is the Spirit who gives life (Jn. 6:63). It is important to continue to invest in the things of the Spirit, even when we feel like little is happening. Eventually, we will see the new growth.