

The Parables of Jesus #12
The Parable of the Seed Growing by Itself
(Mk. 4:26-29)
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INTRODUCTION

- A. I remember the seed growing experiment from elementary school
 - 1. We took a pane of glass and on top laid several layers of paper towels
 - 2. Then we scattered a few bean seeds on the paper towels
 - 3. On top of that went another pane of glass, then we taped two sides of the glass panes together to hold everything
 - 4. The glass panes were stood up on one edge and we then watered the paper towels, and re-watered them each day
 - 5. In just a few days, the seeds began to sprout, and you could watch how they were growing through the glass
 - 6. Now, how did it do that?

- B. Science may explain to us what happens when seeds germinate, but no one yet knows how to explain the concept of life
 - 1. In others words, we know what happens, but we don't know how
 - 2. With all our advances, it's still a mystery

- C. These are the simple stories Jesus chose to use to communicate truths about the kingdom of heaven
 - 1. The idea of seeds growing is a frequent picture used to illustrate the kingdom
 - 2. In the parable tonight, Jesus uses it again to describe something very important

- D. Mark 4:26-29

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. 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." (NKJ)

I. THE PARABLE

- A. Remember, we must identify that to which Jesus compares the kingdom
 - 1. It isn't just seed
 - 2. Here, the kingdom is compared to the entire process of growth that seed goes through
 - 3. The story is both informative and encouraging

- B. Story summary -- what's the kingdom like?
 - 1. It's like planting seed, then going to bed and getting up -- daily activity
 - 2. Suddenly one day you notice that where you planted seed, it's all sprouted and beginning to grow
 - 3. You carefully watch, and each day, the seed grows through a variety of stage -- blade, ear, full corn in the ear
 - 4. Stages aren't announced, nor can you even see the changes
 - 5. It's a mystery how it happens, but it does happen

- C. That's what the kingdom is like
 - 1. Nothing happens until the seed is planted
 - 2. Then things happen quietly, secretly -- but they do happen
 - 3. Steadily and surely, the seed grows to maturity

II. LESSONS TO LEARN

- A. The kingdom is a result of the sovereign rule of God
 - 1. Ps 33:8-9
Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. (NKJ)
 - 2. Prov 30:4
Who has ascended into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is His Son's name, if you know? (NKJ)
 - 3. Job 9:10
He does great things past finding out, yes, wonders without number. (NKJ)
 - 4. When you speak of the works of God, it is good to experience awe at his power and ability -- to see it goes far beyond our understanding

- B. Growth of the kingdom does require some participation on our part
 - 1. The parable of the sower showed the importance of planting the seed of the word of God into the hearts of men
 - 2. Matt 28:19-20
Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and

lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (NKJ)

3. 1 Cor 3:6

I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. (NKJ)

C. Like the parable illustrates, however, growth and development are God's work

1. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. (NKJ)

2. Acts 21:19-20

When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. . . . (NKJ)

3. Paul understood that if he would plant the word, God would cause it to grow and develop

D. The parable points us to the truth that the kingdom is spiritual in nature

1. John 3:5

Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (NKJ)

2. 1 Pet 1:23

having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, (NKJ)

3. Phil 2:13

for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (NKJ)

4. John 15:4-5

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. (NKJ)

5. 2 Cor 4:16

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. (NKJ)

E. The kind of growth God desires is gradual, but steady and sure

1. 1 Pet 2:2

as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, (NKJ)

2. 2 Pet 3:18

but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen. (NKJ)

F. Kingdom growth has a harvest as its final goal

1. Gal 6:7-9

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit

reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. (NKJ)

2. Matt 25:31-34

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: (NKJ)

3. Already in our study of the parables, we have seen that judgment against the wicked and reward for those in the kingdom is God's plan

CONCLUSION

A. What is the kingdom of heaven like?

1. It's like a man who plants seed
2. He goes to bed at night, rises in the morning -- daily activity
3. In the meantime, something is happening to the seed that he neither controls nor can further affect
4. God is at work, doing his life-giving, life-sustaining work
5. Suddenly, there is the plant, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear

B. It's an appropriate picture of what happens in the life of those in whom the seed of the word of God is planted

1. We can plant it and water it
2. But God gives the increase
3. It is gradual, but steady
4. We see stages of spiritual growth and finally full maturity
5. It is a parable of hope and promise for the people of God

C. Has the seed been planted in your heart?

1. Is it growing
2. Are you aware of it's progress
3. God is doing a work in your life

D. If you are not a Christian, obey the gospel today

E. Invitation