



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

*Week 13: The Great Paradox*

The kingdom of God is the rule and reign of God from heaven introduced into human history. It was established when Jesus came to earth and it will be fully realised at his return. It is made up of unlikely subjects because it is a kingdom for the strugglers and the unrighteous. Jesus used parables to teach his listeners about what the kingdom of God was like.

## 1. The Kingdom Is Concealed But Must Be Revealed

- Read Mark 4:21-23

Jesus compared the kingdom of God to an oil lamp that has one function – to fill the surrounding dark areas with light. We are supposed to be that light to the world, allowing people to see that the kingdom of God has arrived, and we do that through the way in which we live. When we engage with justice and mercy and when we act like a loving and serving community and give generously of ourselves and of our resources, people get to see the good news of Jesus in action. When we fail to live like that, we hide the good news away from people and we stop functioning as a light to the world.

- ❖ Q: Why is it important to live lives that reflect the reality of God's kingdom?
- ❖ Q: Are you conscious about the way you live your life, knowing that unbelievers are watching you?
- ❖ Q: In what areas of your life are you particularly intentional about living in a God-honouring way, and why?
- ❖ Q: What do you think non-believers are really watching for in your life? (Are they looking for morality or love?)

## 2. The Kingdom Needs To Be Heard In Order To Be Seen

- Read Mark 4:24-25

Jesus wanted his followers to listen intently to what he was teaching them, so that they would not just hear and understand his words but that they would apply it to their own lives. He promised that if they listened and learned then he would give them more, but if they did not, even the little that they started with would be taken away from them. We need to heed the warning and embrace the promise about Jesus' teachings.

- ❖ Q: Why do you think Jesus wanted his followers to not just listen intently but to obey his words?
- ❖ Q: If we are people who love a good sermon but never do anything with what we hear, what is the warning for us in this parable?
- ❖ Q: Are we ever guilty of making less of what Jesus says in order to continue living in the same way that we are currently?
- ❖ Q: Why is it encouraging knowing that God will give us more of his word to learn and apply if we are faithful with what he gives us now?

## 3. The Kingdom Grows All On Its Own And With Our Participation

- Read Mark 4:26-29

God does the work of growing his kingdom. Our job is to keep our hearts soft and to “weed” and “water” the soil but the growth happens by the power of the Holy Spirit. As we tend to our hearts, over time Christ grows his kingdom in and through us, and we need to trust him to change and grow us. While he does his work in us, we need to share the good news of his kingdom with as many people as possible and trust God to bring results.

- ❖ Q: Who is it that actually changes us? Is it the Holy Spirit or do we do it ourselves?
- ❖ Q: If you look back on your Christian walk, do you see some growth in Christ? Was any of it a quick process or something that God did slowly and thoroughly?
- ❖ Q: What evidence is there that God is building his kingdom in and through our little church?

## 4. The Kingdom Seems Tiny, But It Will Eventually Rule The World

- Read Mark 4:30-34

The kingdom started out small and grew continuously even through great adversity throughout the ages. It got polluted in the middle ages and yet survived and was reformed in the 1600's. The church today is made up of 2 billion people and it's growing rapidly. What started as a tiny seed is becoming a huge tree, where people can find shade and rest.