

Gospel Service

Mark 4: 26-29

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In considering our Lord Jesus Christ according to the accounts given to us in the various gospels, one cannot fail to be deeply affected by all the things which he "began both to do and teach," Acts 1: 1. Not that we have recorded for us all that He did and taught, for John assures us that had this been attempted all the books in the world would not have been sufficient to contain it, John 21: 25. We can be sure that everything needed to fit us for our service in this world *has* been recorded for our enlightenment and encouragement. While four servants were used by the Holy Spirit to give us an account of the earthly ministry of our Lord, how distinctive they all are in their particular line of ministry concerning HIM. Each gospel may have as a caption an Old Testament Scripture as follows:-

Matthew — "Behold, thy King," Zechariah 9: 9;

Mark — "Behold My servant," Isaiah 42: 1;

Luke — "Behold the Man," Zechariah 6: 12;

John — "Behold your God," Isaiah 40: 9.

This wonderful Person is the long promised Messiah of Israel, the faithful servant of God; One who as moving through this world in sinless, subject, perfect Manhood ever gave an answer to God of all that man should be for His pleasure and glory. Yet, underlying all, was His personal greatness, for He is "God blessed for ever. Amen." Romans 9: 5. This glorious Person is our Saviour, and as belonging to Him, our Teacher.

We have in mind to call attention to a parable which is recorded in the gospel by Mark only. While it is not said to be a parable, it is obviously in parabolic language. Doubtless it was uttered by our Lord at the time He gave the seven parables recorded in Matthew 13. Six of those seven are said to be parables of the Kingdom of Heaven, the first of them is *not* said to be so. The first one covered the ministry of our Lord while in this world, and prepared the ground for the setting up of the kingdom in the power of the Holy Spirit as recorded for us in Acts 2. The other six are said to be parables of the Kingdom of Heaven, and refer to the time of our Lord in heaven using His servants in the power of the Holy Spirit to establish the kingdom in a spiritual way in this world. The second parable viewed the kingdom as in the care of "men" as v. 25 records.

The parable we are calling attention to in Mark has a distinct bearing on the theme of service in the gospel, hence it is fittingly found in Mark the servant gospel. We venture a little explanation of it which we hope will be of help and encouragement to all who have part in the service of the gospel.

"And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the *blade*, then the *ear*, after that the full *corn* in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come," Mark 4: 26-29.

The first simple truth taught here is — sowing and reaping. If seed is not sown, fruit will never be produced. Moreover, if God does not put the right resources into the earth, sowing would be in vain.

Would not our Lord be assuring His disciples that unless God had prepared the ground first, their efforts would be in vain? To take this truth home to ourselves, all we can do is sow the seed. Once the seed is sown the sower can do no more, but goes on with his daily labours and leaves the seed to do its own work assisted by the resources which God has placed there. Let us not try devices in an endeavour to cause the seed to germinate when only God can do that! One is persuaded that this initial work of preparing the ground for the right reception of the seed — the word — is when a soul is "born again." Then, as our Lord spoke of the earth bringing forth "fruit of herself," so also a soul wrought upon by God would have spiritual resources for the receiving and gendering of the word heard in the preaching of the glad tidings of the grace of God. Also, as seed sown in the earth is beyond the reach and sight of the sower, yet the evidence of growth will be seen in the appearance of the "blade" and the "ear," and finally, "the full corn in the ear" which is the time to reap. So may we not be over anxious to reap ere the full time has come, nor lagging behind when we ought to be reaping. May we go on sowing the seed, quite assured that God only can cause it to grow, and let us be watchful for the appearance of the "full corn" — a harvest for the praise of God.