

"He knoweth not how"

Mark 4: 26-29

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In the gospel of Mark, chapter 4, we have a parable concerning the kingdom of God which only Mark records. That it fits in with his account of the works and words of our Lord as the Servant of God is evident to any spiritual mind. At the beginning of this chapter we have the parables concerning the Kingdom of God which are also recorded in both Matthew and Luke, who present them in accord with the character of their particular writings. Mark alone records the parable from which the words at the head of this paper are taken. It is not so much to present the labours of our Lord Himself, but rather as instruction for those who seek to carry on this work during the absence of the Lord. Two elements seem to stand out — labour and patience. A careful consideration of this parable would prevent us from being discouraged if we do not see some immediate fruit as the result of our labours. It may be that we are so eager to see souls entering the kingdom that we run before the Lord, but *patience* seems to be the kernel of this short parable.

We do well to lay to heart that the only element which will effect that which is according to God in the heart of any creature is the seed of the "word of God." Earlier in this chapter we have recorded that our Lord said, "The Sower soweth the word." If that was the only seed our Lord Himself used, we do well to limit ourselves to it today. Entertainments and such like things cannot implant in the heart of anyone the spiritual condition which is necessary for entrance into the Kingdom of God. It is in the Kingdom of God that mankind finds practical salvation. Only the seed which is the word of God can bring men and women into this salvation. With this in mind, we turn to the parable.

"And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground," v. 26. *Labour* is the first necessity if the seed of the word is to be sown in ground where it may bring forth fruit. May we never tire of sowing this seed whenever and wherever we may have the opportunity. However good the seed may be, if it is to produce fruit, it must be sown where it is likely to bear fruit. It is our responsibility to sow the seed of the word of God in the hearts of mankind, for the ground of the parable is surely indicative of the hearts of needy creatures.

After sowing the seed, — what more can we do? Nothing but hope and pray that it might bear fruit. Any further development is beyond our control. "And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, *he knoweth not how*", v. 27. Just as God has put into the earth all that is needed to cause botanical seed to grow, so He only can cause the seed of the word to grow in the human heart. As the sower would go on with his daily duties night and day leaving the seed in the earth to grow, so we go on in our responsibilities night and day, leaving the word to grow in any heart where it may have been sown. Of this we can be assured, that if God does begin a work in the heart of anyone, He will surely bring it to fruition (v. 20), but that will be in His own way and His own time. Thus this parable would teach us.

"For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear," v. 28. "The blade" would be the first indication of life, evidence that the seed had germinated. "The ear" would be a further indication of growth. "The full corn in the ear" would be fruit in maturity. Only then is it time to reap the harvest. In our eagerness to gather souls into the kingdom we may be inclined to reap blades, or ears, but how much better to wait for the manifest fruit; then our reaping will

not be in vain!

"But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come," v. 29. We can well afford to wait until the full fruit is produced, and thus sound spiritual material is brought into the Kingdom of God. According to this parable, it is the reward of *patience* after *labour*.

May we seek grace to go on with the sowing knowing that our labour is not in vain in the Lord, and may we have patience to wait, having this confidence, that if God does begin a work, and He only can, He will surely bring it to fruition, and will indicate to us when fruition has come. But this will be in His own time and way.