

Handout 2: Gospel of Mark Notes (Talk 13)

Ryan Carroll, Reformation Fellowship, May 2, 2021

Summary:

Jesus' parables were stories that pointed to truths about the kingdom that would have run contrary to some of Jesus' contemporaries' beliefs/hopes. What do these parables mean?

Outline:

1. Review from last week:

- a. John the Baptist's *national* ministry to Israel, proclaiming the imminent return of Yahweh to his people, left those who heard him AND witnessed Jesus, without excuse.
 - i. Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom having come "near" in his own presence AND supporting that claim through his ministry of healing, forgiveness, exorcism, calling sinners, and teaching, should have left little doubt FOR THOSE WITH EYES TO SEE. But for the rest... "they get everything in parables" (4:11)
- b. Jesus' choice to speak in parables WHILE citing Isaiah 6:9 as a part of the reason (see Mk. 4:9-13) he did so, indicated judgement would be on the way for those who didn't pay attention closely to what Jesus was saying and doing so as to ultimately embrace Him.
- c. The Parable of the Sower (4:3-9), on one level, worked to sound the warning about being careful of how one paid attention/listened to Jesus—the sower of the word. Not all soils (those who hear) will bear fruit.

2. Parables in General:

- a. Stories about timeless truths or contextually focused on the historical ministry of Jesus to Israel?
- b. Why veiled?
 - i. Potentially to keep shocking/angering message from getting Jesus killed prior to his appointed time?

1. Luke 4 is a direct speech that proved the need for a veiled message.
- ii. Once Jesus' had actually been resurrected (a seed sown?), the parables message is no longer veiled.
 1. Fits with 4:21-23 – “nothing is hidden except to be revealed, nor has anything been a secret but that it should come to light”

3. Overall structure of chapter 4:1-34

- a. Bookends:
 - i. Front End: Jesus teaching the crowds “many things in parables” (4:2)
 - ii. Back End: And with many such parables He was speaking the word to them as they were able to hear; He did not speak without a parable (4:34)
- b. Parables Part A: (4:3-20)
 - i. Parable of the Sower AND The Sower explained (in private)
- c. Center: (4:21-25)
 - i. “Nothing is hidden except to be revealed”
 - ii. “Be careful how you ‘measure’”
- d. Parables Part B: (4:26-32)
 - i. Parable of the Farmer and the Seed
 - ii. Parable of the Mustard Seed

4. Given structure: Who is Jesus speaking to when? (the crowd vs. disciples)

5. Interpretation of Parables

- a. Parable of the Sower interpreted:
 - i. Lens of Jesus as Sower:
 1. These various responses (soils) were exactly what was happening in real time as people were seeing Jesus' deeds and listening to his kingdom message
 - a. See Mk. 1-3 for range of responses
 2. Good soil = Those who “hear and accept, end up bearing fruit”
 - a. Accepting the word means?

- i. In the parabolic metaphor, acceptance = the seed taking deep root in the soil (something the other soils could not do)
 - ii. In the real-time of Jesus' ministry, acceptance meant what?
 - b. Bearing fruit means what?
 - ii. Lens of God as Sower?:
 - 1. How does this picture/parable also reflect the story of Israel?
 - 2. Is this parable related to Isaiah 6:9-13?
 - iii. Is The Sower a "kingdom" parable?
 - b. Mark 4:21-25 (the Center/Pivot)
 - i. Part 1: A Lamp and Peck-measure
 - 1. What is the secret?
 - a. How does this saying connect with the "Mystery of the Kingdom" (vs. 11)?
 - ii. Part 2: Standards of Measure
 - 1. What does "measure" mean?
 - 2. What is the message?
 - c. Parable of the farmer and the seed:
 - i. What questions about the kingdom does this pose?
 - ii. What questions about the kingdom does this answer?
 - d. Parable of the mustard seed:
 - i. What, if anything, is different about this parable from the Farmer and Seed?

6. In what ways do these parables potentially subvert the expectations (by various groups) of the Kingdom?

- i. Kingdom will include all Abraham's biological descendants?
- ii. Kingdom will only include the right kind of Jews?
 - 1. Torah Intensifiers
 - 2. The Elites
 - 3. The Qumran group
 - 4. Etc...
- iii. Kingdom will come through force/battle?
- iv. Kingdom will emerge swiftly?

v. Kingdom will not include the nations (“outsiders”)?

7. What is the Kingdom then and now?

- a. First century Palestine was not the time for the longed-for fulfillment of restoration of all things
 - i. But... something significant began there, then.
- b. For those with eyes to see, Jesus’ resurrection was a PARABLE, par excellence, (the story of the seed enacted) that provided the HOPE/FIRST FRUITS of that Kingdom—the model for how God was going to go about restoring all things.
- c. In what sense was God’s Kingdom inaugurated in Jesus?
 - i. Resurrection and exaltation?
 - ii. The people of the kingdom took on new definition?
- d. In what sense are there still pieces of the Kingdom to “emerge”?
 - i. Has the mustard seed fully grown yet?
 - ii. Has the farmer put in the harvest yet?