

POWER OF THE KINGDOM

CORE PASSAGE: MARK 4:21-34

CONTEXT

After Jesus taught and explained to His disciples the parable of the sower and the importance of letting the gospel sink deep roots into our lives, Jesus delivered several short parables about the kingdom of God. He again emphasized the importance of truly listening to His words and living out their powerful implications in the world. Jesus knew His kingdom would start off small in this world, but it also would grow and cover the whole earth.

KEY CONCEPT

The kingdom of God may start small but will be revealed and grow in power.

As you examine Mark 4:21-34:

- Reflect on the truth that God's kingdom grows in this world in God's power and timing, not ours.
- Contemplate that Jesus's ministry started small but would usher in a worldwide kingdom for His glory and purposes.



TIMELINE

Jesus Appoints His Twelve Disciples
(Mark 3:13-19)

SESSION STUDY:
Jesus Teaches Parables on the
Kingdom of God (Mark 4:21-34)

Jesus Heals Two Daughters
(Mark 5:21-43)

Jesus Teaches and Explains the
Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1-20)

Jesus Calms a Storm
(Mark 4:35-41)

Daily Readings

☐ **Day 1:** Mark 4:21-25

☐ **Day 4:** Luke 8:16-18

☐ **Day 2:** Mark 4:26-29

☐ **Day 5:** Luke 8:19-21

☐ **Day 3:** Mark 4:30-34

☐ **Day 6:** Psalm 9



Scan this QR code
to access this session's
Scripture passages.

PERSONAL PREPARATION

MARK 4:21-29

WE ARE MEANT TO REVEAL THE MESSAGE OF THE POWERFUL KINGDOM OF GOD.

Underline the final outcome or goal in each of Jesus's three illustrations.

21 He also said to them, “Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket or under a bed? Isn’t it to be put on a lampstand? **22** For there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed, and nothing concealed that will not be brought to light. **23** If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen.” **24** And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear. By the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and more will be added to you. **25** For whoever has, more will be given to him, and whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.”

26 “The kingdom of God is like this,” he said. “A man scatters seed on the ground. **27** He sleeps and rises night and day; the seed sprouts and grows, although he doesn’t know how. **28** The soil produces a crop by itself—first the blade, then the head, and then the full grain on the head. **29** As soon as the crop is ready, he sends for the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

MISSION OF THE CHURCH: The church is a sign and instrument of the kingdom of God, a people united by faith in the gospel announcement of the crucified and risen King Jesus. The mission of the church is to go into the world in the power of the Spirit and make disciples by proclaiming this gospel, calling people to respond in ongoing repentance and faith, and demonstrating the truth and power of the gospel by living under the lordship of Christ for the glory of God and the good of the world.

Key Concept: The kingdom of God may start small but will be revealed and grow in power.

Jesus continued to teach the crowds using everyday examples in surprising ways. “Would you bring a light into a room only to hide it?” He asked. Likewise, did God send Jesus into the world only to hide His light? Of course not. Although at this point, it may have appeared that way.

When Jesus spoke, He often concealed His truths in parables, similar to how He often tried to conceal His miracles (Mark 1:44; 5:43). In the series of short sayings in Mark 4, Jesus explained that though His kingdom was now largely hidden, it would soon be revealed in the Father’s perfect timing. But how would people respond to that revelation? “Pay attention” (4:24), Jesus warned, because God’s revelation comes to us to the extent that we listen and receive it. As in the parable of the sower, the person who fails to receive the Word soon discovers that it has been stolen away. But the one who receives the Word by faith is rewarded with greater understanding.

How are you putting the kingdom of God on a lampstand through your life?



VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

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“The point of Jesus’ analogy is clear: Those who have received the light of the gospel are not to conceal it; rather they are to let it shine for others to see.”¹

—John MacArthur (1939–2025)

Jesus expanded on these truths about the kingdom of God with another brief parable about a farmer scattering seed. The emphasis of this parable, however, is on the sure growth of the seed rather than the soil’s condition. Once sown, the seed sprouts and grows, independent of the farmer’s understanding or attention. The sun, rain, and soil nourish the plants to maturity, and then the harvest comes. Likewise, believers sow God’s Word with the confidence that God is the One germinating, maturing, and readying His people for the harvest at Jesus’s return (1 Corinthians 3:7; Romans 8:30).

What role does the church play in the certainty of God’s coming kingdom?

PERSONAL PREPARATION

MARK 4:30-34

GOD'S KINGDOM MAY HAVE STARTED SMALL AND HUMBLY BUT WILL GROW TO BE A BLESSING FOR ALL.

Underline how the mustard seed starts out, and circle its final form.

30 And he said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable can we use to describe it? **31** It’s like a mustard seed that, when sown upon the soil, is the smallest of all the seeds on the ground. **32** And when sown, it comes up and grows taller than all the garden plants, and produces large branches, so that the birds of the sky can nest in its shade.” **33** He was speaking the word to them with many parables like these, as they were able to understand. **34** He did not speak to them without a parable. Privately, however, he explained everything to his own disciples.

PHRASE STUDY

KINGDOM OF GOD: Jesus’s miracles, preaching, forgiving sins, and resurrection ushered in God’s sovereign rule. Jesus chose and sent out His followers with kingly authority (Matthew 28:18-20). Whether Jew or Gentile, those who trust in Jesus are transferred from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of God (Colossians 1:13).²

Key Concept: The kingdom of God may start small but will be revealed and grow in power.



Jesus's next parable compared the kingdom of God to a mustard seed and plant. Considered the tiniest of seeds in the region, mustard seeds could grow to produce plants as tall as ten feet. Comparing God's kingdom to this plant would have surprised many of Jesus's listeners, who may have expected God's kingdom to begin with a dramatic overthrow of the Roman Empire. That was not God's plan, however.

The kingdom of God started with the death of one small seed, a death that would bear much fruit (John 12:23-24). In Jerusalem alone, thousands came to faith in Christ after Jesus's death and resurrection (see Acts 2; 4). The good news of what Jesus accomplished spread throughout Judea and Samaria and then through the entire Roman Empire. It continues to spread today on all continents and will not be stopped until people from all nations have come to find refuge in Christ (Matthew 24:14; Revelation 5:9), like birds nesting in a humble mustard bush.

What are some blessings bestowed on those who find shelter in God's kingdom?

Jesus's parables illustrated God's kingdom. The development and characteristics of His kingdom contrast so profoundly with the kingdoms of humankind that Jesus graciously prepared His followers for its in-breaking with many parables. Jesus was wise, though, not to overwhelm the people with more truth than their hearts could take in (Mark 4:33; cf. John 16:12). Little by little, He taught the crowds and explained to His disciples about His kingdom that would, little by little, topple earth's kingdoms and establish everlasting righteousness (Daniel 2:44; 9:24).

How should our teaching model Jesus's teaching, both in what we teach and in how we teach it?

CHURCH CONNECTION

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Jesus ushered in the kingdom of God, and we are blessed to have a part in revealing the message of His kingdom, seeing God's glory grow.

THREE PARABLES

Read Mark 4:21-34. Write out the beginning of each parable, how it ends, and summarize its meaning in your own words.

	BEGINNING	RESULT	MEANING
LAMP Mark 4:21-25			
GROWING SEED Mark 4:26-29			
MUSTARD SEED Mark 4:30-34			

Which parable encourages you the most? Why?

How do these parables illustrate what success looks like in faith and ministry?

Key Concept: The kingdom of God may start small but will be revealed and grow in power.



HEAD

What are some dangers of misinterpreting and misapplying God's Word?

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

As you reflect on the kingdom of God depicted in Psalm 9, praise God for His just, righteous, and gracious rule. Thank Him for being your refuge, and pray for opportunities to proclaim His deeds among the nations.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



HEART

What obstacles or distractions keep you from desiring God's kingdom and God's Word, and how will you address those?



HANDS

How will you point people to God's kingdom through your words and actions this week?

