

The Gospel According to Mark

Lesson 4

Mark 4:2- Mark 5:43

In rapid succession Mark records more of the Lord's short parables.

The lamp under the bushel

Mark 4: ²¹And He was saying to them, "A lamp is not brought to be put under a peck-measure, is it, or under a bed? Is it not *brought* to be put on the lampstand? ²²"For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has *anything* been secret, but that it should come to light. ²³"If any man has ears to hear, let him hear."

Putting the candle under the bushel will not only hide its light; it will put the flame out. Putting the candle under the bed will set the house aflame. The candle is meant for the candlestand where its light glows throughout the entire room. The Lord has charged His apostles and followers with the task of spreading the gospel to the world; it cannot be shared if it is hidden. They have been given the measure of knowledge to change the world, but they must let their lights shine with the gospel message.

The standard of measure

Mark 4: ²⁴And He was saying to them, "Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it shall be measured to you; and more shall be given you besides. ²⁵"For whoever has, to him shall *more* be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him."

Each person can absorb only so much of the gospel message at a time. The follower must hear the message and incorporate it into his ministry for the Lord. More understanding of the gospel will follow and it must be incorporated just as the first. But perhaps the message has been heard but not incorporated in the person's ministry? That message which is not put into practice may soon be taken away. How that knowledge grows in a follower's life is a mystery, but the fact remains that it does grow if we put it into practice as soon as we learn its truths.

The kingdom of God is like the seed upon the soil

Mark 4: ²⁶And He was saying, "The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; ²⁷and goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts up and grows-- how, he himself does not know. ²⁸"The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. ²⁹"But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

Every follower of the Lord should have his own specific ministry of sharing the gospel. We should all be planting the seed of its message in the hearts of everyone we meet. We can never predict or understand how that message will grow, but grow it will in some form. When the gospel has grown in the heart to just the right point,

the person can be harvested for the Lord. Our purpose as followers of Christ is to plant seeds of the gospel as we live our lives each day because the secret of the growth is in the seed of the gospel, not in the soil of the hearer. All who hear the gospel message can experience its growth within them to the point of salvation.

The kingdom of God is like the mustard seed

Mark 4: ³⁰And He said, "How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it? ³¹*It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil, ³²yet when it is sown, grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR CAN NEST UNDER ITS SHADE."*

Planting the smallest seed of the gospel message can be enormously profitable to the kingdom of God. However small the testimony, it can grow to mammoth proportions in the heart of the hearer.

He was teaching in only parables at this time in His ministry

Mark 4: ³³And with many such parables He was speaking the word to them as they were able to hear it; ³⁴and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.

At this point in the Lord's ministry He uses parables almost exclusively. Drawing from everyday life and nature, the parables have earthly meanings with eternal consequences. As close to the Lord as the disciples are, they still struggle with the true message that the Lord is trying to present. The Lord explains His meaning for each parable privately, not in the crowd of onlookers which include the scribes and Pharisees. Privately the Lord discloses the fresh revelation of the parables and how they portray the mysteries of the kingdom of God. However, the Lord does not teach every lesson in parables; some He teaches in life's experiences, as in the case of the next story.

He was sleeping in the boat when the storm arose

Mark 4: ³⁵And on that day, when evening had come, He said to them, *"Let us go over to the other side."* ³⁶And leaving the multitude, they took Him along with them, just as He was, in the boat; and other boats were with Him. ³⁷And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. ³⁸And He Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" ³⁹And being aroused, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, *"Hush, be still."* And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. ⁴⁰And He said to them, *"Why are you so timid? How is it that you have no faith?"* ⁴¹And they became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

The Lord has made the decision to go to Gerasenes to minister. Instead of walking around the seashore of Galilee, He and the disciples get into small boats and begin to row across the sea. Several small boats are sailing together and the Lord is at the back of one, sleeping on a pillow. The Sea of Galilee is 682 feet below the level of the Mediterranean Sea. It is common for the sea breeze of the Mediterranean to heat up as it crosses the land. After climbing Mt. Herman, the wind can rush down the mountainside to cause a cyclonic turbulence across the Sea of Galilee. Today, dangerous storms suddenly occur on the sea and endanger the lives of those in small boats. On this day, one of these storms occurs, frightening the men who are in fear for their lives; yet Jesus is peacefully asleep at the back of one of the boats. The men wake Him up and He calms the storm. The Lord's power over nature frightens the men as much as the storm. Clearly they have accepted His Messiahship, but they have failed to conceptualize the total authority of His Godship. Even asleep at the back of the boat, He is still God. His disciples now begin to grasp the true nature of Jesus as God in the flesh. He can control the winds and the elements and He can cast out demons; He must be God. As they arrive at Gerasenes, there are more demons waiting to be cast out.

The demon-possessed man of Gerasenes

Mark 5: ¹And they came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes. ²And when He had come out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him, ³and he had his dwelling among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; ⁴because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him. ⁵And constantly night and day, among the tombs and in the mountains, he was crying out and gashing himself with stones. ⁶And seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; ⁷and crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What do I have to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!" ⁸For He had been saying to him, "**Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!**" ⁹And He was asking him, "**What is your name?**" And he said to Him, "My name is Legion; for we are many." ¹⁰And he *began* to entreat Him earnestly not to send them out of the country. ¹¹Now there was a big herd of swine feeding there on the mountain. ¹²And *the demons* entreated Him, saying, "Send us into the swine so that we may enter them." ¹³And He gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand *of them*; and they were drowned in the sea. ^{14a}And their herdsmen ran away and reported it in the city and *out* in the country.

At the shoreline of Gerasenes, the Lord is immediately approached by a naked man, possessed, with not just one demon, but a whole legion of demons. It is not clear whether a legion of demons is be the same as a legion of Roman soldiers, but the comparison is interesting. A Roman legion contained 6,826 men, quite a large number of demons for one man. Although we do not know exactly how many demons are in the man, there are enough demons to fill a herd of about 2,000 pigs when the Lord casts them out. It is also interesting that the Lord is commanding the

demons to come out of the man, but they resist because they do not want to return to their home in the abyss, so they suggested the pigs instead. We must also notice that there is no doubt in the minds of the demons concerning Jesus. To them, He is the Son of the Most High God. They obey the command of the Lord and into the pigs they go, but the Lord drives the pigs into the sea and the pigs drown, requiring the demons to return to their home in the abyss after all.

He sends the healed man of Gerasenes to testify in his home town

Mark 5: ^{14b} And *the people* came to see what it was that had happened. ¹⁵ And they came to Jesus and observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the "legion"; and they became frightened. ¹⁶ And those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and *all* about the swine. ¹⁷ And they began to entreat Him to depart from their region. ¹⁸ And as He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was entreating Him that he might accompany Him. ¹⁹ And He did not let him, but He said to him, "**Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you.**" ²⁰ And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone marveled.

It doesn't take long for the herdsman to spread the news of their great economic loss. They gather the sympathy of the town's people and they all return to the scene to complain. When they arrive they see the naked man clothed and as Mark says, "in his right mind." The same man who has kept them up night after night, scared them to the point of death by his actions and broken all the chains and ropes they have tried to use on him, is at last normal and sane. They do not care about his wellbeing; they care only about the economic loss of the pig herders. How can they recover from this great loss? The town's people are afraid that the Lord will destroy all their businesses and they will be destitute. They beg Him to leave and not come back. At the same time, the healed man begins to beg to go with Him as a disciple. The Lord does not let him get in the boat; rather, He sends him to testify to his own people his life-changing experience with the Lord. No one needs to know the Lord more than his people who have just denied the Lord's ministering in their town. The healed man begins to tell his story in Decapolis; a region of Syria so named because it had ten cities, one of which was Gerasenes. The day's ministry is not over. Back on the other side of the lake, a Jewish synagogue official, desperate to find help for his dying daughter, awaits the Lord's return with the multitude at the seashore.

Jairus the Synagogue official

Mark 5: ²¹ And when Jesus had crossed over again in the boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered about Him; and He stayed by the seashore. ²² And one of the synagogue officials named Jairus came up, and upon seeing Him, fell at His feet, ²³ and entreated Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death; *please* come and lay Your hands on her, that she may get well and live." ²⁴ And He went off with him; and a great multitude was following Him and pressing in on Him.

It is a tragic time in this father's life, so tragic that he is willing to leave the religious life of the synagogue, amidst all the disgust for Jesus, and seek Him out because he had heard the testimonies about the Lord. The Lord hears his request and they begin their journey to his house, but the crowd has its own needs and it gathers around the Him as He tries to leave. There is one there who doesn't want to speak to the Lord; she just wants to touch His garment.

The woman who bled for twelve years

Mark 5: ²⁵And a woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, ²⁶and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse, ²⁷after hearing about Jesus, came up in the crowd behind *Him*, and touched His cloak. ²⁸For she thought, "If I just touch His garments, I shall get well." ²⁹And immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. ³⁰And immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power *proceeding* from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, "**Who touched My garments?**" ³¹And His disciples said to Him, "You see the multitude pressing in on You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?' " ³²And He looked around to see the woman who had done this. ³³But the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him the whole truth. ³⁴And He said to her, "**Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.**"

The woman is as desperate as the synagogue official. She has expended all her resources and there is not a physician in the country that can help her. She musters within herself a faith in the testimonies she has heard about the Lord and goes to the seashore, not to speak to the Lord, just to touch His garment. Her faith is so great that she knows that with just one touch she can be healed. She is right. As the Lord moves with Jairus to go tend to his little girl, she is finally able to get close enough to touch the hem of His garment just before they arrive at his house. Immediately she is healed, and, immediately Jesus knows that His healing power has gone out from His body. He stops to speak to her. "Who touched me?" The crowd is pressed against Him and His disciples respond to His question, doubting if anyone will know the answer. Everything comes to a standstill at that moment. The crowds are parted and He looks into the eyes of the woman who has touched Him. She is healed because she has the faith to trust in His healing power.

Jairus daughter had died

Mark 5: ³⁵While He was still speaking, they came from the *house of* the synagogue official, saying, "Your daughter has died; why trouble the Teacher anymore?" ³⁶But Jesus, overhearing what was being spoken, said to the synagogue official, "**Do not be afraid any longer, only believe.**" ³⁷And He allowed no one to follow with Him, except Peter and James and John the brother of James. ³⁸And they came to the house of the synagogue official; and He beheld a commotion, and *people* loudly weeping and wailing. ³⁹And entering in, He said to them, "**Why make a commotion and weep? The child has not died, but is asleep.**"

⁴⁰And they *began* laughing at Him. But putting them all out, He took along the child's father and mother and His own companions, and entered *the room* where the child was. ⁴¹And taking the child by the hand, He said to her, "*Talitha kum!*" (~~which translated means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise!"~~). ⁴²And immediately the girl rose and *began* to walk; for she was twelve years old. And immediately they were completely astounded. ⁴³And He gave them strict orders that no one should know about this; and He said that *something* should be given her to eat.

At just the right moment, the messenger comes from the house with the news of the little girl's death. In one way it is a good transition from the woman who has just been healed, but in another way Jairus might have thought that it was a diversion that took so much time that his daughter died before she could be healed. Certainly the Lord pays no attention to the message from the home and reassures the father that all will be well. Taking Peter, James, John, Jairus, and Jairus' wife into the small room, Jesus tells the family and disciples that the little girl is only sleeping. It is a beautiful word that implies that although she is dead, she is not going to stay dead. The Lord's word choice causes laughter from the crowd. In their minds, if the child is dead, they do not believe He can bring her back to life. Jesus takes her by the hand and speaks two words in Aramiac. Peter hears the words and later retells the words to Mark who translates them into Greek for the Romans who will receive this gospel story. When the Lord says, "Talitha kum," or as we would say, "little girl, get up," she responds to the call of the Lord and gets up. The girl steps out of the room with the Lord and everyone is astonished. She needs food so the Lord asks that she be fed, a natural concern of the Great Physician. Knowing the crowd, the Lord instructs them not to tell anyone about this great miracle. The Lord knows the human nature of everyone present so He knows that they cannot keep this miracle a secret. The work of the Lord is almost through for the day as He travels on to His childhood home of Nazareth. There He can rest until the Sabbath.