

Seeds of Hope

Mark 4:26-32, Mar 6 2016

The last couple weeks I've left you with challenges that connect to Jesus's parables about the Kingdom of God: The parable of the sower and soils, the lamp, and the measuring cup of the Lord. Keep on sowing. Let Christ's light shine. You have everything to gain.

Jesus' continues to use the example of seeds to explain the Kingdom of God. So simple, yet powerful. First, the faithful farmer's work is compared to God's work.

Read v 26-29

Who has the bigger task, the farmer or God's created process? Yet one doesn't happen without the other. A seed needs certain conditions to burst from it's dormant stage...timing, soil, temperature and moisture are a few. And that's only the beginning. The farmer is important...but not in control of the whole process. Certainly, it makes a difference how we sow the Gospel: being sincere and gracious for instance. But there is an enormous process going on in Joe...to move him from skeptic or neutral to conviction and belief in Jesus. There is an unseen battle for his soul. How much credit can we take for the

miracle of rebirth in a human heart. God's grace is beyond our measure. We, like the farmer are to remain faithful to the work, believing some seeds will sprout new life...and there will be a glorious harvest. Keep on sowing, God knows what He is doing.

In the last parable of this section, Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a mustard seed. It's all about creating contrast. It helps us wonder how something so humble at the beginning...can grow to be so significant.

Read v30-32

The mustard seed seems so puny, yet it can grow 12 feet tall: big enough for shade and bird's nests. It's beyond natural explanation. And so it is fruitless to turn the kingdom of God into a natural equation we can predict. Jesus did not fit the people's idea of a Messiah: a humble servant and sacrifice.

In our next section in Mark, we will discover that the soil of the disciple's hearts is not so full of faith. Yet 2 years later, when all seems lost: the disciples hidden away devastated and fearing for their lives...a miracle happens.

They see their Master and friend risen from the tomb. They are given their final instructions. They watch Him rise into the clouds on the way to His throne in heaven. Then they receive the Holy Spirit. Such humble beginnings to an enormous move of God that even reaches into Lillooet 2016.

Jesus' parables point to hope that overcomes despair. It is by faith we move from discouragement to hope. Faith submerges us in God's will...beneath the swirling waves of trouble in this world. How can we have faith in the face of trials and despair?

1. God will accomplish His plan.

There will be judgment, but there will also be a miraculous harvest of saved souls (2 Pe 3:10-14).

2. We are the insiders. We can join the disciples to make a difference by God's power. We can be part of God's rescue plan. We have the seeds (gospel) and we have the lamp (Jesus). We have everything to gain.

Don't give up sowing on rugged ground. Let out the light of Christ in the living room, car, and workplace. As we walk, or share a meal. The hardest part of faith is waiting. But we're not waiting for

a co-worker, spouse, a team to finally win the championship...we wait upon the Lord. God's timing is for good.

Congregational Reading

2 Peter 3:8-9, 15

We wait in confidence that God will triumph. Christ will return. We have a place with God waiting for us, already prepared by Christ, the master builder

(Read John 14:1-6)

Jesus gave the disciples this hope on the night he was betrayed.

Confidence Proclaimed

What confidence do we have...to move onto a steeper narrow rugged path...and follow Jesus' way? It's not natural to share good news that will expose people's sin and their need for salvation. It's not natural to deny our sinful nature. It's not natural to be a humble servant. It's certainly not natural to receive 'blessing' from God for being put down because of our faith in Jesus. It's not natural to wait upon the Lord.

People get agitated if their text message takes more than 30 seconds to be read.

How did the early church survive the great persecutions? And our brothers and sisters being threatened or killed for their faith in Jesus today? Those marked by

the letter 'n' for Nazarene in Iraq-followers of Jesus of Nazareth. How can they believe they are serving on the front lines as God accomplishes His purposes.

Bonus: 'I am n', a book put out by the Voice of the Martyrs is now available (including kindle version). It is full of stories from Jesus followers facing the extremists in Iraq.

Their confidence and ours is grounded in the historical fact of Jesus' resurrection. The dead body of Jesus could not be found.

He has risen! (He's risen indeed) That is the hope we have that Christ is interceding for us today and anoints us for ministry by the Holy Spirit He has sent to us. That is also the reason we have hope for His return. His promises never fail. (I will come again). John 14:3

If our hope is grounded in the resurrection of Jesus. **Let us take full advantage of these times.** In 2 weeks churches all over the world recount our king's final return to Jerusalem-to become Savior. Passion Week. The resurrection of Jesus is the jewel of our faith.

I attempted to share my struggle with adopting the term 'Easter'. Some things we're vigilant about

and others, not. It happens in our personally and corporately. But despite easter's origins as paying homage to a goddess of spring, Christians long ago decided the battle wasn't worth it.

This should be no surprise to us...Paul warned us the days are evil. There will probably be more celebrations from the world that compete with our faith traditions. But Paul also wrote for us to make the most of every opportunity God presents. Wisdom comes from God and so our answers to these dilemmas are found in His word and we live it out by faith and love. When we raise our children to know Jesus and the jewel of our faith, His resurrection...all the other stuff is just fun and games. It's when we put more energy into the world's celebration there is a problem. The world's attempt to exchange the mystery of God's love...for the anticipation of a treasure hunt and sugar buzz will fail - when God is #1. We too, have the spark of creativity. Some add scripture clues to the hunt that unravel the mystery of the empty tomb. We knew a chef who surprised the church and brought a huge giant hollow chocolate egg with an

opening like an empty tomb and a cross inside as a reminder.

Our stake is with the king of kings and Lord of Lords. We have everything to gain...to join Christ's church: bursting through the gates of hell.

Our week of remembrance begins on **Palm Sunday, March 20**. I will be asking: are we ready for the King?

Then on Friday night 7pm we will recall those last hours.

Hiking Analogy

It will be a more intimate time for the church family where communion will be served.

As the sky darkens, we remember:

- Jesus washed the disciples feet and called them friends
- He instituted communion
- He was betrayed and sentenced for being a blasphemer
- He was handed over to the Romans to be crucified

God's radical, scandalous love displayed in a brutal sacrifice

It's Friday, but Sunday's a comin.

Resurrection Day

We will wonder and honor God as the sun is rising over the mountains on the lake at **9am**. By this time, the Lord would have begun to make His appearance to

followers beginning with Mary Magdalene.

At **10am** we share in a **Pancake Breakfast** to warm up again and encourage one another that the mystery of God's love and His power is being remembered. Feel free to share around the table the hope we have in Jesus. As we breakfast together, we build community.

Then at **11am** as believers we join in awe of our King to celebrate the **Resurrection of Jesus**. This is a prime opportunity to invite. By **advertising March 27 as our Resurrection Day service**, it catches people in a different way. In a day when our culture is fascinated with zombies as less than human walking corpses, we celebrate the risen Jesus...proving He was fully man and God. Jesus demonstrated the truth of everything He ever said and did by conquering sin and death for all who believe. Just like He promised (Matt 27:63)

The seeds of the Lord will be sown. The story of God's power over sin, death, and Satan will be told. The earthquake, the angel, the temple curtain torn from top to bottom, dead rising and Jesus

appearing in bodily form: the tomb with only His grave clothes. We will worship our risen Savior in song, prayer and word together.

The gospel message will be clear and there may be some who are ready to receive Jesus in repentance and faith.