



The Oaks Baptist Church Grand Prairie, Texas

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

We should see our local churches, all of us, as a part of God's universal church, being built in Christ Jesus throughout all generations

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK:

As a part of Your church, dear Jesus, keep building me in You

SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:

And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.
(Matt 16:18 NKJV)

(from "Our Daily Bread", Aug 22, 2023)

Series: Enduring Beliefs of the Church

UNIT 3: The Church and Its Teachings

NEXT WEEK

Baptism and the Lord's Supper
(Matt 3:13-17; 28:19-20;
1 Cor 11:23-29)

The Christian Church Mark 4:26-32; Eph 4:4-6, 11-18

Lesson Background and Introduction

Jesus and the people of His time and place did not have corn as we have it today. But they had other plants that grew rapidly in the fertile and well-watered fields of the Galilee region. Jesus told many parables involving farming and sowing seeds. This lesson reveals one reason why Jesus is known for his use of parables when teaching. While Jesus' parables are unique, this teaching method was well-known in the ancient world. For Jesus, a parable is usually an illustration that compares something well-known in the experience of the hearers to less understood spiritual truths. His illustrations were drawn from the everyday lives of his audience. Many parables teach about the "kingdom of God" (in Matthew, "kingdom of heaven"). We see their comparative nature in their introduction, "The kingdom of heaven is like ..." (example: Matthew 13:24). Some parables are narratives, telling a little story (example: Luke 15:4-7). Others are observational, giving spiritual application to an easily pictured scenario (example: 6:39). The kingdom parables often have applications regarding Jesus' intentions for the church. This lesson looks at two such parables in Mark.

The parables Jesus told give the impression of rapid growth of the kingdom of God. As with seeds to mature plants, this may seem mysterious to us at times. Astounding church growth may be happening in places we don't expect. May we rejoice whenever we hear stories of unbelievers coming to faith in Christ! But the numerical growth of people brings growth in the number of opinions and interpretations. This can lead to divisions (compare 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:1-9; 11:17-22). The solution is found in the "seven ones" of Ephesians 4:4-6. These still define the basis for church unity.

(Adapted from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

Parables of the Kingdom (Mark 4:26-32)

Spreading the seed of the Word (26-29)

- Spreading the Word through preaching (2 Tim 4:2-5)
- Spreading the Word, but God does the growing (1 Cor 3:6-7)
- Spreading the Word so that it is planted in man's hearts (James 1:21)
- Spreading the Word that is imperishable, living and enduring (1 Pet 1:23)

Amount of seed of the Word needed for growth (30-32)

- Amount grows when God takes it over (Isa 60:22)
- Amount grows like yeast when it is applied to the mix (Luke 13:21)
- Amount grows when God prunes the receiver (John 15:2)

Work of the Kingdom (Eph 4:4-6, 11-18)

Unity of the kingdom (4-6)

- Unity through the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:5-6)
- Unity through being in agreement (1 Cor 1:10)
- Unity through being firm in one spirit (Phil 1:27)
- Unity through being like-mindedness (Phil 2:2)

Leadership of the kingdom (11-14)

- Leadership must give an account for those over whom they have authority (Heb 13:17)
- Leadership must accomplish God's Will (Luke 12:47)
- Leadership where when much is given, much is required (Luke 12:47)
- Leadership must be proven faithful (1 Cor 4:2)

Discipleship of the kingdom (15-16)

- Discipleship that has been commanded by Jesus (Matt 28:19)
- Discipleship through being a witness (Acts 1:8)
- Discipleship that brings salvation to the world (Acts 13:47)
- Discipleship that provides the good news (Mark 16:15-16)

Distinctive of the kingdom (17-18)

- Distinctive through being washed, sanctified and justified through Jesus (1 Cor 6:9-11)
- Distinctive through Jesus making us alive in Christ (Eph 2:4-7)
- Distinctive through not having any kind of impurities (Eph 5:3-4)
- Distinctive through doing godly good deeds (1 Tim 5:24-25)