

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Third Quarter 2024: *The Book of Mark*

Lesson 4 “Parables”

Read for this week’s study

Mark 4:1–34; James 1:21; Isaiah 6:1–13; Psalm 104:12; Daniel 4:10–12.

Memory Text

“Then He said to them, ‘Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him’ ” (Mark 4:24, 25, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Parable of the Sower
- III. Jesus’ Interpretation
- IV. The Reason for the Parables
- V. Lamp and Measuring Basket
- VI. Parables of Growing Seed
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. This week’s study is on the series of parables in Mark, chapter 4. Among the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), Mark has the fewest parables. There are only five, and all of them are in this chapter. The Gospel of John has no parables at all, sort of. Half of this lesson focuses on the Parable of the Sower. The rest of the lesson focuses on the four shorter parables in the chapter. (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)
2. The memory text for this week is noted above, Mark 4:24-25. It seems to be articulating a principle of “the more you have, the more you get”. What do you think Jesus was trying to communicate in this way? (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)

3. Read Mark 4:1-9. Jesus often didn't explain His parables to the crowd. So as far as possible, ignore for the moment Jesus' interpretation of the parable in 4:14-20. Try to make sense of the parable in its own terms. What are the different soils like, and what happens to the seed that falls on them? (Sunday's Lesson)
4. Later on, Jesus interprets the parable of the sower by identifying things external to the story that the details in the story stand for. Read Mark 4:13-20. How did Jesus interpret the parable of the sower? How does one become the right kind of "soil"? (Monday's Lesson)
5. Read Mark 4:10-12. Why did Jesus teach in parables? What is the purpose of speaking differently to different audiences? What was the purpose of His allusion to Isaiah 6:1-13? How does John 3:18-21 also speak to this issue? (Tuesday's Lesson)
6. Read Mark 4:21-25. What major thing is Jesus trying to say with the parable of the lamp? What secret, in particular, is Jesus talking about in verse 22? How are the comments of verses 24-25 related to the parable of the lamp? (Wednesday's Lesson)
7. Read Mark 4:26-29. This parable is unique to Mark, something that doesn't happen often. What are the major lessons Jesus was trying to teach with this parable? What do plants need in order to grow and what spiritual application can come from that? (Thursday's Lesson)
8. Read Mark 4:30-32. What is the key message of the parable of the mustard seed? How does Jesus use allusions to Psalm 104:12 and Daniel 4:10-12 to make His point? Consider what the church was like when Jesus made this prediction. What does this tell us about Jesus' insights into the ultimate outcome of His efforts on this earth? (Thursday's Lesson)
9. What is "holiness"? (Friday's Lesson)
10. If Jesus is the clearest revelation of God's character, what do all these parables tell us about the character of God?
11. What are some other spiritual lessons we can learn from nature? (Sunday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

As he experienced this separation from his Father, "so great was this agony, that his physical pain was hardly felt. With amazement angels witnessed the Savior's despairing agony." Note the words, agony, fear, consternation. He was really tempted to doubt all that he'd been teaching. He even wondered if he'd rise again."

Maybe he was tempted to believe this legal explanation that the second death is, you die and stay dead forever. And if he was going to pay the price for sin, he would have to die, and stay dead forever. He would never rise again. But he didn't come to pay that penalty. He came to answer the questions, and as soon as he had answered them (he did wait over Sabbath, to add

more meanings to the Sabbath, so that every Sabbath we'd remember the questions he'd answered on Friday) he arose a great while before it was day, and he hastened to heaven. And he said to Mary, "Don't detain me! I have to hasten to heaven." And he appeared before his Father, and the angels, and he said, "Was it enough?" To pay the price of sin? "No," they could have said, "you're supposed to stay dead for eternity. You hurry back! We'll not let anybody know you were out." They never said such a thing! They said, "It is more than enough. You've cleared up all our questions. You've confirmed our trust without fear for eternity." And he came back down to see if the twelve had gotten the message, and they were all in a deep depression. It took him a long time to revive them.

And to this present day, do we really accept what he came to reveal at such infinite cost, that he does not wish to be served from fear? The Father will no more kill us at the end of the millennium than he killed his Son—which leads some to believe that he did kill his Son as he will kill the wicked at the end. How have you worked this out yourself? How did Jesus resolve these questions on the cross? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Luke, recorded April 1982, Riverside, California} To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:

<http://pkp.cc/55MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/56MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

So first this evening, let us consider again what has gone wrong, because I believe the way we understand what went wrong helps us to understand the methods God has used to set things right. And particularly then it helps us to understand **why** Jesus had to die. Our God has been accused, specifically, of being arbitrary, and exacting, vengeful, unforgiving, and severe. God sent His Son to reveal the truth about these matters. Why was it not enough for Jesus to come and live among us as He did and tell us the truth about His Father and then demonstrate by His gracious treatment of the worst of sinners that God, indeed, is not the kind of person His enemies have made Him out to be?

Of course, the way He lived and the way He treated people is vital evidence. And we will spend much time on it later, particularly on the evening entitled "How God Treats His Erring Children." But remember that the most serious charge leveled against our God is that God has lied to us. He lied when He said that sin results in death. Worse than that, Satan has turned God's gracious warning to our first parents in the Garden of Eden into a terrifying threat. He pictures God as saying to Adam and Eve, "Either you obey Me, or I'll kill you!" And think of the baleful effect that perversion of the truth about our God has had on the human race. Think how it has poisoned people's attitude toward God and their practice of religion. Think of picturing our gracious God as saying, "You either love and obey Me, or I'll torture and execute you in My

righteous wrath.” How could this satanic view of God win such wide acceptance as it has? And it is still very widely believed.

For thousands of years, men have sacrificed even their own children to win the favor of their offended gods. Even in the Christian world it is suggested, even believed, that if it were not for Christ’s appeasement (sometimes called propitiation), of His Father’s wrath, we would long before now have been destroyed. And were it not for Christ’s constant pleading with the Father, God could not find it in His own heart to forgive and heal His children.

Who could have thought up such perversion? But now, as you know the sixty-six books, does anything need to be done to persuade God to love His children? The testimony of all sixty-six books is that God has always loved even His most wayward child. That is what is summed up in John 3:16: “God so loved the world. . . .” Not just His good children, but all His children, both good and bad.

And those serious words to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden were no threat. Those words were a gracious warning—because sin actually results in death. Sin so changes the sinner that a natural consequence of this condition is death. Cut off by his own rebellious choice from the source of life, the sinner will die. Now out of harmony with God by his own rebellious rejection, the sinner is so changed that even the life-giving glory of our God becomes a consuming fire. How can this best be clarified? Not by claims, but by evidence and demonstration.

One choice that God had was to allow Adam and Eve to die. And He could have said to the universe, “Who is telling the truth? I said sinners would die! It is the Devil who has lied to you.” Or going back even further, God could have left Satan and his followers to reap the natural results of their sin and they would have perished. And surely then there would have been no question about the truthfulness of God’s warning. Why didn’t God take those—it would seem—easy choices? He could have saved all the painful history since that time.

Of course, had the universe watched Satan and his followers die, they had never seen death before, so there was the hazard that they would assume that God had executed His children who did not please Him. Then there would be the danger that the angels would serve God from fear, and the obedience that springs from fear produces the character of a rebel. And rebelliousness is the essence of sin. And so instead of God taking that easy way, not wanting the obedience and love that springs from fear, totally unacceptable to so gracious a God as we know Him to be, and having such dire consequences; instead of taking those choices, God sent His Son in human form. And He died the death that is the natural result of sin. And the universe watched to see how God was involved in the death of the wicked. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #8, “The Most Costly and Convincing Evidence” recorded March 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/8MMCAG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

Not by force of arms, not by violent interpositions, was the kingdom of God to prevail, but by the implanting of a new principle in the hearts of men. {COL 34.4}

All who come to Christ for a clearer knowledge of the truth will receive it. He will unfold to them the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and these mysteries will be understood by the heart that longs to know the truth. A heavenly light will shine into the soul temple, and will be revealed to others as the bright shining of a lamp on a dark path. {COL 35.3}

Christ's favorite theme was the paternal tenderness and abundant grace of God; He dwelt much upon the holiness of His character and His law; He presented Himself to the people as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. {COL 40.2}

God bids us fill the mind with great thoughts, pure thoughts. He desires us to meditate upon His love and mercy, to study His wonderful work in the great plan of redemption. Then clearer and still clearer will be our perception of truth, higher, holier, our desire for purity of heart and clearness of thought. The soul dwelling in the pure atmosphere of holy thought will be transformed by communion with God through the study of Scriptures. {COL 60.1}

Jesus sought an avenue to every heart. By using a variety of illustrations, He not only presented truth in its different phases, but appealed to the different hearers. Their interest was aroused by figures drawn from the surroundings of their daily life. None who listened to the Saviour could feel that they were neglected or forgotten. The humblest, the most sinful, heard in His teaching a voice that spoke to them in sympathy and tenderness. {COL 21.2}

As the heart is opened to the entrance of the Word, light from the throne of God will shine into the soul. That Word, cherished in the heart, will yield to the student a treasure of knowledge that is priceless. Its ennobling principles will stamp the character with honesty and truthfulness, temperance and integrity. {OHC 31.4}

The truths of the Bible, treasured in the heart and mind and obeyed in the life, convince and convert the soul, transform the character, and comfort and uplift the heart. . . . {TMK 199.2}

Through His Spirit God makes His word a vivifying power. It is quick and powerful, exerting a strong influence upon minds, not because of the learning or intelligence of the human agent, but because divine power is working with the human power. {8T 55.2}

The creative energy that called the worlds into existence is in the word of God. The word imparts power; it begets life. Every command is a promise; accepted by the will, received into the soul, it brings with it the life of the Infinite One. . . . {FLB 20.6}

The Bible is full of knowledge, and all who come to its study with a heart to understand, will find the mind enlarged and the faculties strengthened to comprehend these precious, far-reaching truths. The Holy Spirit will impress them upon the mind and soul. {FE 449.2}

In the visions given to Isaiah, to Ezekiel, and to John we see how closely heaven is connected with the events taking place upon the earth and how great is the care of God for those who are loyal to Him. The world is not without a ruler. The program of coming events is in the hands of the Lord. The Majesty of heaven has the destiny of nations, as well as the concerns of His church, in His own charge. . . . {5T 753.3}

He who slumbers not, who is continually at work for the accomplishment of His designs, can carry forward His great work harmoniously. That which appears to finite minds entangled and complicated, the Lord's hand can keep in perfect order. He can devise ways and means to thwart the purposes of wicked men, and He will bring to confusion the counsels of them that plot mischief against His people. {5T 754.2}

Jesus employed no miraculous agency to compel men to believe in him. They were left to choose or reject him, of their own free will. No direct power was to force them into obedience, and destroy the free moral agency that God has given to man. {4Red 86.3}

To everyone is given freedom to act, and upon everyone rests the responsibility of their own actions. . . . {CTr 180.5}

In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan's control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God. {DA 466.4}

In the very fact that men are free moral agents, God teaches us not to be forced or compelled into any course of action, also that as responsible beings in copartnership with God we are to represent God in character. We are to have an interest in our brother, in our neighbor, in all around (Letter 65, 1895). {5BC 1098.1}

God never forces the will or the conscience, but Satan's constant resort—to gain control of those whom he cannot otherwise seduce—is compulsion by cruelty. Through fear or force he endeavors to rule the conscience and to secure homage to himself.—GC 591 (1888). {1MCP 325.1}

In His plan of government there is no employment of brute force to compel the conscience. The Jews looked for the kingdom of God to be established in the same way as the kingdoms of the world. To promote righteousness they resorted to external measures. They devised methods and plans. But Christ implants a principle. By implanting truth and righteousness, He counterworks error and sin. {COL 77.1}

God destroys no man. Everyone who is destroyed will have destroyed himself. Everyone who stifles the admonitions of conscience is sowing the seeds of unbelief, and these will produce a sure harvest. By rejecting the first warning from God, Pharaoh of old sowed the seeds of obstinacy, and he reaped obstinacy. God did not compel him to disbelieve. The seed of unbelief which he sowed produced a harvest of its kind. Thus his resistance continued, until he looked upon his devastated land, upon the cold, dead form of his first-born, and the first-born of all in his house and of all the families in his kingdom, until the waters of the sea closed over his horses and his chariots and his men of war. His history is a fearful illustration of the truth of the words that “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Galatians 6:7. Did men but realize this, they would be careful what seed they sow. {COL 84.4}

Christ’s illustrations were taken from the things of daily life, and although they were simple, they had in them a wonderful depth of meaning. The birds of the air, the lilies of the field, the growing seed, the shepherd and the sheep—with these things Christ illustrated immortal truth; and ever afterward, when His hearers chanced to see these objects, they recalled His words. Thus the truth became a living reality; the scenes of nature and the daily affairs of life were ever repeating to them the Saviour’s teaching. {CT 261.1}

It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, (2 Peter 3:12, margin). Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain. {COL 69.2}

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Not only is the growth of Christ’s kingdom illustrated by the parable of the mustard seed, but in every stage of its growth the experience represented in the parable is repeated. For His church in every generation God has a special truth and a special work. {COL 78.2}