

RTS Women's Study: The Gospel of Mark

#8: Mark 4:21-34: Four Truths about the Kingdom of God

Intro: Big Things Start Small

I. The Kingdom Cannot be Hidden (v.21-23)

A. Lamps in the Ancient World

- Oil lamps were set high in a room to give off light
- They were critical for living in such a dark world

B. Jesus is the "Lamp" that Will Shine

- Greek text mentions *the* Lamp—likely referring to Jesus
- While the Kingdom was "hidden" before, now it is "made manifest" in Jesus (v.22)
- "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5)

C. How Do We Let the Light of the Kingdom Shine?

- #1: Point people to Jesus
 - We are on firmest ground when we talk about Jesus
 - He is wonderful enough to captivate the world!
- #2: Be a light yourself
 - If we follow Jesus, his glory shines through us naturally
 - Matt 5:14: "You are the light of the world . . . Let your light shine before others."

II. The Kingdom Cannot be Ignored (v.24-25)

A. Take Seriously How You Respond to the Kingdom of God

- "Pay attention to what you hear" (v.24)
- Both temporal and eternal blessings are at stake

B. Different Responses Lead to Different Results

- "the measure you use, it will be measured to you" (v.24)
 - If you respond in a shallow manner, you will have a shallow Christian life; If you respond in a deep manner, you will have a deep Christian life
- "For to the one who has, more will be given" (v.25)
 - Give all to Christ, and you get all in return and more!
 - Ignore Christ, and even what you have will be taken away

III. The Kingdom Cannot be Hurried (v.26-29)

A. The Kingdom Grows Slowly Over Time

- The farmer “sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows” (v.27)
- You can’t hurry the crops, and you can’t hurry the kingdom of God
- How do we sometimes try to “hurry” what God is doing in the world?

B. The Kingdom Growth Is Mysterious

- We don’t always see or understand Kingdom growth: “He knows not how” (v.27)
- We are not the reason for the growth—we just watch it happen! “The earth produces *by itself*” (v.28)
- Be encouraged, God is at work even when we don’t see it!

IV. The Kingdom Cannot be Stopped (v.30-34)

A. The Kingdom May Seem Small and Inconsequential Now

- The mustard seed was the “smallest of all the seeds” (v.31)
- It would be easy to dismiss it as meaningless, even hopeless
- In what ways does God’s Kingdom sometimes seem small and weak?

C. But Eventually the Kingdom Will Prove to be Powerful and Unstoppable

- It becomes “larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches” (v.32)
- It will be a great blessing: “The birds of the air can make nests in its shade” (v.32)
- What will look different in our lives if we believe the Kingdom cannot be stopped?

Discussion Groups

1. Do you ever feel like you are hiding your identity as a Christian, or holding back about what you believe? In what ways can you be a better “light” to those around you?
2. Talk about whether you tend to be pessimistic or optimistic about the progress of God’s Kingdom in the world? How does this passage help you have a balanced perspective on our world?
3. Have you ever experienced a situation where you thought God wasn’t at work at all, but then it turns out later that he really was, but you just didn’t see it? Share that story with the group and how it encouraged you.

