



Study 5: Jesus—The Prophet Man

Mark 4:1-34

Personal Preparation 1

As we've worked our way through Mark we've seen that Jesus is a preacher. Preaching is at the centre of Jesus' public ministry. See Mark 1:14-15, 1:35-39. In this sense, Jesus is acting like a prophet to the nation – he has a message he needs to give. In chapter 4, for the first time the content of Jesus' preaching is provided in some detail. As we'll discover – Jesus brings a message that packs a punch.

1. From what you've discovered in Mark so far – what would you say is the message of Jesus' teaching?
2. From what you've discovered in Mark so far – how have people reacted to Jesus' teaching? And who are the ones who have reacted negatively?

Read Mark 4:1-20

Yet again Jesus draws a large crowd, so big in fact that he is forced again to speak from a boat (see Mark 3:7-9). Jesus liked to speak in parables (a story with a meaning) and in verses 1-20 he tells a story about a sower in a field.

3. Jesus tells the parable to the crowd, and when he is with his 12 disciples and others, he gives the meaning. Write down Jesus' explanation for the different parts of the parable.

v3, seed	
v4, on the path	
v5-6, amongst rock	
v7, amongst thorns	
v8, good soil	

4. What is this parable and all of Jesus' parables about, v11, v26, 30?

Sowing in the Old Testament is a common way of speaking of God's future work - to bring salvation to Israel. To sow Israel was to bring in the long awaited time of blessing and renewal for the nation. Read Jeremiah 31:27-28; Ezekiel 36:8-11; and Hosea 2:21-23.

5. How does this background context bring meaning to this 'Kingdom of God' parable?

For Today: In Jesus' own day – what are the reasons that Israel rejected Jesus the Christ? Are those reasons still appropriate for describing why people reject Jesus today?

thoughts. questions. insights

Personal Preparation 2

The parable of the sower is perhaps the most famous of Jesus' stories. But it wasn't the only story that Jesus told. He told many other stories about the kingdom of God, and like the story of the sower, they are supposed to make his listeners stand up and take notice.

Read Mark 4:21-29

1. In v21, what does Jesus say is a stupid use and a good use of a lamp?
2. In Jesus' explanation of the lamp illustration, v22, Jesus speaks of what must be disclosed and brought out into the open, what do you think Jesus is talking about? Remember – keep in mind the parables are about the Kingdom of God.
3. In Jesus' parable of the scattered seed (v26-27) what do you think is the point Jesus making?
4. What is the end result after the sprouting of the seed, and the ripening of the grain? v29.

Real Joel 3:13-16. This is an Old Testament prophecy which speaks of God's coming judgement, the Day of the Lord. God will bring devastation and with this, he will vindicate his suffering people and bring blessing to them. Jesus seems to be drawing on Joel to tell his parable.

5. From what we've seen in Mark – do you think Jesus looked like the 'harvester' that the leaders of Israel would have expected? Why/Why not?

thoughts. questions. insights

Jesus: The Prophet Man, Group Discussion Questions

1. What were the issues raised, questions posed or new insights you had as you read Mark 4:1-29 this week?
2. Given what you've discovered in Personal Preparation, how do these parables further shed light on Jesus' identity?
3. We perhaps don't think enough about the parables in terms of Jesus' own context and his purpose for the nation of Israel? How has the personal preparation helped you to think through this?
4. When giving the parables, he uses a phrase – "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." See 4:8, 23. Do you think Jesus' parables are easy to hear and understand?
5. Just before explaining the meaning of the sower parable, Jesus speaks about the nature of the parables – v11, which is a quote from Isaiah. **Read Isaiah 6:8-10.** What is the purpose of the parables? Does this seem fair?
6. Do the parables of Jesus bring good news or bad news? Why?
7. In the parable of the mustard seed, v30-32, what is the interesting thing about that particular type of seed?
8. The kingdom of God will look small and inconsequential – that seems to be the point of first part of the mustard seed illustration. But then it is transformed to be something great and life giving. **See Ezekiel 17:23.** How do we see this played out in Jesus own life?

Pray

- Give thanks that though Jesus was not what people expected of the Kingdom of God, as was rejected—he accomplished salvation through his death and resurrection.
- Pray that _____ would be fertile ground for receiving the message of Jesus.

Remember

- A GG social week is coming up in 2 weeks—week of 24th March. It's a great chance to get to know each other in a different environment.
- Variety is the spice of a GG's life! So get out there and get social.