

How God is Sovereign in Evangelism

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[0 : 00] Please pray with me as we dive into a little bit more of what I preached on last week, which was Mark 4, 1 to 20. We talked about Jesus and the parable of the, is it the sower or the soils?

Parable, there you go, parable of the soils, right? Please pray with me. Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, we just thank you for this opportunity that we can come both to worship you, both in prayer, in song, in community, and to come under your word.

Father, we're touching on a subject that most of us struggle with. It's hard to share our faith with those we love, some people that we meet, and sometimes we're rather confused on how we go about doing this.

There's questions of whether I am supposed to do this as an individual, or do I just go to a church in which this is done? So, Father, I just pray that you would bring wisdom to my lips through your word, and you'd give us ultimately ears to hear.

And I pray that this sermon would be practical, that there'd be some practical truths. We look at God's sovereignty, would help us both understand your heart for those that don't know you, but also show our hearts, instruct our ways to give us assurance, knowing your truth.

[1 : 30] It's so easy to rationalize our way and our ways of thinking, thinking that it's of you because we will say, well, I did it with the right motivations, or I had the right heart.

But ultimately, it's about coming under your will, O Father. So I just ask you for your presence to be here today. I ask you to be in my voice and in our ears.

And we ask these things in your name. Amen. Please turn with me, Mark 4, if you're not already there. If you missed last week, the sermon has gone into oblivion.

We weren't able to record it. So I'm going to kind of recap kind of what we discussed. This is going to be a four-sermon series.

But one of the questions that we end up concluding, last week I talked about God's sovereignty being a part of the quote-unquote process.

[2 : 30] The ultimate question is, so what? God is sovereign. What does that mean to me? And that's what I'm hoping to answer for you today. God is sovereign. What does that mean?

So anyhow, why evangelism? Why has this come up as a subject as we will be heading into the fall? One, people have asked me about it. People have asked me, how do you share your faith? So I thought I'd put together some practical aspects of doing so. Number two, as I've already stated, we struggle with it, right? Sometimes we really struggle with it. Who doesn't want our parents to be saved, right?

Our children to be saved. Our friends, our co-workers, our spouses to know the truth that we have. I know a great many of you have been praying many years for these things.

So we need to know they understand the process and how we can go about working in God's will for this. I think a lot of us turn away from evangelism because we've been rejected, right?

[3 : 38] We shared it. Spouse doesn't want to hear about it anymore. Our friend, when we tell them about the hope that we have in our Lord Jesus Christ, doesn't call as often.

Sometimes it's our co-workers. There's lunches. There's dinners after work day and you're not invited.

All because at a previous lunch you decided to share the gospel with someone. That leads to discouragement. And sometimes it can even cause us to lose faith in God and we start to question ourselves.

Maybe it's me, right? I know God wants them to be saved. God wants me to share this love that I have. Then we start thinking maybe it's the message.

Maybe I said something wrong. So I start to think how can I make myself more relevant? Maybe I should have avoided the whole topic of sin and hell.

[4 : 37] But as we heard from what Dave read today, Jesus certainly didn't shy away from those subjects, right? So we're sitting there thinking about what can we say?

So maybe we start to adopt these strategies. And we might believe it's a little bit of compromise. And I shared last week with you, there was a church down the street from us. They are offering you come to church, your name will be raffled into an iPhone.

It was actually an iPod back then. Or a new plasma TV, right? Anything that you could do to get people in the building, perhaps there would be a hope that they would hear and see the gospel. Well, I'm going to give you guys a quick little history lesson, which has affected our thought process for the last several decades. Post-World War II, there was a...

Most of the Christians of that time that existed, I'm going to talk about, it's more in North America, was the fundamentalist movement. And perhaps some of us are familiar with that fundamentalist movement.

[5 : 45] Perhaps some of us grew up. And that was basically we dressed a certain way. We acted a certain way. We weren't allowed to drink. We weren't allowed to smoke. Certainly we had to avoid movies.

We couldn't play cards. And not only that, we had to avoid people who did. Anybody remember that? Does that kind of trigger some thoughts, right? Some of us came from that kind of stuff. We knew that very well.

For some of you guys are thinking, man, what kind of world did you grow up in, right? But it's true. There was this movement of people who wanted to be so right before the Lord that they started constructing these views.

And you might be familiar with what we've talked about in Mark about the Pharisees, right? What happens is it's a false understanding. And that understanding is what makes us bad comes from the outside rather than on the inside.

You know what I mean by that? It's outside influences make me bad. So if I can protect my family, my kids, my husband, my wife from those outside influences, then people will be good.

[6 : 54] But the whole message of Jesus Christ was, it's your heart that's polluted. I could stick you in a commune away from people and unbelievers and still sin will come out.

Murder will happen. Jealousy, rage, and anger will exist because sin comes from the inside. So anyhow, there was this group of people who decided to found this seminary.

And they wanted this seminary to be the equivalent of Yale and Princeton. They wanted this to be a great think tank that the world could look forward to and say, man, these Christians really got it going on, right?

These guys are just as smart as us. And that we as Christians could start to have this great influence in the world. So ultimately the question comes up is, how do we engage our culture in an effective way?

Because fundamentalism was about hiding yourself from the world. And these group of Christians who got together was about penetrating the world, okay?

[7 : 59] So what happened is these questions would come up. So obviously the issue of church came up. And the question was, is the church meant for those who are saved or for those who are unsaved?

So they started devising these different strategies. So this is a discussion that's been going on since the 40s, okay? And so what happened was, is the church just for us, the gathered to come together, are we to play a part of making the church so much more inviting to non-Christians that we could invite them and people could know the truth, right?

We're going to be loving. So what does that mean? Well, we're going to do away with certain things that would make unbelievers uncomfortable. We're not going to talk about hell. We're not going to talk about sin.

We're actually going to start to play music that is more relevant to the world with the hopes that some people would like it, start coming in somewhere along the way they'd get saved.

Well, as you can figure out, this led to a great schism in Christianity. Some people accepted it one way. Others went another way. Are you familiar with Robert Shuler?

[9 : 15] Do you guys know who Robert Shuler is? He had the Crystal Cathedral many years down in LA. He was a big part of what's called the self-esteem movement. We're not going to talk about how bad people are or refer to sin.

We're going to talk about how good people are. So this division started blown out. Then you had the Willow Creek Seeker Sensitive movement started coming out where we had more events.

We see the Saddleback movement. And what happened was we started to marry preaching church with really good music as the contemporary music scene grew.

And what was born was the attractional method of church. I know most of you probably had this conversation with someone, right? Maybe if we did this different at church, people would want to come and they'd be safe, right?

So anyhow, we thought about if we could just make the church kind of like the world but kind of close. If we get people in the door, they'd kind of become Christians.

[10 : 22] So how do we know what non-Christians need? Well, you take surveys. You go out into your community, figure out what they want, and then you target your church to this culture.

Now sadly, those types of churches are actually meeting a very rapid death in modern evangelicalism today. The culture is a very rapidly changing force.

And what happens is if you're trying to relate to the culture, you have to become more of a student of the culture than of God's word. So these church meetings became what's called an event rather than a place of worship.

And because there was no discipleship, the wheels begin to fall off. If you're wondering what type of church we are at Squamish Baptist Church, Squamish Baptist Church made a very important decision many years ago that we're not going to go the attractional method.

We're actually going to go the discipleship-driven method. We actually want to bring you in and mine the depths of your faith. And through that, as I'll quote one of our elders, Carl was saying, the church gathered is the church scattered, right?

[11 : 40] As we grow in our time right here, we go out and we reach others for Christ. If you're more curious about any of this kind of stuff, you can ask me.

There's a great article right now on the Gospel Coalition site that says, Why I Left the Seeker Sensitive Movement. Now, I want you to understand, I am not questioning their motives.

I believe their motives are actually really great and really sincere. I have found myself as a pastor in the last 10 or 12 years being tempted by some of the thought process that are involved in this.

And I've had to find myself needing to repent for some of my approaches in the thinking in the past. What ultimately grounds my thinking has got to be the truth of God's Word.

Amen? We have to go back and use that as the foundation for why and what and how we exist. So that's what brings us to our words here in Mark chapter 4.

[12 : 48] Now, I'm not going to get into a great big exegetical view of this because I covered a lot of the meaning last week. But Jesus does a pretty good job of it here. But what I ultimately want to do today is answer the question, What does it mean when God is sovereign in our lives?

So if you remember last week, I talked about the context of Mark chapter 4. Scholars believe Jesus Christ has been in the northern part. And once in a while for the festivities, he goes down to Jerusalem.

He's down there and he's always preaching. And he's preaching the kingdom of God. Exactly what Dave read to us today. He's preaching the good news. My kingdom is coming.

Judgment is coming. So you have to make a decision, folks. Are you going to be with me or against me? All right? My Father is going to be sending angels, actually.

That's going to divide you up. And we'll see these parables like the wheat and the tares, the sheep and the goats. And he's trying to get this message through to the people.

[13 : 56] So he's been doing this for 18 months. And this is where he's switching over to these parables. Because one of the apostles makes a really great statement in Matthew. He says, or it's Luke, Will so few people actually believe?

He says, Jesus, you've been going around. You've been doing these great miracles. You're teaching great teaching. But people aren't believing. Why is that? So he's explaining these things. So take a look at Mark 4, starting in verse 1. That's again, he being Jesus, began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him. So they got into a boat and sat in it on the sea.

And the whole crowd was beside the sea of the land. And he was teaching them many things in parables. And in his teaching, he said to them, Listen, the sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path.

And the birds came and devoured it. Other seeds fell on rocky ground where it did not have much soil. And immediately it sprang up since it had no depth of soil. When the sun rose, it was scorched.

[15:00] And since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among the thorns. And the thorns grew up and choked it. And it yielded no grain. And other seeds fell upon good soil and produced grain, Growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.

And he said, He who has ears, let him hear. And when he was alone with the disciples, Those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. And he said to them, To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God.

But for those outside, everything is in parables, So that they may indeed see but not perceive. And may indeed hear but not understand. Lest they should turn and be forgiven.

And he said to them, Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. And there are the ones, And these are the ones along the path where the word is sown.

When they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. And those are the ones sown on the rocky ground. And the ones when they hear the word immediately receive it with joy.

[16:16] And they have no root in themselves but endure for a while. Then when tribulation or persecution arises or account of the word immediately, They fall away. And others are the ones sown among thorns.

There are those who hear the word, But the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches And the desires for other things enter in and choke the word. And it proves unfruitful.

But those that were sown on the good soil Are the ones who hear the word and accept it And bear fruit thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. What is essentially one of the messages we talked about last week is We like to strategize how we sow the world, right?

The word. Usually it begins with the ones we love. Sometimes we may think, Wow, if I could lead this so-and-so person to the Lord, It would make such an impact.

They're such a great leader. They're so successful. Then other thoughts we start to think, Man, that guy is so moral. It wouldn't really be much for that person To go from an unbeliever to a believer.

[17:28] Other people, and I'm sure you've heard people say, Man, if that movie star or that Christian celebrity Could become a Christian, What an impact would make for the Lord.

Do you ever have those conversations or think those thoughts? I remember when I was living in LA, I heard this story about this movie actor. He's a, you probably might not know his name, But you would certainly know his face.

He's been in a lot of movies. And I heard he got saved. And his reputation was that he was kind of a crazy guy. Right? So I went to the church, And they had this poor guy up the front. And there's a couple thousand people waiting to hear him.

And they decide they're going to have this guy teach. And the conclusion was, Not only was he a crazy actor, But now he was a crazy Christian. Right? The poor fella. He had no discipleship, no anything.

But they were so excited because this guy Had come to faith in Jesus Christ. He would make such an impact. It's sad when you think about it.

[18:25] So we learn from these soils That it is God who prepares the heart. Correct? And it teaches us that you and I Cannot twist or manipulate any heart To accept Christ.

There's no magic bullet in the conversation. I can't ask Dustin. I want you to put together These five perfect songs. We're going to dim the lights. We're going to, you know, Going to create this sense of togetherness.

Might even turn up the heat a little bit. Right? Make it kind of warm and cozy in here. So that you would receive the word better. I can't do that. I can't manipulate that. So why bother?

If God is sovereign, why bother? Now, some people have tragically made the statement That because one is a Calvinist And what I mean by this is, Well, if God has it covered, What am I to do? I don't need to do nothing. That's called a fatalist view, Which we're going to discuss in the next couple of weeks. We're going to see why that's wrong. So anyhow, it all comes down to When God

is sovereign, It is about trusting God.

[19 : 38] So how can you or I bring about A spiritual result in someone else? What are we to do? Well, Paul would later tell us and teach us What we are to do.

Take a look at Colossians 4. Turn in your Bibles to Colossians 4. This is a great passage. I would encourage you to underline it When it comes to the idea of evangelism, It's largely overlooked. Colossians 4. Chapter 2. He nails it right here.

Chapter 2 to 6. Simply states, Continue steadfastly in prayer. Being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, Pray also for us That God may open to us A door for the word To declare the mystery of Christ On account of which I am in prison.

That I may speak it clear Which is how I ought to speak. How many times do we go Looking for gospel opportunities? Imagine if this is our simple prayer Every day before we leave, Before we go to work, Go to school, Go out to play, right?

[20 : 53] We know we're going to be around unbelievers, But do we really have this type of prayer? And he simply says, Walk in wisdom towards outsiders, Making the best use of the time.

Let your speech always be gracious, Seasoned with salt, So that you may know How you ought to answer each person. Here we see Paul recognize That God is ultimately in control.

So what does he do? He submits himself to prayer. That God opens the doors To declare the mystery of Christ. So he's understanding God does something And he has a responsibility to do.

God opens, he shares. Friends, this is a huge understanding About evangelism in this passage.

One of the most influential books On evangelism that I've ever read Is J.I. Packer's Evangelism And the sovereignty of God.

In it, he writes, and I quote, If there is one thing Christians Are known for is prayer. By praying, Christians acknowledge God's sovereignty.

[22 : 00] Do you get that? Our prayer is submitting to God. Amen? It's not about us Asserting our will over God's. Sometimes we think, God, you've got a plan. I'm going to pray For my direction on this.

No, no, prayer is about Understanding God's will And us submitting to God's will. So Packer continues, The prayer of a Christian Is not an attempt To force God's hand But a humble acknowledgement Of helplessness And dependence.

When we are on our knees We know that it is not We who control the world It is not our power.

Therefore, to supply our needs By our own independent efforts Every good thing that we desire For ourselves and for others Must be sought from God And will come If it comes at all As a gift from His hands.

So I believe there's three characteristics. If we accept that God is sovereign And we understand Paul's words That we are to pray I'm going to give you three characteristics That should be a part of our prayer life.

One, prayer. Pray earnestly. Pray earnestly. Devote yourself to prayer. In fact, I would encourage you To struggle with your prayer.

[23 : 24] Number two, my encouragement for you Is to pray urgently. To pray urgently.

And what I mean by that is Be watchful. Be on the alert for opportunities That God is a part of So that you would pray To make sure you're the right tool At the right time.

You know that you will come Into circumstances Which you will know That you need to share Christ. There's just those times When someone starts talking to you About how their marriage is falling apart.

That could be an opportunity For the gospel, right? Struggling in a moral issue. It's an opportunity To come into the gospel.

And we need to pray for these things. People are talking about them all the time. When people start to talk about money And where they're investing their future. There's probably no better opportunity To present the gospel.

[24 : 28] Do you know in those kind of situations, right? Because they're revealing What their treasure is. And it gives you an opportunity. So we need to prepare our hearts. So to pray earnestly. Pray urgently.

And the third one is Pray with humility. To give thanks to God And recognize there is no greater. No one greater than him. And that everything is under His sovereign control.

Our ultimate question I think we all need to ask is Do we want to be under God's program? Our own program? Now I want to spend some time A little bit more On this second aspect of God's sovereignty.

I'm really hoping that this will speak to you. Because it's one issue of God's sovereignty That we don't speak about a lot. It's actually God's sovereignty In who you are As a person Where you live As a person And what you are like As a person To accept God's sovereignty Is to accept how God has created you.

Do you know that? That he actually had a hand Where you were born Who you were born to What country What city You ultimately I grew up in the hub of hockey My city where I grew up Was hockey town I hated hockey I couldn't I've got bad ankles I remember going out Learning Ankles would split I couldn't play So I That affected How What happened with the rest of my life I couldn't be into hockey But for some reason God gave me an ability To throw a baseball Really hard And really fast And that's where My desires went Right?

[26 : 18] All under God's sovereignty In how I was Created Do you know You've been sovereignly Ordained by God To be who you are And where you are You live in Squamish Because God desires you To be here You know that?

Whether you think It's through circumstances Of work Family or whatever These things You might think Are under your control But ultimately We're under God's control Now I know In some of your minds You're going to say Hey where does free will Fit into this?

We're going to answer That next week Alright? Can you be patient On the free will questions? Because that's a big issue And we're going to talk about it But I want you to understand When we accept God's sovereignty What does that mean?

Look at this farmer The sower In parable one God gave him A field to sow He didn't go sow In his neighbor's field He didn't go over to Egypt And sow in that field He understood That his responsibility Was right there Where he was And if he had a family To support his family That was the first responsibility That he has Sometimes I think we forget Where we are As a pastor I struggled to send someone As a missionary Remember this decision Was made This person Had made an application Wanted to be sent out As a missionary And I could not support it And I simply said I've watched you For the last six years And I've seen you Disciple nobody But now you're telling me You have a heart For this group of people On a far away Pacific island I can't do it I think as God's created you

To reach people here You will reach people elsewhere I remember after high school I had this experience Of serving on a Summer missions team In France And that event Changed my life It changed my thinking We were working primarily With a lot of North African students And we were able to see Some of these kids Come to know the Lord Very exciting I'm 19, 18, 19 Obviously very impressionable And I decided That's what I want to be For the rest of my life And I remember Going to camp Later on in that summer And someone suggests That if I'm really excited To share the gospel I should become A Bible salesman Because what's going to Offer more opportunities For the gospel Than going around Trying to sell Bibles door to door Right And I remember Thinking about that And wanting to do I want to do What God wants to do But what this guy Was suggesting Like hey I don't like Walking that much

[28 : 58] And just the rejection At the door Would crush my spirit I'm just I'm just not made That way And the fact that I would ignore My education I kind of thought God has something Different in mind And sure enough I got to university And I immediately Plugged in Through an invitation Of a football player To join athletes In action Which I absolutely Love being a part of Why?

Because I love sports And I love baseball And it gave me Great many opportunities To share Christ University community Was very exciting And God gave I understood That he gave me This love for sports For a reason And I became An organizer of sports And through those opportunities I was able to develop Relationships And share Christ What's interesting I had this friend Who saw what I was doing And was also In student ministries In the residences And he kept applying And he came up And he asked me About why he He kept getting Turned down He thought You know If I joined I'd have as many opportunities As you would To share the gospel And that's really My whole love And I remember Telling him I said Are you anything like me?

And what I meant was I was a big time extrovert I loved hanging out With people I loved being with people I loved sharing with people Where this guy Was actually A real introvert You know His heart Had the same Desires as my heart But God had created him Quite differently With his relationships

And how he related to people Not to mention He couldn't play sports To save his life But that's Besides the point Right?

He's created For something And I can honestly Attest to you Apart from preaching The greatest success I have in personally Sharing Christ And I'm not talking about People coming to know Christ But sharing Christ And people who come to me Call me Even today Asking me About the hope And the faith That I have Because my friends Are grown up They have wives And kids And some of them Get cancer Some of them Lose all their money Some of them Lose their marriages I can tell you The single thread That binds All those relationships Ironically enough Is sports It's baseball It's not Monet I don't have any Artistic ability Or artistic knowledge It's a struggle For me To talk with people About that Because it's something That means something To them I can fake Being a hockey fan But I can't fake Being an art fan

I always used to joke You know I just can't speak That heart language But you know Who can? [31 : 49] Some of you can Right? God hasn't called me To reach everybody He's actually created Each and every one of you With a special heart Special desire Special needs To reach people Just like the Coops Share last week Their experience But notice He used that word Heart language Quite a bit In his presentation He was talking about Translating the Bible Into the heart language Of people It's what It's what speaks In common with them Right?

When someone Tries to be a friend With me And says Hey what do you think About this artistic picture? It's colorful Right? I don't know But you can talk to me About baseball And I can break down Every nuance of the game And I understand The work That makes an athlete That great Other people Couldn't care less About that But there's others That do I'm going to tell you God developed In you A love for social Causes for a reason God has developed In you A love for gardening For a special reason Whether it's hiking Or sailing Or working with numbers And building things God has uniquely Created you And he's sovereign Over who you are You know that? Now where does this Fit into evangelism? Those are the people That you're surrounded with Who speak those same Heart languages Right?

That's the people We're able to relate to It's very difficult To relate to someone Who has no interest In the things That we do For you that are Parents with young kids What are our neighbors Thinking about Who have young kids Right?

They're thinking about How can I best Raise my kids And the world Isn't presenting Any answers But you know what? You have that answer Those are the opportunities My prayer for you Who have Young kids And their friends Come over My encouragement Is to you Start mining Those relationships Start praying For those kids That come over Pray with your kids That play with your kids Think about These things That you meet down At the community garden Those are The people That I honestly believe Has God has created you Those are the ones He's calling you To reach out All we need to do Is as Paul said To be aware And pray I believe We need to be Creative and selfless In our love Love for others When I was in university With Campus Crusade There was one thing That I struggled with And that was creating

[34 : 42] Friendships Just for the sake Of the gospel I'm convinced I was wrong In doing it Like it was just To see them A Christian Rather than know Them as a person If we are only Friends with someone As long as they're Interested in discussing The gospel I don't think We know much About friendship There's this great Illustration I've got a friend He gives me permission To share this story He kept reaching Out to his dad And every time Of his birthday He'd send a bible Or a Christian book And there was No relationship there His dad didn't want Anything to do with it And he comes to me As a pastor And says Hey you know What can I do And I said Well what does Your dad love Because my dad Loves birds Well Send him a bird book Send him something That actually shows You love him By sending him A bible Or a Christian book

I know in your heart You want him To desperately Know this truth But who is he As a person He loves birds What a great Ability to get in And talk about God's nature And how he's created These small creatures So many unique Different designs Tell me that doesn't Get into a discussion Of evolution And natural order Right But know your dad Love him Because we're not Just called to Share the gospel My friends We're called to Make disciples How are some Personal practical Ways do we do This One Are your ears Open Are they open To the people That are around You Alright You know someone That is perhaps An artist And you're really Into sports What do you do I guarantee you You have friends That are interested In art Have people over Connect them Just because You're the entryway Do you know how

Peter got to know Jesus It's because Andrew First heard Jesus Thought Jesus Word was so good That he ran And grabbed Peter and said Hey you got to Listen to this Guy named Jesus And we need to Do that With ourselves Right If someone's Got a common Hobby Think about it Who would Really be able To speak And get along With these people The other piece Of advice I would say Is be wise Jesus himself Said that we Are to be Innocent as Dove And shrewd As snakes My friends This all begins In our hearts Right here Right now Before the Lord Begins with the Question Why do I Want to share Jesus Christ Second question We need to ask Is do we Even have a Message to Share About Jesus Christ And is That message Real To you I don't know If this encourages You I don't know If this causes You fear Perhaps It's an idea But my deepest Desires to see You living Not only a life That reflects God's glory Glory But you'd Have the words To express What God's Glory Means to you And want To share it With a friend Let me pray For you And then we're Going to watch A final Video Go authorized To death Toby I Did you Just verse Your impacto In person You Honey If this■ Has You Father We We We We