

Scattering The Seed Of The Gospel

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[0 : 00] Let's open up our Bibles this morning to the book of Mark. The book of Mark. If you're just joining us for the first time or first time in a while, you should know that our normal practice as a church is to walk through books of the Bible.

And we've been in a bigger series going through the book of Genesis. And we're actually going to pick back up next week, Lord willing, right where we left off in the book of Genesis. I'm excited to get back into that.

But here in the month of January, what we're doing, really, this is a month of kind of sharpening our focus together as a church and reminding ourselves what are we here to be about and what are we here to do.

And so we've reminded ourselves this month of our mission and then our ministry priorities. It's our mission at Seaweed Bay that we exist to magnify the glory of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We want to make a really big deal about the gospel of Jesus Christ because we believe that that's where the glory of God is seen most clearly. God's mission is God's glory.

[1 : 07] And so God's mission, God's glory is our mission as well. And then the how of how we plan to go about that. We've seen that over the past couple of weeks. We plan to enjoy God together as we worship him and delight in him.

We plan to equip the saints for the work of ministry by speaking the truth and love to one another. And then this morning, we see our last kind of ministry emphasis.

We plan to evangelize the lost. Every member engaged in the work of personal evangelism. And so Mark chapter 4, our passage this morning is verses 26 through 29.

Mark 4 verses 26 through 29. If you don't have a Bible of your own, that's okay. There should be one somewhere nearby and a seat back close to you. But I would encourage you to have your Bibles open this morning as we look at the passage together.

So when you found it, Mark 4 verses 26 through 29, let's stand together in honor of the reading of the word of God. And he said, Father, we praise you, God, that you've given us such a clear, such a simple mission.

[2 : 57] And we simply pray for your strength to do it. That we would each leave here encouraged and equipped to open up our mouths and share the good news of the gospel with others around us.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. One of my favorite pictures is from June of 2024.

It was summertime. Our family, our boys were home from school. They were outside playing in the backyard. They were soaking wet. There had been water games of all sorts happening that day.

And they posed for a picture standing outside. And right behind them were these tall, towering sunflowers. And we had them stand right in front of them for scale.

And you could tell in the picture that the flowers are at least twice their size. They were just these huge, beautiful, towering sunflowers that gave the backdrop for our picture.

[3 : 56] But, of course, they didn't start off that way. They didn't start off as tall, towering, seven-foot-tall sunflowers. Earlier that year, Amanda wanted a garden for her birthday.

And so my role in this, I'm not a gardener at all. My role was to clear out the soil, bring in the mulch, build the beds, and give her a blank canvas that she could turn into this beautiful, flourishing garden.

And what she chose to plant that year were a bunch of wildflowers and several sunflowers. And so surely, slowly but surely, time went on.

And steadily, not all at once, but over time, the seeds that she had scattered there in the soil grew. And what started off as just a blank patch of dirt out in our backyard became, over time, this

beautiful, flourishing garden.

In our passage this morning, here in Mark chapter 4, Jesus tells us that the kingdom of God is a little bit like this.

[5 : 03] The kingdom of God is like, he says, a man scattering seed on the ground, and then all over time, watching that seed steadily, slowly but surely, he knows not how, as he sleeps, as he rises.

He says, steadily, he watches that seed turn into a harvest. You know, this is important for us to grasp, because as we think about the mission of our church here in the month of January, this task of evangelism, it is all tied up with the growth of the kingdom.

We want to see the kingdom of God grow. And we believe that the way that that happens is by each and every one of us scattering the seed of the gospel.

And so let's take a look at the text this morning. And what I want to do is I want to ask two questions this morning. We'll spend most of our time on the second question, but two questions this morning. This will be our outline if you're taking notes.

Question number one, what is the kingdom of God? We need to understand what that is, what we're trying to grow, what we're aiming to see grow. And then second, I want to ask, well, how does it grow?

[6 : 13] How does it grow? So what is the kingdom of God, first? And second, how does the kingdom of God grow? So first question, what is the kingdom of God?

And we'll, again, spend most of our time on that next question, but we need to be on the same page here with what it is that we're trying to grow. And you should know, surprise, surprise, Christians have a lot of different ideas of what the kingdom of God is.

But what's absolutely clear as you read through the gospels is that the kingdom of God is a central part of Jesus' message. In Mark chapter one, you open it up, it says, Jesus, at the very beginning of his ministry, he came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God and saying, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe the gospel. It's a major theme. In fact, we see the phrase, the kingdom of God, come up 13 times in Mark's 16 chapters, 32 times in Luke's 24 chapters, only five times in Matthew's 28, but that's just because he prefers the title kingdom of heaven, which shows up 32 times in his 28 chapters.

It is all over the place. But even still, it's not so simple to define because Jesus tells us what the kingdom is like, but he never just explicitly tells us what it is.

[7 : 36] So, for example, he says things like, the kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed. It's small, but then it flourishes and it grows to be the biggest tree in the land.

Or, the kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour until it was all leavened. He describes it in this way.

Or in our passage this morning, the kingdom of God is like as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He uses these parables to describe it, but never just to explicitly define it.

So, here's my best take, okay? And you have probably heard this before from me. What is the kingdom of God? The kingdom of God is the redemptive reign of God.

The kingdom of God is the redemptive reign of God. It is his saving rule. Now, of course, in a general way, if we're talking generally, of course, God reigns and rules over all the earth.

[8 : 47] He's king over all of his creation. But when we're talking about the kingdom of God, we're talking more specifically about his redemptive reign over his redeemed people.

Those who have been redeemed, purchased, and brought into the kingdom by the blood of the king himself, Jesus Christ. In other words, church, if you are a Christian, you are in the kingdom.

If you are in Christ, you are in the kingdom of God right now. The kingdom of God is here now.

Now, we live in this incredibly unique period of time here in between the two comings of Christ. We live in between the inauguration of the kingdom at his first coming and the consummation of the kingdom at his second coming.

Think about what Christ has done. At the first coming of Christ, Christ our king defeated the enemy at the cross and at the empty tomb. And when he comes again, he is coming to finish what he started.

[9 : 56] So at the first coming of Christ, sin and death were defeated at the cross, at the empty tomb. Satan was decisively, effectively defeated at the cross of Christ.

But there remains a time when Christ comes again, when these things will be finally dealt with for good. And where are we? We live here in the in-between.

But it's absolutely incredible, isn't it? There is incredible blessing to enjoy right now through faith in Christ if you are in him because you are presently in the kingdom.

So all the blessings of the kingdom to come, peace, love, joy, victory over sin, fellowship with God, fellowship with one another, all of this we can experience right now because we are in the kingdom right now.

And yet, there is an incredible, certain hope ahead of us that we will experience all these things in full when Christ returns.

[11:05] Free from sin, free from shame, free from the enemies, free from grace, free from suffering, free from guilt, free from the curse.

So the kingdom is here and it is coming. We live in the in-between. And what is it doing here in the in-between? What's the kingdom doing in between the two comings of Christ?

The kingdom of God is growing. It is expanding. We live in the age of the ever-expanding kingdom of God.

God's redemptive reign and rule is expanding within us, in His people, and it is expanding through His people to the ends of the earth. And by God's grace, we get to be a part of it.

We get to be a part of seeing God's redemptive reign expand. And that's the mission of the church. That is why we labor, why we're so eager to plant and to strengthen and to revitalize and support other gospel-preaching churches.

[12:16] I wonder, do you see this overlap between the growth of the kingdom and the growth of the church? You see that? The mission of the kingdom on one hand and the mission of the church on the other.

Why is that? You ever think about that? It's not because the church is the kingdom, as some people believe, but because, think about it, where do we see the redemptive reign and rule of God most clearly here in the present age?

It is in the local church. The local church is where the redemptive reign and rule of God, His authority as Lord and Savior, His blessing to His people as their God and King, is realized and experienced most clearly on this side of eternity.

Church, we are a kingdom people who share kingdom values and a kingdom mission to go and to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that Jesus has commanded.

You may have heard it said like this, and I hope you have because I've said it like this a few times. The local church is an embassy of the kingdom of God and we are His ambassadors.

[13:39] The local church is an embassy of the kingdom of God and its members are ambassadors. We have a mission. What is it? It is to represent the kingdom of God here on earth.

It is to proclaim verbally the glories of the kingdom and in so doing it is to see the kingdom of God expand. Church, we want our neighbors, we want our family members, we want our co-workers, we want our friends to come into the kingdom, don't we?

And to come under the glorious redemptive reign of God through faith in Christ, how will that happen? They must hear the gospel from our lips. Charles Spurgeon says it like this.

He says, we ought to regard the Christian church not as a luxurious hostelry where Christians may each one dwell at ease in his own inn, but as barracks in which soldiers are gathered together to be drilled and trained for war.

We should regard the Christian church not as an association for mutual admiration and comfort, but as an army with banners marching to the fray to achieve victories for Christ, to storm the strongholds of the foe and to add province after province to the Redeemer's kingdom.

[15:10] Church, we are citizens and saints of the eternal kingdom of God bought by the blood of the king himself and now we are commissioned to join him in his work of kingdom growth until he comes again.

So second question then. How does it grow? How does the kingdom grow? Three ways.

Three ways. And now let's look to our passage here. We'll see all three. Until it comes in full at the return of Christ, the kingdom of God now it grows in three ways.

By scattering, by resting, and by expecting. We'll see all three. First, verse 26. Look there with me. Jesus says in this parable, he says the kingdom of God grows first through scattering.

He says the kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. And if we wonder what in the world is he talking about here, we can just look up a few verses in the immediate context to the beginning of chapter 4 where he tells another parable about, guess what?

[16:22] Scattering seed. You're all familiar with this parable, I'm sure. It's the parable of the sower. And what does he say? Look, verse 14. He tells us very clearly that in this parable the seed represents the word of God.

So, in verse 26 here, we don't have to guess at what he means. He says the kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter the word.

He scatters the word and goes to sleep and rises night and day and does it again and again and again and again and over time that seed of the word sprouts and grows.

Now, I wonder if you were here last week if you are noticing a pattern yet. Are you noticing a theme? What is the church's ministry internally to one another, to the members of the church? How do we grow up in maturity together? How is it? It is by the ministry of the word. It is by each member speaking the truth in love to one another.

[17:29] That's the internal mission of discipleship. So, when we go out of these doors and we think about our external mission, what is it? Well, our primary mission to the outside world is guess what?

Speaking the truth. Only now as to those who don't yet believe it as to those who are not yet in the kingdom. This is what we call evangelism.

And just like we saw last week, that's not the ministry of a few. This is the ministry of the whole church together. together. Every member of the church is called to be active in the work of evangelism.

This is how we aim to see the kingdom grow. We have to focus in here and make sure that we're on the same page because again, just like we saw last week, we can easily make the mistake of getting a little bit preoccupied with other things.

Good things, even. But things that are not the ultimate things. We have to make sure we're on the same page here because our methodology of church growth, it needs to match God's methodology of kingdom growth.

[18:43] You hear that? Our approach to growing the church needs to be a 100% overlap with God's approach to growing the kingdom. Our mission as a church has to have a 100% overlap overlap with God's mission.

What do I mean? Well, for example, our mission as a church is not primarily political. If you define the kingdom of God in terms of kingdoms of this world, earthly politics, then inevitably the way that you will try to see the kingdom come is through political activism.

And so success looks like political victory or advancing towards your idea of what a Christian nation might look like. And while I am thankful that Christians can be engaged politically, we need to understand that's not the kingdom we're trying to advance.

That's not the way that we're going to advance it. If you want to support a certain party or a certain politician, please go for it. If you want to post a political hot take on your social media feed, good luck to you.

Use wisdom. But ask yourself, am I at least that passionate about the kingdom of God? Am I at least that excited to talk about the glories of Christ?

[20:10] Am I willing to risk a negative comment on Facebook for posting about the glories of King Jesus? Another example.

Our mission is not primarily to do social good in our community or in our nation. And if you define the kingdom in terms of social progress, social justice, mercy ministries, then the way that you'll seek to grow the kingdom will be through social justice and mercy ministries.

And success will look like a church that's just very busy with that sort of thing, helping the poor or feeding the hungry. And again, please hear me, good things. The things that Christians ought to care deeply about, but not the way the kingdom of God advances and not the primary mission of the church.

If we feed a thousand hungry people a day but never open up our mouths to share the good news of Christ, we have not advanced the kingdom of God one inch.

Now, that doesn't mean that we don't care about these things. Please, let me be clear. That doesn't mean we don't care about these things. Far from it. You all know our family is fostering. Okay? That

is a social mercy ministry, isn't it?

[21 : 30] And a big reason why is because we believe this is one way as individuals, as a family, this is one way that we can be engaged with caring for orphans as James calls us to do, but simply welcoming children into our home is not by itself expanding the kingdom.

Anyone can do that. Atheists can do that sort of work. But it's as we pray for them and share the gospel with them and pray that they would hear the word of God and that God would cause that seed to grow in them, that scattering seed that the Lord would use it as he sees fit to grow the kingdom of God.

One more. And this is common for a lot of church planters. If your vision for kingdom impact is visible, tangible results, and then success means simply drawing a crowd and filling the room and your mission is just, well, get as many people into the room as possible and that's what leads to either pragmatism a whatever works approach to ministry on one hand or attractionalism where the main concern is, well, what will get people here?

What do the people want rather than what has God said? And again, we saw this last week, didn't we? Just having more people in the room does not necessarily mean that more people are in the kingdom.

So, more people in the room is not the primary goal. What's the goal? The goal is that the lost would hear the good news of the gospel of Christ and by God's grace believe.

[23 : 18] And what's the mechanism for achieving that goal? It is each one of you leaving this place and opening your mouths to proclaim the glories of Christ.

Jesus tells us here the kingdom of God comes not by political power, not by feeding the hungry, not by drawing a crowd, not by making church a lot of fun.

The kingdom of God comes by faithfully scattering the seed of the word of God. And what word is that? It's the word of the gospel.

We are ambassadors for Christ, Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians chapter 5. God making his appeal through us. So we implore you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God.

We have to share this message. It starts with bad news. This is not popular news where we start this gospel message. But we have to share the bad news that we are at odds with a holy God.

[24 : 25] We are sinners in need of reconciliation. We are dead in the trespasses and sins in which we all walk. It's not just you, it's me, it's all of us.

We are dead in our sins. But here's the good news for sinners like us. For our sake, he made him who knew no sin to become sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

God, the gospel is our sin in exchange for his righteousness. That he took our place on the cross and that his victory over the grave is our victory over the grave if we are united to him by faith.

That's the gospel. Now, this word is the ministry of the church. We don't have to complicate it. This word is how the church builds itself up in love as we speak this word to one another and apply it to one another's lives.

This word is how the kingdom grows externally as we bring it to the lost and share the hope of the gospel with those who have no hope outside of it. It is through this word that the church is built.

[25 : 39] It is through this word that believers grow in Christlikeness. It is through this word that the saints are equipped for the work of ministry. It is through this word alone that the kingdom grows.

That's why our mission statement again, why our mission as a church, we exist to magnify the glory of God in what? There's nowhere else.

It is in the gospel as we enjoy him together, as we equip the saints for the work of ministry together, as we evangelize the lost together.

That is our big ministry plan. And that is our how. We desire to see every single member of this church to be engaged with faithfully sharing the gospel with others around them.

Why? Because we believe the kingdom of God grows through faithfully scattering the word of God. God. Just imagine somebody has this vision, has this idea, they want to see this town filled with sunflowers.

[26 : 49] What does he do? He comes to get some seed, of course. But then what? He fills his pockets. He takes them out with him and wherever he goes he drops a little here, he drops a little there and everywhere he goes he's just scattering seed and over time guess what happens?

The whole town is flourishing. That's what we want to see happen here. So come here and gather your seed fill up your pockets and then go.

Who will you see this week? Think about it. Who will you interact with this week? How can you scatter the seed of the gospel in your conversations this week over the fence with your neighbor at the pickup line at school in your conversations at work?

You take the seed of the gospel with you as you go because the kingdom of God comes through scattering. Not only this, second way, second way, the kingdom grows through resting.

Resting. Now that second step, it might be a little surprising for some because some of us are looking for more, right? So we scatter the word and we preach the word and we share the gospel.

[28 : 12] Then what? Right? What do we do? What's the next step? Well, verse 27 says, go to sleep. He sleeps and he rises night and day and the seed sprouts and grows.

I love this. He doesn't even know how. The earth just produces by itself. First the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. It is amazing when you embrace God's definition of the kingdom and you commit to God's methodology for kingdom growth, guess what?

You can sleep well. He can sleep well. Whatever the immediate visible result may be. even. Of course, this laborer, he's not doing nothing.

He's not just sitting on his hands. He's getting up day and night, probably rising up early. He labors hard and he rests well because he's worked hard.

But at the end of the day, how much of that growth is because of him? How much did he manufacture? How much was he able to wrangle up by his own effort?

[29 : 28] The earth produces by itself, it says. While he sleeps, he knows not how. This is the sleep of somebody who has worked hard out in the garden, scattering the seed, but it's also at the same time, it's the sweet rest of someone who knows that the results are out of his hands.

It's not up to him, is it? The point here, and we have to understand this, church, as we go out to share the gospel, we are called to faithfully scatter that seed, to work hard at scattering the seed of the gospel, but all the while recognizing that the coming of the kingdom of God is not dependent on us.

Do you hear that? It is not dependent on you. Those who give themselves to God's mission with God's methods can rest well knowing God does not need us and all of our wisdom and all of our methods and all of our labors to expand his kingdom.

He is far more committed to this work than we are, but he's pleased to use weak vessels like us to do it. We can work hard and sleep well knowing that the kingdom of God does not depend on our efforts.

R.T. France. says it like this. He says the kingdom of God does not depend on human effort to achieve it and human insight will not be able to explain it. Again, it's kindness.

[31 : 10] God is pleased to use us to work through us. Can you believe that? If we would simply open up our mouths and share the good news of the gospel and trust that the word will do the work.

you all know the Protestant Reformation took place a little over 500 years ago and Martin Luther and his contemporaries took on the Catholic Church and they wrote and they wrote and they wrote and they wrote books upon books upon books commenting on the Bible exposing lies.

I mean these guys, if anybody worked hard, right, it was these guys. They got up day and night like faithful farmers scattering the seed of the word.

But how did the Reformation happen? Luther later answered that question. He said, it happened while I slept or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip and Amsdorf.

The word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing. The word did everything.

[32 : 28] The kingdom of God grows as we scatter the seed of the word and then rest as laborers who work hard but know ultimately the results are out of our hands.

God brings the growth. Lastly, one more. The kingdom of God grows through expecting, through expecting.

Look there to verse 29. The farmer scatters the seed. He gets up night and day. The earth produces the crop. It comes up slowly, sometimes painfully slowly, but he scatters that seed in hope, in confident expectation that when the grain is ripe at once, he puts in the sickle because the harvest has come.

farmers plant seed in expectation of a crop. They scatter seed in expectation that through that faithful labor, through his constant day and night sharing of the word of God, in the end, there will be a harvest.

I wonder, do you approach evangelism in that way? Do you expect there to be a harvest? harvest? Or do you expect nothing but rejection?

[33 : 52] Do you expect God to take that seed of the gospel and bring the results that he intends to bring? Or do you expect nothing? I think the enemy would have us expect nothing.

You know, one day, the Lord Jesus will return. That second coming will come. And all who have believed in him will be saved from the judgment to come.

All who have put their faith in him will be with him. This harvest is the harvest of God's people at the end of the age when the kingdom comes in full. Can you just imagine that harvest?

As the Lord comes to gather his people to himself, just imagine the joy of that day for those who believe in Christ. Can you picture it? This coming day is going to be a day of rejoicing for those who are in the kingdom now.

At the same time it's going to be a day of sadness and terror for those who are not in his kingdom now. Those who are in Christ now by faith have nothing to fear and everything to look forward to on that day.

[35 : 04] But don't you understand not everyone knows the good news of the gospel. Not everyone that you know has the hope of Christ. Christ. Not everybody that you know has confidence in the face of death.

Not everybody that you know knows that the blood of Christ is available to them to wash them clean from their sin, to atone for their sin, to reconcile them to God if they would only turn from their sin and put their faith in Christ.

Not everyone knows that judgment is coming. not all of your neighbors know, not all of your family members know, not all of this town knows.

Some have heard and have rejected it. Some have heard and don't fully understand. They're blinded. But we know with certainty there will be a harvest.

When Christ returns, there will be a harvest. what will the harvest be like here in this place? In the town of Allendall and McClellanville and Huges and Mount Pleasant and Charleston, what will the harvest be like?

[36 : 22] I want you to think for just a minute here with me as we close and would you just think of a non-believer that you know? Maybe just one or two and I just want you to get them in your mind.

Okay? Now there is no guarantee that God will certainly save those that we share the gospel with. But here's a guarantee.

They must hear the gospel to be saved. The only way to be saved is by faith in Christ.

And the only way that they're going to put their faith in Him is if they hear about Him. The only way that they're going to hear about Him is if somebody opens their mouth and tells them about Christ and wouldn't you have it?

Look at what God's done. He's put you right there with them. A Christian who knows the gospel, who hears it week in and week out at church, who has their pockets full of seed.

[37 : 28] And God's providence, He has put you in contact with them. What would it look like? Just strategize for a minute. What would it look like for you just to go scatter some seed this week?

Are you scared to do it? Maybe you don't feel ready. Maybe you don't feel qualified. Maybe you fear rejection.

Maybe you don't think you have all the answers. Guess what? you don't. Neither do I. It is worth risking a little bit of humiliation for the harvest.

It is worth risking a little bit of rejection for the harvest. It is worth risking a little bit of discomfort, loss of friends, broken relationships for the harvest, for the sake of God's glory and the salvation of the lost.

What if I don't have all the answers? So what? What if God has prepared for them to believe? And what if they do repent of their sins and put their faith in Christ?

[38 : 53] And what if that soil has been primed and prepped and is ready to receive that planting of the seed of the word of God? What if the spirit is ready to move and bring that person to salvation in Christ?

What if all of a sudden they just suddenly desire to know the Lord and to walk with him and we get to be a part of it? What if, just imagine it, what would it look like if every member of this church went out, faithfully scattering the seed of the gospel?

Could you imagine the harvest that would come? Do you expect it? We read earlier from Isaiah 55, God promises, as the rain and snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth, it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, it shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

As you go out of here and go scatter the seed of the word of God, we do so in confidence, church, in expectation, that God will do exactly what He wants to do.

God will bring in exactly the harvest that He intends to bring. His word will accomplish all His purpose.

[40 : 39] Will we go? Will you go? Will you share? will you think about those who don't know Him this week?

Will you open your mouths and proclaim the glories of Christ? Will you scatter the seed so that through you the kingdom might grow?

Father, we praise you for this simple, clear directive from the mouth of the King that we are to go and make disciples of all nations.

Father, this is our ministry to the lost and dying world. So we pray, God, that you would mobilize us. Father, you've placed us in position, you've put others around us, you have given us spheres of influence, Father, that are unique to us, God.

Opportunities to share the gospel. Would you lead us to be faithful with those opportunities? And would you bring the harvest, we pray, in Christ's name. Amen.