



# Table Talk

By Rev. Timothy J. Swenson • ILT Dean of Chapel

Third Sunday After Pentecost

June 13, 2021

## MARK 4:26-34

.....  
"With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it." Vs. 33



Jesus spoke parables to them. He disguised the Word of God in parables so the people could stand hearing it. And even though he provided explanations to the disciples, they, too, remained uncomprehending (Mk. 16:11). We continue to explore the theme of bewilderment and incomprehension.

Take the metaphor of God as a man who scatters seed. Once the seed is scattered, the man simply goes about his normal business, marking the passing days by his sleeping and his rising (vs. 27). While the man occupies his days with his normal routine, the "seed sprouts and grows" (vs. 27). Then come the words that confuse and bewilder, the man "knows not how" (vs. 27). The seed sprouts and grows, developing through its successive stages of blade, ear, and full grain (vs. 28). The earth produces of itself, but the man remains ignorant of how this happens. God, the man who sows the seed, takes note of when the harvest has come and then, and only then, gathers the harvest (vs. 29).

The sowing of the seed is the only visible (audible) act of God in this metaphor. We, you and I, have preachers of God's Word. These preachers mark out the presence of the kingdom of God. Through the hearing of that Word, the Holy Spirit works faith—and here is the one and only qualifier—as it pleases God. The preacher

knows not how God is working to advance the growth of the seed... the growth of the kingdom. Its growth is a mystery of the hidden work of God. You and I have only Jesus' promise delivered by our preacher that the kingdom grows around us and within us. We enjoy this mystery in faith... our God does not lie.

The preaching of the Word of God seems such an insignificant event. A puff of air pushed over the preacher's vocal cords, formed by her tongue, released through his lips, mere sound waves fading to non-existence nearly as soon as they are uttered. Yet Jesus tells us that the "smallest of all seeds on earth" (vs. 31), grows to such size that it becomes home for even the "birds of the air" (vs. 32). How such astounding growth takes place exceeds our comprehension, even though we would very much like to force it into visibility. We remain in the mystery of faith, not knowing how it is that the seed sprouts and grows.

**Table Talk:** Discuss ways that you or others have tried to force the mystery of the kingdom's growth into visibility.

**Pray:** Heavenly Father, hold me in such faith that I live day-to-day hearing your Word, confident that your kingdom grows around me and within me. Amen.



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**MARK 4:26-34 ESV**

26 And he said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. 27 He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. 28 The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. 29 But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

30 And he said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? 31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, 32 yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.”

33 With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. 34 He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.



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