

Kingdom (Part 3)
The kingdom of Heaven is Like

2/23/2025

In last weeks lesson one of the parables we looked at was the parable of the sower. When Jesus' disciples asked for an explanation of this parable here is the beginning of that answer by Jesus as recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke's gospel accounts -

*"He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the **good seed is the sons of the kingdom.**" (Matthew 13:37-38)*

*"The sower **sows the word.**" (Mark 14:14)*

*"Now the parable is this: **The seed is the word of God.**" (Luke 8:11)*

A little confusing perhaps?

Let me help clarify things by going back to the beginning - Genesis 1:1 In the beginning was the seed! No! That isn't it. *"in the beginning was the word"*

*"Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his **offspring.** It does not say, "And to **offsprings,**" referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your **offspring,**" who is Christ." (Galatians 3:16)*

The word translated as 'offspring' in the passage above is a Greek word *sperma* defined as - something sown, i.e. seed or offspring.

God's Word created everything including that which we know as seed! Anything that exists we are told was created by God through The Word of God.

John's gospel account does not record this parable. But John does give the answer to it. In fact it is how John's gospel account begins -

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."

In John 1:14 we are told that Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Mankind has often debated which came first - the chicken or the egg? When looking for how life came to be from a worldly scientific perspective this simple question has stumped even the greatest of minds. For by this 'scientific' way of thinking or method there can be no correct answer. For one requires the other to be. Therefore many search for that spark or chemical reaction to provide an answer to this dilemma of how things came to be. And by scientific discovery of what already exists they hope to find their answer. See the paradox!

This same dilemma is expressed in the parable we will look into this morning. The parable known as 'the growing seed' found in Mark's gospel account. Mark 4:26-29 -

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

When we speak of where things come from we often refer to it as it's seed. Plants come from seeds. People often refer to it as seed money when starting a business. Farmers plant seed to grow a crop Etc.

In Scripture we find the following concerning seeds -

In The Old Testament the word 'seed' appears 224 times, and both the words 'seeds' and 'seed's' appear once. The Hebrew word used in all but 3 cases is the word zera. It has 2 primary meanings. 1. Physical seed as in a plant's seed. 2. Offspring as in mankind's children or descendant's.

In The New Testament we find the word 'seed' 55 times, and 'seeds' 4 times. And again we find the same 2 primary uses of these words. 1. Physical seed of a plant. 2. Offspring as in mankind's children or descendant's. But then we also find the parables about seed which at first don't quite seem to fit this pattern or fall within these two categories as described above.

Consider the following from Scripture about seed or seeds -

The first time that the word 'seed' appears in Scripture is in Genesis 1:11-13 - *"And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding **seed**, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose **seed** is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding **seed** after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose **seed** was in itself, after his kind: and **God saw that it was good**. And the evening and the morning were the third day."*

From this passage we learn a number of things about physical plant seeds. Including that they play a part in God's plan to produce things as God intends. For scripture tells us here in Genesis - that it was good.

In contrast notice how the seed of man is first spoken of in Scripture -

The first time in Scripture we see 'seed' being used for mankind's offspring is in Genesis 3:15 - *"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring (**seed**) and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."*

This passage is often referred to as the first prophesy about the Christ.

The next time 'seed' is used in Scripture for mankind's offspring is in Genesis 4:25 - *"And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another **seed** instead of Abel, whom Cain slew."*

And the next time 'seed' is being spoken of in Scripture is Genesis 7:3. The scene here is of God directing Noah to take animals upon the Ark so that their **seed** survives the coming flood.

Looking at the word 'seed' from this perspective in God's Word we see a very distinct difference in outcome for the 'seed' of plants and 'seed' of man and animals. Just something's to consider!

Next let us consider the following from Isaiah 55:1-13 -

*"Come, all you who are thirsty,
come to the waters;
and you who have no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without cost.*

Why spend money on what is not bread,
and your labor on what does not satisfy?
Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,
and you will delight in the richest of fare.
Give ear and come to me;
listen, that you may live.
I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
my faithful love promised to David.
See, I have made him a witness to the peoples,
a ruler and commander of the peoples.
Surely you will summon nations you know not,
and nations you do not know will come running to you,
because of the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel,
for he has endowed you with splendor.”
Seek the Lord while he may be found;
call on him while he is near.
Let the wicked forsake their ways
and the unrighteous their thoughts.
Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will freely pardon.
**“For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,”
declares the Lord.
“As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.
As the rain and the snow
come down from heaven,
and do not return to it
without watering the earth
and making it bud and flourish,
so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,
so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
It will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.
You will go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and hills
will burst into song before you,
and all the trees of the field
will clap their hands.
Instead of the thornbush will grow the juniper,
and instead of briars the myrtle will grow.
This will be for the Lord’s renown,
for an everlasting sign,
that will endure forever.”**

In this chapter from Isaiah we see Israel is in big trouble concerning their relationship with their creator. There are a lot of promises made by God to the people of Israel to be found here. And a specific lesson on them would be of great value for us today. But this morning I would like for us to focus on the highlighted portion above. More on the idea of 'this will happen' rather than the 'What will happen'. Or simply the assurance we may have of what God's Word declares will happen, and that it will in fact happen and as God decrees. God's **Word** will not return empty - it will produce!

Physical plant seeds that live and produce always produce what that seed is. An apple seed produces an apple tree from which we get apples. You can't get a grape vine from an apple seed. And God's Word will do the same, it won't come back empty, it will produce. It is mankind and mankind's Will which is in opposition to God's Will. This rebellion is sin and produces the destruction of those involved but it does not thwart God's plan.

The Hebrew writer opens his letter with the following message - *"In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe."*

The message of God to mankind has been the same throughout history. It is a message of hope by following God's Will for our own good. God does not change and so His Word does not change over time. Solomon said it this way - *"What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; **there is nothing new under the sun.**"* (Ecclesiastes 1:9)

Or as Isaiah stated above concerning God -

***"For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,"***

declares the Lord.

***"As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.***

It is we "humans" who have wandered away from God. We rebel against God. In last weeks lesson we looked at the opening of chapter one of Isaiah which describes this disconnect. *"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord has spoken: "Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand."*

So plants do what God designed them to do, and animals know and do what their master wants. But mankind rebels against God's Will.

In this parable of the growing seed in Mark the man does not know how this seed does what it does. But the seed is doing what God has designed it to do. And then this man harvests the good things it produces. God continually blesses us with numerous blessings and yet we often neither thank Him nor appreciate God's kindness towards us.

But there is another side to this story. We human are also 'seed' and will be harvested as the parable of the sower described.

Here is the parable of "The Growing Seed" - Mark 4:26-29 again -

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

Notice how it begins - “the kingdom of God is like”.
A few of the things to consider from this parable.

1. Seed is being scattered

2. A man is scattering it

3. Seed produces something - Again Genesis 1:11-13 tells us this about seeds - *“Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: **seed-bearing** plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with **seed** in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing **seed** according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with **seed** in it **according to their kinds**. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.”*

4. Just how a seed produces what they do is still somewhat of a mystery to mankind. We know for example that apple seeds produce apples and grape seeds grapes. But exactly how they do it we are just beginning to understand. And yet we reap the benefits even without understanding of how it all works.

Notice this example of seed in James 3:9-16 *“With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers and sisters, **can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs?** Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water. Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.”*

As stated in last week’s lesson God has been informing mankind of many things since the days of Adam. God has used various methods and writers to provide us with example after example of how things are designed to work in His creation.

When we do things contrary to God’s Will there will be consequences. We need to be careful that we are not planting the seeds of our own destruction, so to speak!

5. We will eventually produce a crop that will be harvested. And as we saw in the parable of the weeds in Matthew last week - that which produces weeds will also be gathered ‘harvested’ but will be destroyed.

Or as explained by God concerning Israel in Isaiah 5:1-7 -
*“I will sing for the one I love
a song about his vineyard:
My loved one had a vineyard
on a fertile hillside.*

He dug it up and cleared it of stones
 and planted it with the choicest vines.
 He built a watchtower in it
 and cut out a winepress as well.
 Then he looked for a crop of good grapes,
 but it yielded only bad fruit.
 “Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and people of Judah,
 judge between me and my vineyard.
 What more could have been done for my vineyard
 than I have done for it?
 When I looked for good grapes,
 why did it yield only bad?
 Now I will tell you
 what I am going to do to my vineyard:
 I will take away its hedge,
 and it will be destroyed;
 I will break down its wall,
 and it will be trampled.
 I will make it a wasteland,
 neither pruned nor cultivated,
 and briars and thorns will grow there.
 I will command the clouds
 not to rain on it.”
 The vineyard of the Lord Almighty
 is the nation of Israel,
 and the people of Judah
 are the vines he delighted in.
 And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed;
 for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.”

Remember that the parable we are talking about here in Mark is one of many that Jesus spoke to the crowd on that day. Mark like Matthew records that Jesus quoted this about the people to whom He was speaking - “*they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!*” (Isaiah 6:6-9)

We can learn much about seeds by simply listening to what God has to say about them throughout Scripture. Consider the following -

Genesis 1:29-30 - “*Then God said, “I give you every **seed-bearing** plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with **seed** in it. **They will be yours for food.** And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every **green plant for food.**” And it was so.*”

Matthew 4:4 “*Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”*”

We recognize the above passage from when Jesus was being tempted by Satan. But Jesus refers to it as ‘it is written’. Jesus is referring to something God had already spoken to man that

we find back in Deuteronomy 8. Here is that reference in it's context where God is speaking to Israel through Moses -

*“The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the Lord swore to give to your fathers. And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, **but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.**”*

We are part of that creation in the truest sense of the Word. And God breathed life into us.

John 6:47-58 *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.”*

The above passage would be nye impossible to understand had we not received knowledge about seeds, food (bread) and living because of God's Word.

Psalms 34:8 *“Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.”*

Humans associate taste with pleasure and satisfaction. Bible commentator Matthew Henry elaborates on this idea: “Let God's goodness be rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel.” When David says, “Taste and see that the Lord is good,” he is calling us to figuratively take a bite—to try for ourselves by our own experience—and find out exactly how satisfyingly good God is. Peter echos this thought when he writes - *“now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.”* (1st Peter 2:3)

It all begins with the Word of God. We grow in The Lord or we grow in the way of the world. Either way a harvest is coming.

Or as Jesus stated - “The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. (Matthew 13:38-41)

Or as Paul warns -

“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” (Galatians 6:7-10)

As Christians we have come to know and realize the following. But without God’s written Word we would still be like those described in the parable of the seed. That is having know idea where it all comes from! But as Christians we can say as Paul did -

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.” (Ephesians 1:3-14)