

SLIDE 1

The Kingdom Parables

Mark 4:21-34
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Introduction

The year was 1975. It was my first winter as a driver. I didn't have a car. But my friend had a 1964 Dodge Dart.

SLIDE 2 – Show picture of the Dodge Dart

It looked like this same color, just had more rust.

I remember it well, because it had a push button transmission on the dash board.

I had to go early to school, so my friend who lived just up the street told me I could drive her car for the early morning play rehearsal if I came back and got her before school started.

That morning I was running late, so I scooted up the street, to get her car out of her driveway. Anyway, that particular day it was cold. Frost was thick on the windshield. I rummaged through the car but there was no scraper. I turned on the heater on, but I'm not sure defrosters had been invented in 1964. And I was late to rehearsal, something our drama teacher did not take lightly to. So I did my best to make a hole in the ice so I could see to drive to school.

SLIDE 3 – Show Peephole

Looking through the peephole I had made, I eased the car out of the driveway, and headed to school.

Well you know what happened. I stopped at a stop sign. Couldn't see to the right or the left, and eased into the oncoming traffic, only to hear that awful crunching sound as another car slammed into my blind side on the right. It was a guy I knew from school. He had a peephole too! We both got out of the car scared, me terrified of the thought of having to take my girlfriends car back to her house—her step father was BIG!

Well I am here today, so you know I lived through it, but I learned a life lesson that day. Clear the whole windshield before driving. And apparently I am not the only one who has done this.

As the recent winter approached, *USA Today* writer Larry Copeland wrote a story about the danger of "peephole" driving.

You're in a hurry to get to work on time, and when you walk out into the cold you find that your car is encased in a layer of snow and ice from an overnight storm. After a few minutes you have cleared away an opening the size of a large pepperoni pizza. You throw caution to the frigid winds and get in the car and drive away.

Then it hits you: you can hardly see. You drive really slow and lean up close to the windshield and peer out your peephole and hope against hope that you don't run into anyone before the heater and defrosters melt more of the ice away from your windows. Worse yet, as you peer out your peephole, you notice that other drivers are peering out their peepholes!

Copeland's article ends with this warning from the North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles: "Peephole driving is an invitation to disaster."

In Today's Kingdom Parables Jesus gives an even more important lesson: Peephole living is an invitation to disaster.

You have to live in the light of God's truth. Letting is light your way, and in so doing, lighting the way of others.

Bible; Blindness; Ignorance; Knowledge; Scripture; Spiritual perception; Understanding; Vision; Wisdom

The Parable of the Lamp

SLIDE 4

Mark 4:21–25 (NET)

21 He also said to them, "A lamp isn't brought to be put under a basket or under a bed, is it? Isn't it to be placed on a lamp stand? **22** For nothing is hidden except to be revealed, and nothing concealed except to be brought to light. **23** If anyone has ears to hear, he had better listen!" **24** And he said to them, "Take care about what you hear. The measure you use will be the measure you receive, and more will be added to you. **25** For whoever has will be given more, but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him."

The parable begins with an illustration every one can understand and every hearer would be familiar with. This was almost 2000 years before the invention of electricity, so everyone light their homes with one of these:

SLIDE 5 – Show Picture of the Lamp

4:21 lamp. This refers to a very small clay bowl made with a spout to hold a wick and containing a few ounces of oil that served as the fuel. **a lampstand.** In common homes, this was simply a shelf protruding from the wall. Wealthier homes might have separate, ornate stands (cf. Rev. 1:12).

Then the parable takes a turn, and we have to turn our understanding up...

4:22 there is nothing hidden ... revealed. The purpose in keeping something hidden is so that one day it can be revealed. Jesus' teaching was never intended to be just for an inner circle of followers. It would be the responsibility of the disciples to take what was entrusted to them, the message of the gospel, and communicate the gospel of the kingdom to the world at large (cf. Matt. 28:19, 20).

So that verse 23 could be thought of as a one verse parable of the talents. Jesus asks us to ask ourselves what are you going to do with what I have given you? And when you show yourself faithful, God will invest more resources into you.

SLIDE 6 – Show George Mueller Slide

At the age of 20 George Mueller was a drunken college student. Then one day he woke up out of his stupor he trusted Christ.

Soon he committed himself to a full-time gospel ministry. When Mueller was twenty-five, he went to Teignmouth, England, with his new wife, Mary, to pastor a small church. He gave up the small salary offered when he discovered it was paid through the rental of church pews. From that time on he resolved to live by faith.

Mueller moved in 1832 to Bristol, England, to be the pastor of another church. There his famous work with the orphans began when two young children were thrown upon the church's care.

SLIDE 7 – Orphanages

Mueller had only two shillings to his name when he began the orphanage work, but over the next sixty years God sent more than \$7,500,000 to supply their needs. New buildings were built or purchased, staff was hired, and the hundreds of children never missed a meal. Many times prayers were said over empty plates only to have food arrive at the last moment.

Mueller resolved never to tell anyone what his needs were. He told them to God and confidently expected them to be met.

During his life, Mueller started 117 schools which educated over 120,000 young people and orphans.

George Mueller appears to me to be a man who heard Jesus and realized the truth of this parable that

4:24 With the same measure. The spiritual results which the disciples realized were to be based on the amount of effort they put forth; they would reap as they had sown. **more will be**

given. The one who has learned spiritual truth and applied it diligently will receive even more truth to faithfully apply.¹

Which way are you moving? Which measure are you using?

(raise up your ¼ cup and a scoop shovel)

The parable is about how one hears the parables. The difference between those outside and those inside is the measure they give in the way they hear the parables. The disciples who consider carefully what they hear will be given more. Although Jesus teaches in a form that obscures his message for those outside (vv. 11–12), his message is meant to be made known and will be made known to the disciples through his explanations. His message is not meant to be hidden under a bowl or a bed, but set up on a lamp stand as a source of light.²

So the question is how open are you to the teachings of Jesus? Understanding parables is a test of that openness. We respond, but do not cause the growth, God does.

SLIDE 8

The Parable of the Growing Seed.

Mark 4:26–29 (NET)

26 He also said, “The kingdom of God is like someone who spreads seed on the ground. 27 He goes to sleep and gets up, night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. 28 By itself the soil produces a crop, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. 29 And when the grain is ripe, he sends in the sickle because the harvest has come.”

This is Mark’s only unique parable. Like the Soils Parable, it presents a comprehensive picture of the coming of God’s kingdom: sowing (v. 26), growing (vv. 27–28), and harvesting (v. 29), with emphasis on the growing phase. Only one person, the sower (not identified), appears in all three phases.

4:26. The initial words in this parable could be rendered: “**The kingdom of God** is as follows: it **is like...**” In phase one, the sower **scatters seed on the ground.**

4:27–28. In phase two the sower appears but is not active. After planting **the seed**, he leaves it and goes about his duties **night and day** without anxious thought for the seed. Meanwhile it germinates, **sprouts, and grows** in a way **he did not know** and cannot explain.

¹ MacArthur, J. J. (1997). *The MacArthur Study Bible* (electronic ed.). Nashville: Word Pub.

² Black, A. (1995). *Mark*. The College Press NIV commentary. Joplin, Mo.: College Press Pub. Co.

The soil (lit., “the earth”) **produces grain** which develops to maturity in successive stages. The soil does this **all by itself** (*automatē*; cf. the Eng. “automatic”). This key Greek word (emphatic by position) could be translated “without visible cause” implying “without human agency,” and thus refers to work done by God (cf. similar situations in Josh. 6:5; Job 24:24; Acts 12:10). God works in the life-bearing seed which, when planted in good soil, grows stage by stage and produces grain without human intervention.

4:29. The sower’s ultimate interest is phase three, the harvest. Whenever (future) **the grain is ripe, he** immediately (*euthys*; cf. 1:10) **puts the sickle to it** (lit., “sends forth the sickle,” a figure of speech for “sending forth the reapers”; cf. Joel 3:13) **because the harvest has come** (*parestēken*, “stands ready”).

It is a picture of the coming of God’s kingdom by the mysterious, sovereign work of God. Its emphasis is on growth under God’s initiative in the interim phase between the proclamation by Jesus (the lowly Sower) and His disciples and the ultimate manifestation of the kingdom by Jesus (the mighty Harvester). The third view is preferred in light of Mark 4:26a and the overall context of the kingdom parables.³

SLIDE 10 – Start the Video DVD as I talk

There’s a popular surfing video that captures well what it feels like to step into the awesome work of the kingdom of God. To view the video, [click here](#). It is just over a minute and a half long.

The video starts with famed surfer Laird Hamilton upright on his board. He is holding on to a rope being towed along the water by a speeding jet ski. You sense a massive wave rests just underneath Laird and the jet ski, but the camera is focused in a manner that you can’t quite tell how big it is.

As Laird gains speed via the power of the jet ski, you begin to see that he is on the downward slope of the wave. He lets go of the rope and the jet ski moves out of the camera’s view. The focus is on Laird alone. As the camera pulls back, back, back, you see the surfer for what he is—a mere speck on a wave so enormous it defies comprehension. You realize that Laird is standing on the crest of a 65-foot breaker. The wave curls and the surfer zooms down its face, propelled by the wall of water crashing around him, exhilarated by the ride of a lifetime.

Like the wave, God’s kingdom is on the move. It is enormous beyond our comprehension, and it’s there whether we’re ready to catch it or not. Should we want to ride this wave, we soon learn that it travels so fast, we can’t do a thing on our own power. Our paddling simply won’t do. We need the Holy Spirit to tow us along to get up to speed. Even when we catch it, we still don’t do the bulk of the work. We are simply willing to ride the wave of what God is doing, exhilarated all the while by its awesome nature. Awaiting the return of Jesus and the coming harvest.

³ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Bill White, Paramount, California; source: YouTube.com

This should prompt us to ask a question. In this parable Jesus teaches that the kingdom of God will take over everything. Nothing can stop it. Nothing has. And nothing will.

To prove it Jesus entrusted his message to just 12 men. One even betrayed him. But since 33 AD the message of the kingdom has become the dominating force. Are you riding with God, or will you simply be lost as he rolls on through history?

Now perhaps some of you know that today is the Super bowl Sunday. My team is not in it. I am a chief's fan. And the chiefs have been so hopeless well, let's just say this, the last time they won the Super bowl, Lyndon Johnson was President, the hand held calculator hadn't been invented yet, and gas as \$.26 cents a gallon.

So that is why I am now listening to this parable, it is time to get with the wave, and I have been reading the bible, and I have noticed this:

SLIDE 11

Ephesians 1:1 (NASB95)

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus:

Philippians 1:1 (NASB95)

1 Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons:

Colossians 1:2 (NASB95)

2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

So for this reason, it is obvious to me, if I am not going to be swept away, it is time to abandon the inept chiefs, and ride the advancing wave of God's kingdom, and join the ranks of Saints fans!

SLIDE 12 – Show the Saints slide

Just Kidding

SLIDE 13– The Kingdom Parables

In the message of the gospel, God in Christ is on the move. As you would expect, nothing will stop the Lord.

The question the kingdom parables ask you. Will you join God in his work, or be left behind?