

# Home Study

## Mark's Epiphany



MONDAY, JANUARY 25, 2021

### INTRODUCTION

Yesterday, in our Gospel reading, we heard Jesus tell a memorable story, his famous “Parable of the Sower.” Today we read two more short parables, as Mark records them for us.

In his parable stories, Jesus was commonly revealing the ways of the kingdom of God. Christ taught the people, in his day, about God’s plans and God’s priorities. He instructed them about the true meaning and purpose of their lives, from God’s perspective.

The Lord’s parables have tremendous meaning and importance for our lives, too, as followers of Jesus in this modern age. We live in a nation that seems to be on a path leading more and more away from God, and we’re part of a culture that is less and less focused on God. How vital it is, then, for us to learn about the kingdom of God, where our true and ultimate citizenship lies. And who better to teach us than the Son of God himself!

### TODAY’S READING

In your Bible, read the two parables recorded in Mark 4:26-34. As you are reading this section, make a note of any items that surprise you, or jump out at you in some way. Jot down what you think the main point in each parable might be.

### PRAYER

It’s interesting that Jesus offered another sower/seed parable. Back then, the sight of a person spreading seeds in a field was probably a common visual image. But most of us have likely planted a seed or two in our time. Do those seeds always grow? Are your planting efforts always successful?

Jesus was teaching about how the kingdom of God grows. What makes people come to faith, in your view? What causes a particular church to grow? How do people like us grow and mature in our faith relationship with God?

Jesus tells us about a man who plants seeds. The man does a certain amount of work to get the seed into the ground. But the Lord’s parable makes it clear that sprouting and growing happens in an unknown, unprompted way.

Read verses 27-28 again. Is the man who planted the seeds responsible for the produce?

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What's the point that Jesus made for us in this brief parable? When it comes to your spiritual life, is growth and maturity completely up to you? Or is God involved? Even more, is God ultimately responsible?

Take a minute to read and reflect upon Romans 1:16-17. This is one of the many Bible passages, along with today's reading, that make it clear that the power for faith, and the ability to grow in faith, comes from God and God alone.

When it comes to our church, then, should we view its growth as something we make happen, or something God makes happen? Does God get the glory, or do we?

Some Christians feel that, if the kingdom of God grows by God's hand, and by God's power, maybe we don't really have to pitch in and work so hard. Do you agree? Is Jesus' parable encouraging us to become spiritual slackers?

Most definitely not. Let's keep busy planting seeds, as God calls us to do. And let's faithfully pray to the Lord of the harvest to bring the growth. Read St. Paul's words of personal experience in 1 Corinthians 3:1-9, for more about our work of planting seeds.

In Mark 4:30-32, Mark records yet another seed story shared by Jesus. This one is a super-short gem, which makes a great point about the kingdom of God.

Jesus talked about a tiny mustard seed, which is ridiculously small when planted, growing up into a huge bush. He wanted us to know that when our efforts in his name seem insignificant, unsuccessful, and paltry to us, God may still be at work in mighty, effective ways.

Does this parable offer hope, to the Christian who's feeling trivial and inconsequential?

A fundamental principle for Christian living, and a foundational premise of God's kingdom, is that what the world sees as small can be mammoth in God's eyes. Take a few moments, and try to think of a couple of ways in which that truth applies to in your church, and how it applies to a couple of situations in your personal life.

## **PRAYER**

Jesus, you came to reveal God's truth to the world. Teach me/us more and more about your kingdom, your ways, your perspective, and your plan for my/our life. I/we pray for growth and maturity in my/our faith life, and ask you to bring growth and maturity to my/our church, as well. Thank you, Lord, for all you do for me/us. Amen.