

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not review by the speaker, for personal use only)

Mark 04: 26-34

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. We'll continue to read Mark chapter 4, verses 26 to 34.

In Mark's writing, Jesus carried out His earthly ministry by preaching the Word, casting out demons, and healing the sick. Preaching, is for our spirit: the Word of God is Spirit, which is life. When God's Word comes into our spirits, our spirits will be quickened so we can receive life and life supplies. Casting out demons, is for our souls: Jesus Christ casted out demons by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the same way, our spirits were quickened through God's Word, our spirits then can be filled with the Holy Spirit, and overflow into our souls and release us from all kinds of bondage. That is to break down the strongholds of our minds, to remove the bondage and dependence in our emotion, and to soften the hardness and rebellion in our will, so that our souls can freely follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. Healing the sick is of course directed at our bodies: so that we can overcome our physical ailments to serve God and the church.

The Gospel of Mark has always been very concise, but we must not be careless when we read it, nor should we read it through in a casual way and have a superficial understanding of it. Rather you should read it carefully. Always ask yourself, why did Mark write about this, and what was the logic behind it? Only then will you be able to truly understand Mark's gospel, and you will especially appreciate Mark's ability to outline the essence of Jesus' earthly ministry in the simplest of words.

Mark 4 is Jesus' unraveling of the mystery of the kingdom of God to His disciples. This chapter is not the same as Matthew 13. Matthew Chapter 13 specifically describes the kingdom of heaven in its entirety including every aspect of the New Testament church. Mark on the other hand, focuses on the development of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is a kingdom of life that begins with Jesus who's the sower. When the seed is sown in good soil, the word of life can take root,

grow, and bear fruit, and the word of life will produce the testimony of life. Like a lamp was placed on a lampstand. Not only that, but the word of life will be passed on from generation to generation. Jesus was the first to sow the seed, and then 12 disciples were sent out by Jesus to sow the seed, and then Jesus sent another 70 disciples to sow the seed. In the book of Acts, we see that 120 disciples were sent out to sow the seed, and later Paul was raised, and Paul and his co-workers went out into the Gentile land to sow the seed. To this day, the seed of this gospel has been sown in almost all the inhabitation of the earth, and God has always blessed the work of this sower.

And the principle of God's blessing is that God will measure it to you with whatever measure you use, and more will be given for whoever has, to him more will be given. Today's scriptures, verses 26-34, will show us that there are two different developments in the kingdom of God, one is a natural way and the other is unnatural; one is of life, and the other is life plus something else. Please remember the principle of interpretation of the bible: it must be consistent, not conforming to men's ideas or traditions, or theological frameworks; it must be interpreted according to the scriptures and in consistency within the contexts.

Verses 26-27: "And He said, 'The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how.' "

Here we see that after sowing the seed, it seems that people do nothing special. In the evening, he went to sleep, and when he arose in the day, he found that the seed had sprouted, and life had begun to grow, and the sower did not know why. Here we see that this sower is no longer Jesus, of course Jesus knows how this seed will develop, how it will grow, and here it is the disciples who will inherit the ministry of Jesus, of course it includes you and me today. We have limited knowledge, limited abilities, and sometimes even limited faith, we just obey Jesus' command: Go out and sow no matter in season or out of season. As to where the seeds fall and what kind of development they will become, we truly don't know.

But praise the Lord, there is a law of life, and we have to be sure that it is the word of life that is sown.

Verse 28: "For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head."

We all know very well what happens in nature, just as when a grain is sown in the ground, it naturally sprouts, it grows ears, and then it produces full grains, and all of this is the natural operation of life. In the kingdom of God, if we sow the seed of life, the seed of life will have the law of life, and they will grow naturally, sprout naturally, and spit out ears naturally. Paul was a wise master builder who spent his life preaching the gospel and building churches among the Gentiles. Based on his observations, he described the law of life in more detail.

In 1 Corinthians 3:6-9, he knew that the kingdom of God was like a field that he planted, and God would send others, like Apollos, to water it, and that it would be God who would make it grow. It is God's sovereignty that the seed of life given by God has the ability to grow, and God will send different people to cooperate in different circumstances. Neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God hath made him grow. And God alone is worthy of all glory, which is a natural condition for the development of God's kingdom. And Peter was very matured in his later years; in 2 Peter 1:3-11, he further describes the trajectory of life's growth. As life grows along these tracks, it is possible to enter the eternal kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. What is the trajectory of life growth? It begins with faith, adds virtue to faith, adds knowledge, adds self-control, adds patience, adds godliness, adds love for brothers, and finally adds love for all people, and the fruit is ripe.

Verse 29: "But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come"

When the crop is ripe, it needs to be harvested. And when is the harvest of the kingdom of God? Just before Jesus Christ returns, God will come and reap the harvest. The harvest is recorded in Revelation 14. There we see two harvested crops, the first in verses 14:1-5, which are the firstfruits of the crops. Here it is said that there are 144,000 people, and they are all overcomers. Their characteristic is that they were all bought from the earth, and they were all followers of the Lamb; Wherever the Lamb went, they followed Him. There is no lie in their mouths, they are without blemish. The first crops are the first fruits.

Then in verses 14-16, we see the harvest being harvested in large numbers: "And one like the Son of Man, wearing a crown of gold and a swift sickle in his hand, heard an angel crying out from the temple, 'Stretch out your sickle and reap; For the harvest has come, and the harvest of the earth is ripe. So, he threw his sickle into the ground, and the harvest was reaped.'" Here we see from the beginning that the seed of life is sown in good soil, it grows naturally, it sprouts naturally, it emerges, and finally it matures naturally. And before Christ returns, He will be reaped and returned to Christ. This is the first metaphor, which is life, is normal, and develops naturally. Then we'll look at another parable.

Verse 30: "Then He said, 'To what shall we liken the Kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it?'"

Here is another parable, which is different from the previous one, and we compare the two together. The former one is natural, this one is not natural; the former one is of life, and this one is of life plus other things; the former one is normal, and this one is abnormal.

Verse 31: "It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth."

The mustard seed is the smallest among all the seeds. In Matthew 17:20, Jesus compared faith to a mustard seed, and said, 'even if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, move from here to there, and it will move away.'" Do not be afraid that you have little faith, but be afraid that the essence of your faith is changed. Even if your faith is as small as a mustard seed, you can move mountains. Mustard is an annual vegetable and its seeds are very small; but planted in the ground, it can grow and mature, and it can also become a vegetable for people.

Verse 32: "but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade."

The mustard seed mentioned here is not normal in its development: when it is planted, it grows bigger than all other vegetables, and even does not look like a vegetable anymore. It grows big branches just like a tree. As a result, the birds of the air can also rest in its shade. Many commentators have interpreted this verse in a positive way, using it to explain the vigorous development of Christianity: A small mustard seed can grow into a big tree, grow to the point where it can be a cover for the world, and it can be a resting place for all nations.

Many churches also have this interpretation that they want to make the church big, to the point where it can be visible and respectable. Such churches are very numerical and very good at using all kinds of methods to attract people to the church, and every Sunday is full of traffic and has a certain impact on the world, and they think that this is the ministry that God has given to the church. But let's not forget that in the same chapter of the Bible, the parable of the sower also has the birds: v. 4, When the sowing came down by the wayside, the birds came and ate it all, and verse 15, Jesus Christ Himself explained: He who was sown by the wayside was the word that was heard, and Satan immediately came and took away the word from his heart, that is, the birds there were a type of Satan. Since a similar event is spoken of in the same chapter, in verse 32 the phrase "the birds of the air

may next under its shade” should also refer to Satan. That is to say, when the mustard seed grew into a great tree, and it was so big that it had many branches, and as a result, even Satan came in, and Satan hid under the shade of the tree.

In fact, this is also the true situation of many of today's big-seeking churches. If we have sown the word of life, the growth of life is natural, vigorous, and slow. Now if you use some artificial methods, some worldly means, you can accelerate the growth of the church, and the speed is faster, but at the same time, you can bring in something that is not of God. The development of the whole church is not normal, it becomes deformed, and even there is a seat of Satan in the church.

In the previous parable, this way of life has the natural growth of life, and in the future, it will produce full grains, which will eventually ripen and be able to be harvested. And in the second parable, there is no mention of the harvest at all, because the harvest must be preceded by separate work to remove those who do not belong to God. Dear brothers and sisters, we must realize that the church can be small, and the church can grow slowly, because the growth of life is not fast. Growth is natural and vibrant, although it is slow, it will surely produce full head of grains and there will be a harvest. Pray that God will give us a pure heart, that we are willing to walk the path of life according to God's will, so that the growth and maturity of the church are according to God's law of life.

Verses 33-34: “With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything”.

These two verses are very similar to those in 4:10-12 because the kingdom of God is a mystery, and when Jesus spoke to the crowds about the kingdom of God, He spoke in parables. And in private, He explained to His disciples that they could understand the things of life. When I heard the parable, I thought I understood, but in fact I saw it, but I didn't know it. I hear it but I didn't understand it. We must come to God according to the principles of life, and ask God to open the mystery of

life to us, so that we can truly understand God's heart. In particular, those of us who are interested in serving in the church should pursue God's will and be able to serve God's church and provide for God's children in God's way.

Let's pray: Lord, thank You that the seed You sown is the word of life, and according to the principles of life; the seed will naturally take root, sprout, spit out and mature. Help us to always walk on the path of life, to help us not fall into the pursuit of efficiency, the pursuit of superficial prosperity, the pursuit of human fame, to constantly examine our hearts, so that we can always maintain a pure heart to You, so that we can build the family of God with the saints around us. In the house of God, the Holy Spirit is absolutely sovereign and does not allow the world to enter the church and Satan to find a place to dwell. Bless my church as a church that is after God's heart. Pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ.