

## RTS Women's Study: The Gospel of Mark

### #7: Mark 4:1-20: The Advance of the Kingdom of God

Intro: What is the "Kingdom of God"? And How Does It Grow?

Note: The "Kingdom of God" is not a country, place, or location, but a reference to God's *reign* or *rule*. The Kingdom advances as people believe and follow the King.

#### I. Reason the Kingdom Advances (or Doesn't) is Not Because of the Seed

##### A. The "Seed" Refers to the Word of God

- V.14: "The sower sows the word."
- The "word" is the message of the Kingdom: the good news that a new King has come who offers the forgiveness of sins

##### B. There's Nothing Wrong with the Seed

- Sometimes we think the problem is the message
  - The message is offensive, or difficult, or bothersome to people
  - After a while, we might think we are delivering the wrong message
- We might be tempted to alter, soften, or modify the message
  - What are offensive doctrines that we might want to take out?
  - This doesn't mean Christians are never personally offensive; sometimes we are! If people are offended, let's make sure it is by the message and not us!

Key point: The message is not the problem! On the contrary, the message (like a seed) contains enormous power.

#### II. Reason the Kingdom Advances (or Doesn't) is Not Because of the Sower

##### A. The "Sower" Refers to Those Who Spread the Word

- V. 14: "The sower sows the word."
- Anyone who shares the Gospel is a sower. WE are the sower!

##### B. The Sower Is Not the Problem

- We might think people don't become Christians because of our bad sowing technique
- This doesn't mean evangelism techniques don't help (we can all learn and grow), but Jesus never indicates the sower is the problem
- What are some of the reasons we resist doing evangelism?

Key Point: Sometimes basic, non-polished evangelism leads to be people's conversion. Don't be "man-centered" in the way you think of evangelism!

### III. Reason the Kingdom Advances (or Doesn't) is Because of the Soil

- A. The Soil of the Pathway (Hard Heart)
  - The pathway represents a hard heart where the seed does not take root (v.15)
  - Consequently, the birds (Satan) can easily snatch it away
  
- B. The Soil of the Rocky Ground (Fair-Weathered Heart)
  - Things seem optimistic at first: "immediately receive it with joy" (v.16)
  - But trials and persecution ultimately keep the seed from bearing fruit
  - \*\*Perseverance is the mark of a true believer
  
- C. The Soil of the Thorns (Distracted Heart)
  - "cares of the world, deceitfulness of riches and the desire for other things" (v.18)
  - Some people start out well but end up falling in love with the things of the world
  
- D. Good Soil (A heart softened by the Spirit)
  - A heart that "hears the word and accepts it" (v.20)
  - Such people are truly saved and thus "bear fruit"
  - Notice that true believers can bear different levels of fruit: thirty, sixty, hundred fold

Key Point: The advance of the Kingdom is determined by the response of individual human hearts. Which Soil Are You?

#### Discussion Groups

1. Do you ever find yourself tempted to change/alter the message of the Gospel? Share about a time when you either did this, or felt like doing this.
2. What are some of the fears that keep you from sharing your faith? How does this passage help you overcome your fears?
3. While we all want to be a person with the good soil in our heart, do you ever feel like you sometimes have a fair-weather heart? Or a distracted heart? What steps can you take to fight against those tendencies?