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Sermon 29 – Marshall Reeves – The Parable of the Seed

New Life Church

Warrnambool Australia

Luke 8:

5 "A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell along the path, and was trodden under foot, and the birds of the air devoured it.

6 And some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture.

7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns grew with it and choked it.

8 And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold." As He said this, He called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

What exactly is a parable? It's defined in many ways. It is variously described as an enigma, a puzzle, a mystery, an allegory or even a proverb. The Book of Proverbs is simply parabolic language, communication using figures of speech. How do we define that and what is its purpose? It is a narrative that conveys a complex or difficult message through symbols and characters. It is a representation of abstract or spiritual truth using concrete or material forms in order to be understood better.

"His disciples then asked Him what does the parable mean, to which He replied, To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God but to the rest it is given in parables that,  
'Seeing they may not see and hearing they may not understand.'"

What did He mean by this? Was He trying to obscure their understanding? No, He was speaking in a fashion that would eventually allow them to more easily grasp difficult messages through symbolic narrative. He was able to speak in more direct terms to the disciples because they had been given the great privilege to **know** the Kingdom of God. The word for **know** is ginosko which means to know intimately and experientially for He is that kingdom. The multitudes could only witness and attempt to understand at a distance. He knew this and therefore hoped to make it easier, not harder, to grasp. However, until the coming of the Holy Spirit who would teach and bring to their remembrance all that Jesus had said, none would truly grasp the great mystery of Christ. This is the crux of the matter for it is the Gospel, Christ in you the Hope of Glory. It is the message of the Incarnation and the fulfillment of God's dream to become man.

In Mark's account of the story Jesus says in 4:

13 "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all (or any) of the parables?"

This parable is recorded in all three synoptic gospels and its importance cannot be overstated. In it we understand the relationship between God and man. I grew up in a

fundamentalist evangelical church in America where I was taught that this parable was the parable of the sower. That's fine as long as we understand what is being communicated. The word for seed and sower in Hebrew is actually the same word, simply different conjugations. Sower is the verb meaning to sow or to disseminate while seed is simply that which is being sown. It's describing the Father and Son as Jesus states in response to the disciples.

Luke 8:

11 "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God."

His explanation is simple and straightforward. I prefer to refer to the parable as the Parable of the Seed simply because the subject is clear. The Word is the Seed. In fact, His answer to the disciples carried with it the profound mystery hidden for ages and generations that we'll look at further. This, however, isn't what I was told growing up. To my church, and I believe this to be the prevalent view of most Protestants and Catholics in the west, was that we, the Church, were the sower. The reason being that with the exception of the various charismatic movements, the fundamentalist church did little more than give lip service to the presence of the Holy Spirit. Whether or not it was part of formal doctrine, most accepted that His gifts and works ceased with the last Apostle. This is the doctrine of cessationism meaning 'that which was, has ceased'. Therefore, it fell to the church as an organization to be solely responsible for evangelizing the world. One of the cornerstones of Evangelicalism is missions outreach. It was (and is) an imperative since doctrinally speaking, reaching the lost with the gospel message was the determining factor as to whether a person would go to Heaven or Hell when they died. To not achieve this because tithes and offerings fell short was seen as failure to fulfill the Great Commission. To neglect this responsibility was paramount to damning those in third world countries to eternal conscious torment, thus carrying with it due guilt and shame. Not only was this used for manipulating the conscience, but it also reinforced the teaching that we were depraved and uncaring and nothing more than sinners saved from Hell by the thin thread of grace. It was yet another component of the good works needed to prove your salvation. Are missions wrong? Hardly, only our reasons for doing it can be wrong. I am speaking generally, and my intention isn't to belittle fellow believers, however, the church as an institution, especially in the West, has been teaching "another gospel" for a very long time - the gospel of works that Paul called accursed. It is past time to proclaim the truth for it is far too beautiful to be shared in such error.

The light of the world resides in each one of us in the Holy Spirit. This, too, is rejected by today's church using terms like imputed righteousness, meaning it's not real today but will be someday if you go to heaven when you die. We know, however, that Christ in you is the lamp of truth that shines forth from within at this very moment.

Luke 8:

"No one, when he has lit a lamp, covers it with a vessel or puts [it] under a bed, but sets [it] on a lampstand, that those who enter may see the light."

What if we read this verse as follows, ‘No one who has a lit lamp covers it or puts it under a bed but sets it on a lamp stand that those who enter in may behold its light.’

This verse is an allusion to the Tabernacle of God in the OT. Within the Holy of Holies resided the Showbread or Bread of the Presence and the Lampstand that illuminated it. The Showbread represented Christ, the Bread of Life. The Lamp that pointed to and illuminated it was the Holy Spirit. It is the picture of the fulness of the Godhead indwelling man bodily within our inner chamber.

1 Cor 3:

“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and [that] the Spirit of God dwells in you?”

Jesus’ Great Commission did not say to go build churches. He said to teach and make disciples, knowing that through them the church would be built. I believe this is where New Life Christian Church finds itself today. When we understand the Gospel, the truth of our being is restored. It’s then that the beauty within the temple of our heart shines forth to the world and the wonder of the indwelling Christ radiates naturally. This is true evangelism, without programs, effortless and effective.

It all began with The Seed.

Gen 3: (Amp)

15 “And I will put enmity (open hostility) Between you and the woman, And between your seed (offspring) and her Seed; He shall [fatally] bruise your head, And you shall [only] bruise His heel.”

God is speaking to the Serpent, Adam and Eve. The Serpent has orchestrated the fall of mankind. The Adam life has been returned to the dust of the earth destined to die in its dying because the light of the Spirit is fading. There is no life in this fallen state, only mortality and death and therefore no seed to produce fruit. To produce fruit is our fulfillment of purpose and that not for ourselves but for others. It’s only in relationship that we experience true quality of life. The only true life would come from the Seed of the woman, that being the Virgin birth. For His seed, which is the word sperma in Greek, produces the conception between God and the woman in the womb of a young Jewish girl. Hence the title the “Seed of the Woman”.

Gal 3:

16 “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’, which is Christ.”

Let’s look again at Luke’s words.

Luke 8:

4 "And when a great crowd came together and people from town after town came to Him, He said in a parable:

5 "A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell along the path, and was trodden under foot, and the birds of the air devoured it.

6 And some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture.

7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns grew with it and choked it.

8 And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold." As He said this, He called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

It's spoken of course with figure of speech, prompting His disciples to immediately ask what this meant, to which He responded.

11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

12 The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, that they may not believe and be saved.

13 And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy; but these have no root, they believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.

14 And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.

15 And as for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience.

Who is the sower? It's not the church but as Jesus said it's God the Father. Why?

John 6:

"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up (within Myself) at the last day. (3rd day)."

We are drawn by the seed sown in our hearts.

Jesus Christ the Word of God is the Seed who came forth from God. Those to whom He has given life are the fruit of that union, i.e. you and me and all who have been born or ever will be. According to Peter we were all born again at His resurrection for we were all in Him. The crucifixion wasn't a local event in time and space but a cosmic eternal one. He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Colossians 1:

"16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."

Paul goes on to say He is the firstborn and the preeminent one. Preeminence means original or in Greek protos as in prototype. He is the blueprint of the many to follow in the ages of ages. This is the meaning of

Eph 2:

6 “and raised [us] up together, and made [us] sit together in the heavenly [places] in Christ Jesus,

7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in [His] kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

Our very person is the mirror image and testimony for all in the ages and generations to come to behold our redemption and restoration in God’s grace and kindness in Christ Jesus. From darkness to light and death to life we have been made living epistles written not with ink but by the Spirit of the Living God!

Did He raise us up apart from Himself? No, as Paul tells us, He is the Creator who was before all things and in Whom all things consist. We already consisted in Him, therefore, what happens to the creature when the Creator dies? Man dies also. What then happens when the Creator is resurrected to new life? All of mankind being in Him was raised as a new race of human being. His words of “**it is finished**” are reflected in the reality that His life and ours have become fully and completely one life. It is no longer simply I who live but Christ who lives in me for in this marriage covenant I have been given not only a new name but a whole new existence as His Bride. The two of us have become one flesh.

8:12 “The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, that they may not believe and be saved.”

I like the way the Mirror Bible puts this. “The seed on the road means that some hear the word, then because of the typical inferior mindset, it is stolen from their hearts before it germinates, and they remain trapped in their unbelief.”

I don’t believe the word rendered devil in this case is referring to an entity or evil creature but a fallen mindset within man. The word is diablos which is dia meaning because of or as a result of something and ballo, to cast down. Thus, it is the fallen Adamic mind that was cast down in the garden as a result of sin. It’s the inferior, unworthy mindset that can’t see its way clear to being seen as acceptable without doing something to attain it. It is eating from the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Because of all we’ve been taught in our lives it’s not difficult to see why we think of the Old Man as our default identity. This is the very reason God will always show us who we are before He reveals anything to do concerning behavior. Thus let God be true and the slandering voice in your head a liar. Sin is simply the loss of awareness concerning our identity. It is the amnesia of our origin in God. This makes us totally susceptible to the lies of religion and the world about who we are. Jesus has lifted that veil of darkness when He took away the sin of the world and crucified the Adam life on the cross.

13 “And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy; but these have no root, they believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.”

The seed falling on rocky soil prevents roots being able to penetrate and anchor them. As a result, in times when they are tested by the events of life, they “fall away”, meaning to revert back to the old legalistic and futile mindset. I’m no good, I should have known it was too good to be true, who am I to think that I deserve joy in my life, I’m being punished because I’m just a sinner.

Eph 4:

18 “The life of their design seems foreign to them because their minds are darkened through a hardened heart ruled by ignorance.”

The lie of a false identity has leavened our thinking.

14 “And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.”

This is an interesting verse in that it speaks directly to the manner in which our faith is attacked. We read in

Numbers 33:

55 “But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall come about that those whom you let remain of them will become as pricks in your eyes and as thorns in your sides, and they will trouble you in the land in which you live.”

We know that the OT provides types and shadows for us in the NT. The children of Israel are being admonished by Moses that to dwell in peace and joy in the Promised Land (Kingdom of God) they would need to put away the thoughts of who they previously believed both God and themselves to be. The land, soil, earth, etc. are often used in Hebrew as metaphors for the heart and mind of man. The words for prick and thorn both imply afflictions that trouble, blind and oppress. We are to take these lying thoughts captive to our knowledge of God in Christ.

The second part of the verse describes how concern and anxiety for achieving material success has become paramount. After all, to keep a roof over my head and food on the table is up to me if it’s meant to be. The pursuit of this singular focus doesn’t provide life, it steals it away. The fear and worry of lack replaces any joy we might experience. The phrase “choked with cares” literally means to be strangled and suffocated resulting in no fruit. It ends with nothing worthy being brought to fulfillment.

Once again in Numbers we read in

13:33 “And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim); and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.”

The 10 spies refused to go into the promised land because they perceived the people as obstacles too great to face. In spite of God being with them every step of the way from Egypt to Canaan and all the miracles they’d experienced, they still refused to believe in who they were. In fairness to them, this is the result of slavery for they’ve been told for 400 years that they were nothing and nobody. The bondage of sin has had the same effect on our lives. They thought themselves no more than insects. Have you noticed that what we believe about ourselves is what we likewise convey to those around us? As we then observe our reflection in the eyes of others the lie within ourselves is reinforced. It’s interesting that the word in scripture translated as giants doesn’t mean that at all. Nephilim means the fallen ones and the name Anak means to strangle or choke. Thus, we’re right back to believing the lies of the fallen ones and exalting them to the status of giants. The fear and anxiety they produce obscure the truth in darkness. The worries and anxiety to attain that which proves to be both fruitless and worthless is, in the end, nothing more than an obstacle to ever grasping who we truly are.

Matt 6:

32 “...for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

33 But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

Change can be a fearful proposition. Much of it has been brought on by the angry characterization of God the Father combined with the religious teachings surrounding it. Just as with the Israelites, our fear of giants asks us who are we to stand against it. Yet God says let no anxiety distract or divide you. For the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard (and protect) your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Matt 11:

28 “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”

And finally, this is the message of verse 15:

“And as for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience.”

As it says in Mark, fruit is then born at thirty-fold, sixty and even a hundred. Imagine your quality of life if it were just 30X greater. No longer “choked with cares”, staggering crop folds are released in our lives.

John 10:

10 “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came so that they would have life and have it abundantly.”

Abundant describes a state of super abundance in quantity and excessively superior in quality.

So, what is the fruit?

In Gal 5 we read once more in the Mirror

22 Your spirit effortlessly bears the rich harvest of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, integrity, gentleness and self-control; all these individually reveal the irresistible attraction of the inner life of our design. (They are not fading, fragile emotions produced by willpower. This is the fruit of what you know in your spirit to be true about you. Fruit is the effortless, spontaneous expression of the character of the Tree of Life. Rest in the awareness and assurance of who you are.)