

Matthew 4

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[0 : 00] It is a great privilege to bring you the Word of God this evening. I want to invite you to go back to the parable of the mustard seed.

Mark 4, 30-32. Our Savior used parables, which are concrete pictures, to teach abstract ideas and truth.

Parable is a world picture. The mustard seed, as our Lord explains, is a very small seed. But when it takes roots and begins to grow, it turns into an immense bush.

It is a simple picture, but with deep meaning and significant implications.

The mustard seed in this parable refers to the Kingdom of God in its present manifestation on earth.

[1 : 52] The rule and leadership of God first in the hearts of believers, then in our midst as the body of Christ, and ultimately in the world.

Our Lord speaks of the Kingdom of God in three stages, or three manifestations. First, the Kingdom of God must begin in you. It begins in our hearts.

The Kingdom of God begins in our hearts when the seed of the Gospel takes roots in us. And we come to the knowledge of the Holy. We come to the knowledge of our Savior.

And the tomb that characterizes the human heart turns into the temple of the living God. We who were naturally inclined to disobey the Lord and to rebel against the laws of God are now inclined, also naturally by the Spirit who indwells us to obey and to follow His command and His wishes.

Now the Kingdom of God has come into our hearts. When a group of people whose hearts the King has come into his heart, into those whose hearts the King has come, assembled together, then we have the Kingdom of God in our midst this evening.

[3 : 22] This is the Kingdom of God. The Scripture also speaks of a day when the whole earth will be covered by the knowledge of God as the waters cover the face of the sea.

When evil will be covered by the earth and the face of the earth. This is the Kingdom of God upon the whole earth.

The parable of the mustard seed is an account of the growth and expansion of the Church from its small beginning in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost until the second coming of Christ.

A modest beginning but a staggering worldwide impact. The Gospel, the message of our Lord to mankind, is also like a mustard seed.

It is simple, but when it takes roots in a person's heart, it brings about extraordinary transformation and change.

[4 : 32] Not only in that person, but through that person in others like that person, and ultimately transforms human societies and nations.

The Gospel and the body of Christ have impacted the world in incredible ways. I was going about my life 38 years ago.

For the first time, I heard this message. It changed my character. It changed my perspective on life. It completely changed me. And changed the direction of my life. And through my life, the lives of those whose lives were touched by my life, was changed a ripple effect.

In these years that I have served our Savior, I have seen the unfolding of this truth many times.

[5 : 34] Some more dramatic than others, but in every instance, the conversion of a human being is just as extraordinary and supernatural of an event.

I remember eight years ago, when I was in Athens, Greece, and I came in contact with a notorious criminal.

He was involved in drug dealing, forging documents, and you name it.

His name was Mohammed. And he had a nickname called Laser because of his prowess with his knife. He would get into fights, and he was very skilled with his knife, and hence he had the

nickname Mohammed the Laser.

The Lord had brought about a situation where I met him. And in the course of our conversation, he said, since you say that you are a Christian, I have heard that Christians are given a spirit that gives them supernatural power.

[7 : 01] I would like to have that spirit. So I explained to him, the spirit that he was referring to was the Holy Spirit.

It was the Holy Spirit. It was not the spirit of mischief. And that spirit is only given to people who believe on the Lord Jesus in order to empower them to follow him, to obey him, and to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord.

He said, whatever it is, I like to have it. I explained to him again the gospel. And the idea of the new birth.

And he said, man, I am ready to be born again. I didn't believe it. But he was very insistent that he wanted to receive the Holy Spirit.

And he said, what do I need to do? I said, well, I pray, and you can follow in what I say if you believe it. And he did, and made a profession of faith.

[8 : 18] But there was a big question mark in the back of my mind as to the authenticity and the sincerity of his faith.

Next time, and he insisted that he did not want to have any water to be splattered on him. And he needed, he wanted to be baptized in the sea.

So we took him to the shores of Athens to the Aegean Sea and he was baptized. To make the long story short, the next time I was in Greece, there was, six months later, an unbelievable transformation in the life of Muhammad de Lazer.

When we met, he said, brother, I can't, with my reputation, I am not able to live in Athens to live in Greece anymore.

Because my life is in danger. And I can't use my knife, I can't defend myself. So, I think I'm going to go to Germany. Do you know anyone in Germany?

[9 : 29] And I had a friend in Hamburg and I contacted my friend and eventually Muhammad ended up to go to Hamburg. again, to make the very long story short, he has become quite an evangelist for the Lord.

And his testimony is very simple. It is the transformation, supernatural transformation that God has brought in the life of this man.

He has led, I don't know if he even has a high school diploma, but he has led a very distinguished biologist in University of Hamburg to the Lord who looks up to him as he is a spiritual mentor and a spiritual guide.

I can tell you tens of these stories remarkable supernatural transformation brought about as a result of the gospel and the power of this life-giving message, this little mustard seed.

you never know the consequences of that step of faith you took to speak to an unbelieving friend or person, that 30-second encounter, planting of the seed of the gospel in a person's heart, where it would lead.

[11 : 05] the man who gave me the Bible 38 years ago would have never imagined the consequences, the ripple effect of that stepping out of his comfort zone, that 30-minute encounter with that foreign student on a university campus in Chicago.

A couple of years ago, I was in one of our house fellowships in Middle East, underground fellowships. We are not permitted to worship.

Muslim converts to the Christian faith are not permitted to assemble together publicly, and if we assemble privately, that is also illegal.

If you are caught, your goose is cooked. You are going to run into great difficulty. But in one of these house groups, I met a man who was a Muslim cleric.

He was an imam of a mosque. The story of his conversion was that he was on his way to go to the local mosque to lead the evening communal prayer where they all line up behind a person, the imam.

[12 : 32] and then afterward to deliver the evening sermon and then go home. He got a taxi and the taxi driver as he dropped him off in front of the mosque as he opened the door to get off, this brave taxi driver turned around and handed him a book and said to him, Sir, if you are truly seeking God, you will find him in this book.

Read it and ask God to open your eyes. A 30, 25 second, 30 second encounter. He takes the book, puts it in his pocket, goes off, does his reading of the communal prayer and delivers the sermon that evening when he goes to his home and pulls out the book that he was handed, the taxi driver had handed to him.

It says the gospel of Jesus Christ and he began to read the book and what happened to him was exactly what happened to me 38 years earlier.

He said he recognized all of his training and all that he had done was a complete waste in the eyes of God. And so he took his turban and his gown and he burned it and moved from where he was to another city and he came in contact with the underground church and because of his past training, he's very articulate and now he has the responsibility of three of these underground fellowships. And if he's ever caught, they would relish chopping up such a person into a thousand piece. But these are just sinful examples of the truth of what our Savior is speaking of.

[14 : 39] A little mustard seed with profound impact and effect. in the gospel of Matthew, the parable of the mustard seed is followed by another parable which speaks of the impact of the church in our world.

In Matthew, we are told, he told them another parable, the kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour till it was all leavened.

Matthew 13, 33. No religion, no idea, no philosophy in the history of humankind has had such an expansive, significant, positive, and beneficial influence in the world.

I will be standing here until next week, reading the list of hospitals, schools, universities, orphanages, humanitarian organizations, humanitarian undertakings throughout the world, which all have been the byproducts of the gospel and Christian church.

just imagine hundreds of thousands if not millions of missionaries who have taken the light of the gospel into some of the darkest corners of the world and in the process some of them have given their lives for betterment of others.

[16 : 27] There are people who came into our world and they brought with their poisonous ideas misery after misery to humanity and we think what a better world we would have had if such people would have never been born.

But for a moment imagine a world in which the Lord Jesus would have not come. a world without the Church of Jesus Christ in spite of all its imperfections.

There are people who say the Church has lost its voice. It has no place in the modern world. It is obsolete. I disagree.

This message this mustard seed this Church has not lost its potency. It is timeless. It is the most beautiful message ever.

It is as needful as oxygen to a living organism. The Gospel and the Church are as irrelevant today as they were 2,000 years ago.

[17 : 45] Look at our world. Look at the violence, the decadence, fraud, deception, corruption, lawlessness, injustice, hopelessness, confusion which characterizes it.

All results of either ignorance and spiritual darkness or those who have turned their back upon the light of the world.

If the restraining power of the Holy Spirit who dwells in the hearts of God's people, these temples of the living God were to be removed, men will completely destroy life on this planet.

Look at those nations, societies, which are without Christ and benefit of his Church, and then compare those societies with those in which the Gospel and the people of God have been a dominant force.

What a gift Christ and his Church are to a society. The body of Christ is the anchor which holds this Babylon, the city of man, from judgment and ruin.

[19 : 09] This seed is not just a seed, it is a treasure, it is the most valuable gift. It is important that we understand this truth.

People think they do God's favor when they come to Church or when they make a profession of faith, when in fact, those of us who know the Lord and have been the recipient of the greatest favor and the greatest gift.

Let me read to you these verses. Paul, reminding Corinthians of this great gift, writes, but we have this treasure in earthen vessels, in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

2 Corinthians 4, 7 Treasure. Our Savior himself, speaking, says, The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Matthew 13, 44. The man goes and sells everything he has.

[20 : 36] What this action implies in this story, is how valuable this treasure is. It is in view of this truth that the Apostle Paul says, But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. for his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him.

What a tremendous gift has been extended to us, has been given to us, who believe. Again, our Lord is speaking, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

In his prayer in John 17, our Savior says, And this is eternal life, the greatest gift, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

This seed of life planted in each of our hearts, we call the gospel, the knowledge of God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. This organism that we call the body of Christ, are the most cherished gift given to any person, to any society.

[22 : 23] And we must not forget that it is a gift, it is an unimaginable blessing. It is like a gift of sight to a blind man.

It is like saying to an Afghan, do you want to live in New York or in London? It is incomparable gift. This message we call the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is timelessly relevant.

It is the most beautiful message message of life in a world obsessed with death. A message of love in a world filled with hatefulness.

A message of forgiveness in a world where men are determined to exact revenge. A message of hope in a world drowning in despair.

A message of peace in a world in grips of violence, turmoil, and destruction. A message of truth in a world filled with falsehood and superstition.

[23 : 35] A message of freedom from the bondage and addiction to sin. The most beautiful, life-giving message that has been given to all of us as a gift and has brought the transformation and change that it has.

May I pray.