

Gospel of Mark 8 – Chapter 4, verses 26 – 43 - More parables and a link to Chapter 5:-

I have always liked the old style of announcing the date - “This Year of Grace 2022”. It is a constant reminder that we live in between the “already” and the “not yet” of the Kingdom of God! “*The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*” (2 Peter chapter 3, verse 9). The New Year message of the Church of God must be that of the Gospel:- “*God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life*”. (John chapter 3, verse 16).

Remember that we are studying the words of the Lord Jesus Christ – born as a babe at Bethlehem, now grown and teaching and preaching the Kingdom of God. Remember also that the preceding chapters (2 and 3) are full of controversy and conflict with the Scribes, Pharisees and ‘Rulers of the Synagogues’. Jesus is now ‘outside’ the established religious framework and teaching in parables. In this section Mark emphasises the fact that the teaching was primarily for those who were able to ‘hear’ and understand – see chapter 4, verses 33 – 34 as well as verses 10 - 13 and 21 – 25.

A parable of God given growth, chapter 4, verses 26 – 29:- This parable takes up the theme of growth from the Parable of the Sower. (See the previous study). It describes the growth of the seed sown in good ground. “*The earth produces of itself . . .*” (verse 28). The seed contains life in itself, which when placed in the proper environment produces growth. The characteristic of the present ‘Time of Grace’ as set forth by this parable, is that the message of the Gospel, by its very nature, when sown in the hearts of men and women produces growth and fruitfulness spontaneously. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 6 - “*I planted, Apollos watered but God gave the growth.*” So we sow the seed and wait with patience for the God given growth!

Small beginnings can give tremendous growth, chapter 4, verses 30 – 32:- The seed of the common black mustard is the size of a pin head. Although it is a herb, given the right conditions it can grow to a height of ten to twelve feet! From small beginnings, the Kingdom will by its own inner spiritual vitality grow to tremendous proportions. It will also attract many different kinds of people who will find a home there. “*they will make nests in its shade*” (verse 32).

A comment by the editor (Mark himself?) - chapter 4, verses 33 – 34:- This is an explanation as to why the Lord Jesus Christ taught in parables. His preaching in public was through parables. His teaching in private to his disciples gave a full explanation of his meaning.

The Stilling of the Storm – chapter 4, verses 35 – 43:- The Gospel of Matthew, chapter 8, verse 18 gives the reason for the journey across the Sea of Galilee. Mark himself says that there was “*a very large crowd gathered about him, . . .*” (chapter 4, verse 1).

Sudden local storms can happen unexpectedly on the Sea of Galilee. Warm air rising from the lake allows cooler air to descend down the hillsides (katabatic wind). This can cause a sudden churning of the waters in an angry tempest. The account in the original is even more vivid than our English translations. “*The waves kept beating into the boat and it is already filling with water.*” The disciples who had been brought up in fishing families would know how dangerous the situation was, not just for them but also for the other boats who were with them. In contrast Mark pictures the Lord Jesus as being quietly asleep in the stern of the boat. The Lord Jesus only had to speak once! No repeats, no doubts about the outcome! Literally “*Be silent, Be muzzled*”.

The Lord rebukes them for their lack of faith. There does not appear to be any mention of them praying to God the Father and it may be this lack of faith in believing prayer that draws Jesus comment.

The ultimate question that can be asked is here in verse 41. “*Who then is this?*”. Our eternal destiny depends on our answer! The reply to the same question is given in Matthew chapter 21, verse 11. “*This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee.*” The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate has come to suffer on the cross and to die, that we who believe in him may have eternal life.

Who is he, in yonder stall,
At whose feet the shepherds fall?
'Tis the Lord, O wondrous story!
'Tis the Lord, the King of glory!
At his feet we humbly fall,
Crown him, Crown him Lord of all!

Benjamin R. Hanby 1866