

# Sowing the Seeds of the Kingdom

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning. It's a joy to worship with you and to gather with you in the name of Jesus. And now we have just finished our sermon series in the book of Exodus.

And today we're going to be in the book of Mark chapter 4. So if you have a Bible, please open your Bibles to Mark chapter 4. If you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand. We'd love to bring you a copy that you can use.

And you can keep that copy as well and take it home with you. Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word.

Father, I acknowledge that I am just a messenger.

You are the author. Father, so help me to just be faithful to the message you entrusted to me to proclaim this morning.

[ 1 : 18 ] And give us, as a whole church, ears to hear. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts be pleasing in your sight.

O Lord, our rock and redeemer. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. If you are willing and able, please stand for the reading of God's word from Mark 4.

I'm just going to read to verse 29 here. Again, Jesus began to teach beside the sea.

And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea. And the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. And he was teaching them many things in parables.

And in his teaching, he said to them, listen. Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it.

[ 2 : 24 ] Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil. And immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched.

And since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.

And he said, he who has ears to hear, let him hear. And when he was alone, those around him, with the twelve, asked him about the parables.

And he said to them, to you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God. But for those outside, everything is in parables, so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.

And he said to them, do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. And these are the ones along the path where the word is sown.

[ 3 : 36 ] When they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. And these are the ones sown on rocky ground, the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy.

And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while. Then when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. And others are the ones sown among thorns.

They are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.

And he said to them, Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket or under a bed and not on a stand? For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest, nor is anything secret except to come to

light.

[ 4 : 36 ] If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. And he said to them, Pay attention to what you hear. With the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you.

For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And he said, The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows. He knows not how. The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.

But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come. This is God's holy and authoritative word. You may be seated this time.

Just to give you a little forecast of where we are and where we're headed. As I mentioned, we just concluded our series in the book of Exodus, took us about a year. And next, in the fall, we're going to do a new sermon series in the book of Revelation.

[ 5 : 41 ] In the intervening weeks, in the month of August, we're going to have a short sermon series on Psalms of Lament. Designed to really help people who are suffering and struggling and in pain, how to go to God in that pain and draw closer to Him as opposed to drawing away from Him.

But before that, we start that mini-series. Today and next Sunday, we're going to hone in on our mission as a local church. In September, it will be seven years since the public launch of our church, if I'm counting the years correctly.

That's seven years of trying to accomplish our mission, which is to glorify God by making disciples of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Why do we exist as a church? To glorify, not ourselves, but God. And many of you are probably more familiar with our vision statement that Jen mentioned during the announcement, because it's very memorable, loving God, loving one another, and loving our neighbors.

If we are fulfilling our mission faithfully, that's what it's going to look like, a cascade of love, loving God, one another, and others. There are many ways, though, however, we can love God and love one another and love our neighbors.

[ 6 : 57 ] But the primary way that a local church is supposed to do that, our mission is to glorify God by making disciples of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Everything we do as a church, every ministry team, every members meeting, every song we sing, every sermon preached, has that as its goal, to glorify God by making disciples of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

But this is not an easy or smooth work, as many of you know. Many of you have shared the gospel with non-Christians, but have been repeatedly disappointed by rejection.

Sometimes people you disciple and pour out to and invest in the most are the ones who make poor decisions that harm their relationship with God and the church.

And in worst cases, those who seem to have believed in Christ at first renounce their faith altogether and fall away, which could be discouraging. These realities could tempt us to wonder, is the mission worth it?

[ 8 : 10 ] Are we even doing this right? And if so, then why is this happening? And so my prayer and hope for you this morning and next week is that we, as a church, would be re-energized for and re-focused on our God-given mission.

And that's why we're in Mark 4, 1 to 29 today. And this passage reminds us that we should heed the word of Christ and sow it liberally, trusting that God grows it, even though we know not how.

That's the main point of this passage. And we're going to first talk about how we heed the word, and then we sow the word, but then how God grows the word. Because by this point of Jesus' ministry, he is regularly gathering large crowds wherever he goes.

He preaches on the Sea of Galilee using a boat as a flowing pulpit. This helps his voice to carry a little further. It amplifies it a little bit so that more people on the shore can hear.

Some Israeli scientists have actually run tests to test the acoustics and the capacity of this area, known as the Bay of Parables. And they have concluded that easily the sound travels to thousands of people.

[ 9 : 20 ] And so here it says in verse 2 that Jesus was teaching them many things in parables. The word parable comes from a Greek word that means to place next to something.

It's a kind of analogy or an object lesson that's put next to an idea in order to explain it and illustrate it. But interestingly, Jesus here employs parables also to confound people.

And we're going to talk about that some more. The parable that Jesus tells us in verses 3 to 9 is the famous parable that probably many of you have heard of already called the parable of the seed. Also variously called the parable of the soils or the parable of the sower. Each of those titles highlight an aspect of this parable that's important. A sower goes out to sow seeds. Some fall along the path and some birds come and peck at it and devour it. Other seeds fall on rocky ground and because there's such shallow depth of soil, it quickly finishes growing roots and then it sprouts up quickly.

[10:21] But because of the lack of depth of soil, it doesn't get enough water and as soon as the sun starts to shine on it, it withers away. And then there's another kind that falls among thorns.

It grows okay, but as soon as it starts to grow, it gets choked up by the thorns around it and is unable to produce any fruit. And still other seeds fall into good soil which produce a bountiful harvest.

We don't have to come up with our own allegorization or wreck our brains trying to figure out what this parable means because Jesus tells us exactly what it means in verses 14 to 20.

And the first thing that he tells us about it is very important. He tells us what the seed is. He says in verse 14, The sower sows the word.

Eight times in verses 14 to 20, we see the word word because it's the only seed. Well then what is the word?

[11:25] As Mark 7, 13 tells us, it's the word of God. The divinely inspired word of God, but even more specifically, the good news of Jesus Christ or the gospel of Jesus Christ, as it says in Mark 1, 14 and Mark 1, 1.

The gospel of God, the word of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ. Because everything in the written scriptures point to and is fulfilled by Jesus, the person and work of Jesus Christ, the good news, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The good news of Jesus Christ is the news that the kingdom of God has come with the coming of Jesus. And because he has lived a perfect life, he has died for our sin and has been raised victoriously from the dead, those who trust in him, those who repent of their sins and believe in him, can enter the kingdom of God, which is the reign of God, the rule of God, where all his subjects belong.

So how can people who are dead in their trespasses and sins be made alive again? How can those who are spiritually blind be made to see again?

How can those people who are condemned as guilty because of their sin, justly so, be declared innocent or justified? The answer is in Jesus, by believing the word of Christ, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[12:49] There is no other seed that produces eternal fruit in the lives of men and women than the gospel of Jesus Christ. Brothers and sisters, do you really believe this?

There are many other things that people would have us believe could save people, could really help people, but the seed is not our own good works.

The seed is not political or social activism. The seed is not even community. The seed is not mindfulness or meditation. The seed is not the sacraments.

The seed is not education. The seed is not kindness. There's only one seed that saves people into eternal life, and that seed is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As spiritual farmers, then, what should we be sowing? What should our ministries and activities revolve around? There's only one thing for us to do but to sow the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[13:53] Jesus said in John 14, 6, I am the way and the truth and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through me. There are not many ways to get to God.

There is only one way. There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.

People of this world call on many different gods. People of this world call on many different religions. People call on many different names to save them, but there's only one name by which we must be saved, and that is the name of Jesus Christ.

So that's the first thing that Jesus tells us about this parable. So don't believe it when someone tells you they found the key.

They found the solution. A new method, a new teaching for a successful church. There's no other seed.

[14:58] The same seed that Christians have been planting for thousands of years, it's the gospel of Jesus Christ. Secondly, Jesus tells us what the various types of soil represent, namely people and their varying degrees of receptivity to the gospel.

The first set of seeds are sown along the path that get consumed by the birds. The birds represent Satan and his evil minions, the demons, and these people hear the gospel, but Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown to them.

If you have ever gone birding with a bag of millet or sunflower seeds, you know how quickly birds can gobble up those seeds.

You scatter some on the ground and pitter-patter there right there to take it away. You've met these kinds of people before. You share the gospel with them, and it doesn't seem to stick at all.

It appears to go in one ear and out the other because Satan takes it away. Because as it says in 2 Corinthians 4.4, the God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.

[16:13] The second set of seeds are sown on rocky ground, a shallow soil with hard rock underneath where the seeds spring up quickly but wither away as quickly as when it came up as soon as the sun starts shining on it.

These are the people who hear the word and immediately receive it with joy, however, because they have no root in themselves. When tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, they immediately fall away.

You probably also know these kinds of people. These are the bogus Christians who seeming conversions were not genuine.

Like a seed planted on shallow, rocky soil that sprouts up quickly, these people initially received the gospel joyfully, which can be very exciting for us as we share the gospel with them and minister to them, but that soon leads to disappointment.

And we have known the pain of this disappointment as a church because they never developed roots of faith. As soon as tribulation or persecution arises, they fall away.

[17:17] They lack deep conviction. They follow Christ only insofar as it is convenient and comfortable to do so. When the heat of withering criticism comes, when they are judged, when they are treated unfairly because of their faith in Christ, they do not persevere, but they deny the faith.

The third set of seeds sown among thorns. This soil lets the seed grow some, at least for a little while, but as they grow, the thorns choke the plants so that they yield no grain.

These are people who hear the word and appear on the surface at least to believe it, but Jesus explains the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word and it proves unfruitful.

So these are fruitless Christians. Every healthy tree bears good fruit and every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire, as Jesus says in Matthew 7.

We recognize true Christians by their fruits. So then the third type of soil represents people who are Christians in name only. So not true Christians, but nominal Christians.

[18:37] Christians who are in name only and not in reality. Instead of having heavenly purposes and heavenly priorities and eternal perspectives, they are preoccupied with the cares of this world, the anxieties of this world that is fading away.

More than wanting to please God, they desire health and wealth and success. They are deceived by the comfort and status that money offers and their lives are characterized by the idolatry of covetousness.

The first three types of soil are, they're all inhospitable to the seed of the gospel and they produce no harvest. But the fourth type is the good soil that produces a bumper crop, which is what farmers call an unusually abundant harvest.

A tenfold harvest in those days in Palestine was considered to be abundant. But this is a supernatural harvest. It's 30-fold and 60-fold and 100-fold.

In Genesis 26-12, Isaac sows in the land of Gerar and that same year reaps a hundredfold. And this is explained as a sign of divine blessing because it says the Lord blessed him.

[19:59] So likewise, this hundredfold gospel harvest is not something that we bring about in our own strength, but that it's a sign that God himself is at work blessing the proclamation of his word.

The four different types of soil are differentiated by the varying levels of humble, obedient receptivity to the gospel.

That's why Jesus begins the parable in verse three with this emphatic command, listen. That's why the verb listen or hear is a recurring key word in this passage.

The word hear occurs 10 times in this passage. Again and again, this passage speaks of hearing the word and twice Jesus says, if anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.

What does that mean? Jesus is not merely saying anyone who has ears could hear him. He's saying anyone who has ears to hear, anyone who is not merely gonna hear it, but actually listen to him, actually heed his word and accept his word.

[ 21 : 03 ] Those who have ears to hear it, those who have ears to hear and perceive it and understand it and believe it. Those are the people who are good soil, who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit.

People who heed the word. Later in verse 24 to 25, Jesus reiterates this. He says, pay attention to what you hear. With the measure you use, it will be measured to you and still more will be added to you.

For to the one who has, more will be given. And from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. In other words, if you pay attention and humbly hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and accept the grace of God given to you, offered to you in Jesus Christ, then even more grace will be given to you to understand more of God, to know more of him and to love and obey him.

But if you don't pay attention and you reject the gospel, even the little truth that you are exposed to will recede and fade and will soon be a distant memory.

All of this hinges on how you heed the word of Christ. This is why when it comes to the first three kinds of soil, when the verb here is used, in the Greek, it uses the aorist tense, which refers to a punctiliar just a thing that you do, something that happens at a particular point of time and is done.

[ 22 : 28 ] Something that happens once in an instant. It's like a snapshot, like a photo. However, when it comes to the fourth soil, the good soil, that same verb is used in the present tense to indicate ongoing action, continual listening, paying attention, and trusting.

Jesus is here distinguishing those who hear in a casual and superficial way from those who heed his word. So we have to heed the word of Christ.

So what voices or words are you paying attention to? Are you listening to the voice of tribulation or persecution of this world?

Christianity is an irrational, regressive religion that was invented by people to oppress and control people. Christians are dangerous bigots that should be marginalized, maybe even criminalized.

Are you withering under the heat of the slander of this world? Don't pay any heat to that. Instead, pay heat to the word of Christ.

[ 23 : 44 ] Or are you listening to the deceitful voice of riches and the desires for other things, the cares of this world? You will only be happy and fulfilled if you make this much money, if you have these kinds of jobs, if you buy these brands and wear these clothes, and if you live in these kinds of houses, and if you date or marry that kind of man or that kind of woman.

Is that the voice you're listening to? Sacrifice? Submission? Forget about it. Safety and comfort and experiencing pleasure should be the highest name of life.

Is that the voice you're listening to? Don't pay any heat to that. Pay attention to the word of Christ. Repent and believe in Jesus Christ for your salvation because the kingdom of God has come.

Your eternal future depends on it. nowadays my youngest daughter has become aware that even when her dad is in the same room as her and I'm not wearing headphones and my ears are open and sometimes when she's speaking to me that I'm actually still not listening to her I tend to get really focused if I'm doing something and I'm focused in it like I will not hear her.

Well, that's not true. I will hear her but it's like not registering and so she's kind of learned to get me out of that zone and so she now says Dad, you're not listening to me and at which point I perk up and then I start actually listening to her because she's right I wasn't listening to her.

[ 25 : 40 ] I think some of us here are probably hearing the gospel but not really hearing it. Not really paying attention and I implore you I say this earnestly because all four of these soils will probably be in this room.

Are you paying attention? Are you heeding the word of Christ that alone leads you to Jesus who saves you?

What word are you listening to? Is this word of Christ loud and clear in your ears or is it a faint static in the background while the voices of this world are blaring in your ears?

tune in to the word of Christ turn it up several notches let the words of this world recede into the background tune that out your fruitfulness as a Christian depends on it.

While there is a strong emphasis here in this chapter on human responsibility how we must heed the gospel there's also a strong emphasis here on divine sovereignty God he's here dividing the population and choosing his own people those who belong to him note how Jesus tells the parable in verses 3 to 9 and then explains it in verses 13 to 20 which leaves verses 10 to 12 right in the middle this is a literary device that people have coined the Markan sandwich because Mark is so fond of it he uses it often the meat as in sandwiches is the most important part that's what gives it flavor I mean bread's good too but that's this is the most important part surrounded by two matching sandwich buns which surround and bring attention to what's in the middle that's the function of this literary device and what is in the middle is this verses 10 to 12 and when Jesus was alone those around him with the 12 asked him about the parables and he said to them to you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God but for those outside everything is in parables so that they may indeed see but not perceive and may indeed hear but not understand lest they should turn and be forgiven did I read that correctly?

[ 28 : 27 ] let that sink in for a moment I don't always succeed in this but as a preacher I'm at least trying to speak as plainly as possible every time I speak I try to avoid maybe theological jargon that might be not familiar to people and if I do use them I try to explain it and that's what we would expect Jesus to do I mean Jesus don't you love people and didn't you come to save the world that God so loved the world he sent his only son so shouldn't you make everybody be able to understand you as easily and plainly as possible that's what we expect Jesus to do but no that's not what he does to those who are around him with the twelve Jesus speaks plainly and not in parables because to them has been given the secret of the kingdom of God who gave them this secret it doesn't tell us this is what the Bible grammarians call the divine passive when there's a passive verb but there's no subject the subject is the assumed subject is God

God is the one who gives them this secret of the kingdom and so to them Jesus speaks plainly and explains the meaning of the parables however to those who are on the outside Jesus speaks in riddles he speaks in parables so that they would see without perceiving so that they would hear without understanding because he doesn't he less they turn and be forgiven this is a pronouncement of God's judgment the quote is taken from Isaiah 6-9 when prophet Isaiah is commissioned by God to go and preach preach repentance but when God tells Isaiah to go he says when you preach these people will listen to you and repent no he tells them go and preach to them they will not repent they will not listen to you so your preaching will make them more blind more hardened it's a confirmation of God's judgment theologian James Edwards makes the insightful comment that Jesus' parables in the gospel of Mark and in the other synoptic gospels function like the pillar of fire and cloud in the book of Exodus that separated the Israelites from the Egyptians at the crossing of the Red Sea in Exodus 14 on the one hand that pillar of cloud served to guide the Israelites but on the other hand it served to confuse and impede the Egyptians it lights the way for the Israelites it darkens the way for the Egyptians likewise

Jesus' parables reveal the will of God to his people but conceal it from those who do not belong to him this shows that the fruitfulness of the gospel seed the harvest the salvation of the hearer is ultimately the sovereign work of God over which we have no control as Jesus says in John 9 39 for judgment I came into this world that those who do not see may see and those who see may become blind many people who thought they were on the inside the Pharisees and the scribes the legalists people who are pursuing God with works righteousness they think that they are in but they are actually out they thought they saw but they are actually blind and then many who are were outcasts many who thought they were on the outside looking in become part of this inner circle but for us as hearers of the word how can we know what kind of soil we ourselves are that's not our prerogative to know but what we can do is heed the gospel because it's the gospel that draws the line in the sand note again the contrast between the very large crowd that's what he said in verse 1 very large crowd gathered about Jesus and then now the much smaller inner circle that remains in verse 10 when Jesus was alone there around him with the 12 those around him with the 12 asked him about the parables

Jesus was never in the gospel was giddy about the very large crowd that was gathering around him and following him around he wasn't trying to speak on subjects that will draw a crowd or appease them or appeal to them and keep them engaged no he spoke in parables that confused them in

order to draw a distinction between the crowd and the elect the disciples so don't be discouraged if large crowds are not flocking to us to hear the message of the gospel Jesus is often seen whittling down the crowds throughout his ministry Jesus rebukes the crowd following him in John 6 26 telling them that they are not actually seeking him but rather they've come because they had their fill of the loaves because Jesus fed them with the miracle by multiplying the five loaves of bread and two fish to feed 5,000 and then after telling them that he tells them further that he is the bread of heaven that came down from heaven and that they need to eat his body and drink his blood in order to have eternal life that's not a very popular message just imagining it thinking about it makes you want to wretch

Jesus spoke in that way intentionally so that he says in John 6 66 to 68 after this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him so Jesus said to the twelve do you want to go away as well Simon Peter answered them Lord to whom shall we go you have the words of eternal life there is the inner circle those who recognize and hear and accept the word of Christ then there are outsiders who don't who only follow Jesus casually to satisfy their curiosity it says a few verses before that in John 6 64 for Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe and who it was who would betray him so he knew who would believe and he knew who those who would not believe already from the beginning of Christ so will you heed the word of Christ will you remain with Jesus and believe in his word will you follow him even when the crowd is dispersed when following

[ 35 : 47 ] Jesus is no longer popular when tribulations and persecutions arise will you renounce the cares of this world the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things in order to follow Jesus that's how you know whether you are in or out that you are heeding the gospel of Jesus Christ so this parable teaches us about the seed and about the soils it also has something teaches about the sower though it doesn't actually say much about him first and foremost the ultimate sower here is Jesus at the beginning of Jesus ministry in Mark 138 he spoke of the mandate that the father had given him to preach the gospel saying let us go on to the next town that I may preach there also for that is why I came out Jesus came out to preach the gospel and that exact same verb is used at the beginning of this parable in verse 3 behold a sower went out to sow

Jesus is the sower who came down from heaven from the presence of the father to sow the seed of the gospel more more because he is his work his personal work is the gospel more over in the old testament passages like Isaiah 9 3 and Psalm 126 6 the harvest is a metaphor for the in breaking of the kingdom of God the inauguration the beginning of the kingdom of God so this bumper crop of hundred fold harvest is a sure sign that the kingdom of God is now here because Jesus has come so Jesus says of course you wouldn't light a lamp whose purpose it is to give light and dispel the darkness you would not put it under a basket or under a bed you put it on a stand and the lamp is frequently used as a metaphor in scripture of

God and of his word and here actually in the original Greek there is a definite article so it doesn't say it's of when a lamp is brought in it says the lamp it's referring to the lamp of Jesus Christ the light of the world who said I am the light of the world whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life so because God the prime sower has come in Jesus Christ the kingdom of God is now here and we can't expect the harvest so he is the first sower the prime sower but as those who follow in the footsteps of this prime sower there is a lesson for us here as well since we are commanded to sow the gospel seed all around us we can see this clearly in the parable of the growing seed in verses 26 to 28 when the farmer who sows is clearly not

Jesus because it says that this sower knows not how the seed grows that can't be Jesus because Jesus knows everything he knows exactly how the seeds grow he already knows beforehand which seeds will grow and which seeds will not grow so in that parable clearly the sower is us the followers of Jesus so then what can we learn as sowers of the gospel first there is note that there is no discussion of how to become a better sower the harvest the fruitfulness of the crop does not depend on the intelligence or the creativity or the eloquence of the sower it depends on the receptivity of the soil and even more ultimately on the sovereignty of the God who gives the growth so we should not get insecure or worried when some seeds are plucked away by birds or withered away by the heat or choked out by the thorns that does not mean that we should go back to the drawing board and genetically modify the seed so that it's a little bit more fruitful so it has better yield no there's nothing wrong with the seed and we should expect rejection we should expect disappointment because

Jesus tells us here that we will get all these responses to the proclamation of the gospel the goal isn't to become more successful sowers who get a higher percentage yield rate no the goal is to be faithful sowers sowing the same seed over and over again year after year generation after generation regardless of the response lack of conversions is not failed evangelism because the conversions are not up to us lack of gospel conversations is failed evangelism we only fail when we don't share the gospel at all so don't be afraid of the responses don't be discouraged that some people fall away these things happen but you must not be discouraged because you have to keep sowing let us not grow weary of doing good for in due season we will reap if we do not give up so we should be faithful sowers and we should also be liberal sowers

[ 42 : 05 ] I don't mean that politically but be generous sowers lavish sowers an aspect of this parable that is often missed is that this farmer is downright indiscriminate in his sowing imagine you're a farmer what kind of a farmer sows precious seeds on paths where it gets trampled and birds will come and pluck away the seed there's like no soil there at all what kind of a farmer sows seeds on rocky ground hey that looks like a great place to scatter my seed or among thorns these thorns will assist my plants to grow fruitful no sensible farmer does that but what does this show it reflects the lavish generosity of

God God knows he is predestined he knows who will believe he knows who will not believe and yet and yet the invitation is universal sow seeds everywhere on rocks among thorns and even on the streets it's not our prerogative to know what kinds of soils people are it's not our place to presume who is open or receptive to the gospel or not our role is to simply scatter the seeds so do it indiscriminately at the cafe on the plane in your neighborhood back at your parents house wherever you go scatter the seed reflect the generosity of

God scatter it hoping that somewhere you will find good soil where it will yield that abundant harvest trusting that ultimately God's the one who gives the growth and that brings us to my final point God grows the word read verses 26 to 29 and he said the kingdom of God is as if a man just scatter seed on the ground he sleeps and rises night and day and the seed sprouts and grows he knows not how the earth produces by itself first the blade then the year then the full grain in the year but when the grain is ripe at once he puts in the sickle because the harvest has come this is a wonderful parable it's only found here in the gospel of Mark it's one that God spoke to me about at the beginning of our church plant and revisiting again today

I love the contrast in verse 27 between what the farmer is doing and what the seed is doing the farmer sleeps and rises he's just passing time once he scattered the seed he passes time he sleeps and he rises but the seed is sprouting and growing there's no connection there between what the farmer is doing and what the seed is doing and that's the point the farmer does not know how the seed grows all he's done is scatter the seed he says in verse 28 the earth produces by itself in Greek that word is automatic that's where we get the word automatic the earth produces automatically by itself of its own accord first the blade and then the ear and then the full grain in the ear and what has the farmer done nothing he scattered the seed and then he waited he passed the time he's sleeping and rising so don't be discouraged when there's more of the same you're sowing the same seed scattering the same seed again and again and again and then you watch and you wait and you sleep and you rise how ordinary is that but that's precisely what

God compared what Jesus compares the kingdom of God to sowing seeds and it grows God's the one who gives the growth as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3 neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything but only God who gives the growth God works in this way so that he receives all the glory God has intentionally cut us as sowers laborers cut us out of the entire of the majority of that production process to instill in us the reality the truth that he is the one who gives the growth and he is the one who deserves the glory so then if we do this do it this way if we work this way and that's the goal then my hope is that when we grow when people come to faith in

[ 48 : 08 ] Christ as they have done over the years no one else can take the credit no one's gonna come asking us what was your grand strategy what methodology did you use what did you do to make this happen no one's gonna ask us those questions because all we did we scattered the seed and we slept and we rose up God gave the growth so that's our simple mission church we make we glorify God by making disciples of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit and the main tool in our discipling is the word of Christ we sow it liberally trusting that God grows it even though we know not how so let's be an ordinary church a dependent church that's daily doing the ordinary work of sowing waiting on

God and trusting looking to him to give us the growth I think that's what we've been doing over the last seven years as long as I'm here hopefully that's what we do I'm grateful that you guys are here as co-laborers with me to do that let's pray together father father thank you for saving us and we know that the salvation is a gift from you not our own doing not a result of the works so that no one may boast you have saved us in this way and now you use us in this way you save others in this same way and we want you to work this way we want you to save this way because we want you to receive all the glory

Lord help us to sow faithfully encourage those who are in our midst brothers and sisters who are discouraged remind them of these precious truths so they can continue to trust continue to heed your word and sow it in Jesus name we pray amen