

“They Yielded a Crop and Produced. . .”

Prepared by Patrick J. Griffiths © - pastorpat@waukeshabile.org

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Read Mark 4:1-20

This parable of the soils is part of our Lord explaining the mystery of the kingdom of God. There are aspects of the promised kingdom presently being manifested.

An aspect of the kingdom revealed is pictured in the wide broadcasting of seed. The seed finds various receptions. The truth of God's kingdom will be openly resisted by some. And because of misunderstanding of the true program of God, others will initially receive it with joy, but in time will abandon it because of failed expectations. Only a remnant will receive it with joy and see enduring fruit. This parable explains what is happening. In Mark 1 the authority of the King is established. In chapters two and three there is open resistance to the authority. Now in chapter 4 the reason this is true is explained. The primary idea in the parable of the soils is not to emphasize the $\frac{3}{4}$ who resist, but the ultimate triumph of God's kingdom in the world.

So far in the narrative, Mark has placed the person and work of Jesus in a context of strenuous opposition, whereby the religious establishment and political authorities are openly hostile to Him and are desirous of seeing Him destroyed. In this context, anyone who would claim to be His disciple would be discouraged and depressed. This parable seeks to show them the end of God's program. In so doing, His disciples are to be greatly encouraged.

In the study of parables there is a big idea and it is this big idea that we need to see, hear, and feel. In light of all the opposition to the person and work of Jesus, "the fact remained that at the end of the day there was a splendid harvest. This is the parable to end despair. It may seem that much of our effort achieves no result; it may seem that much of our labor is wasted. That is how the disciples were feeling, when they saw Jesus banished from the synagogue and regarded with suspicion. This parable said to them, and says to us, 'Patience! Do your work. Sow your seed. Leave the rest to God. The harvest is sure.'" (William Barclay, *Mark*, 97).

An unfortunate problem exists when we place the production of fruit on the soil. If the soil is good, fruit will be produced; how much fruit the good soil produces is entirely up to the Lord of the Harvest. The purpose of the parable is not to get the good soil to produce more fruit. Such production is inevitable. You cannot be a part of His family, His kingdom, and not produce fruit. Our tendency is to become fruit inspectors when we are to simply abide in the vine. If the seed is sown and the soil is good, then a harvest is unavoidable. If the soil is not good, then no enduring fruit will be forthcoming. The fulfillment of God's purpose does not rest on the fickle mind of man.

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It is not our strength that will bring in the kingdom, and it is not our wisdom that figures out how it all works and what it will look like. As citizens of His kingdom, we are to rest in the sure work of God. God will finish what He began (1 Thess. 5:23, 24). He will complete the work and establish His citizens in His kingdom for His glory (Phil. 1:6; Heb. 13:20, 21; Jude 24, 25). It is in the face of open opposition and constant kingdom conflict that our Lord assures His audience that God wins!

It is my prayer that we would work to rest in the victory of God. He has won, and we are to live our lives in light of this glorious truth. May such a truth gird us up in our struggle against the world, the flesh, and the devil.