

The Growing Seed ■ | Mark 4:26–29 ■

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[0:00] Welcome to Ontario Community Church, where we are encouraging, equipping, and engaging lives for Christ.! I'm Pastor Patrick Daly, and each week I share sermons that balance the grace and love of Jesus Christ with the truth of the Word of God.

Together, we'll explore Scripture using observation, interpretation, and application. This helps us discover practical ways to live out our faith every single day.

Let's dive in together into God's Word. Alright, well good morning everyone. What a special Sunday it's been as we've had this family dedication and celebrating Mother's Day.

It's just such a special time for us to just remember how important every single person is in the eyes of God. How mothers play such a crucial and critical role when it comes to children, when it comes to mentorship, when it comes to that sense of nurturing.

The reality is, we all have a mother, don't we? Anyone here not have a mother? We should talk after, right? The reality is, we all have a mother. And it's so important for us to recognize and to have this sense of gratitude and thankfulness for our own mothers.

[1:18] Today, as we've had the Scripture reading from the Gospel of Mark, and we're going to focus today on the Gospel of Mark, chapter 4, verses 26 through 29, if you'd like to turn there.

In your ESVPU Bible, that's going to be page 998. It's a short parable. And this parable only shows up in the Gospel of Mark. It's important for us to not only understand that parables are all scattered throughout the Gospels.

Sometimes we find parables that they show up in three Gospels, but this particular one shows up only in the Gospel of Mark. And I had the reading, starting from verse 21, the lamp under a basket. It's kind of interesting when you're reading that, where it says a lamp be put under a basket or under a bed. Going on in that verse 22, that nothing is hidden except to be made manifest, nor is anything secret except to come to light.

We see the lamp under a basket, the parable of the growing seed, and the parable of the mustard seed. This helps us with the context in our understanding of what's happening in Scripture.

[2:41] That that which is small, that which is hidden, it will expand. It will grow, especially when we're thinking about the Lord, when we think about who He is.

We've gone over a lot of seed and agricultural language when we've gone over the parables. The seed representing the Word. We've talked about the soil and how important it is for our hearts to be suitable ground.

In other words, we shouldn't have hardened hearts towards God. We should have softened hearts. That our heart, represented as soil, should be ready to receive the Word.

Be ready to receive salvation, as it were, in the same manner and in the same way. And so Jesus is teaching these series of teachings and of parables about the kingdom.

It is unique to the Gospel of Mark. Let's think about it for a second here. We can go to that next slide. You have this picture of someone who has got a watering can.

[3:46] It's kind of big, I know. He's watering. And over time, this isn't a real plant, by the way. But it's a representation of what happens.

The seed is planted into the ground and it is growing. And what does it say in Scripture? That the kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed onto the ground.

He sleeps and rises night and day. And the seed sprouts and grows. Isn't it kind of funny? He said he doesn't know how. He doesn't know how this happens.

But he just knows that it happens. It's very simplistic language. Especially if we've ever had a garden before. How many of us have had a garden? Planted tomatoes.

You've planted apricots or grapes or whatever it is. I think of my wife. She's been working on strawberries. And I've got little tiny strawberries recently. They're actually really good, by the way. [4:44] But there's only like two of them. So I can't share with you guys. I apologize. But in the event I have enough strawberries, I'd love to share them with all of you. But that's kind of the really beautiful thing when we think of the physical world.

When we think of plants. We want our plants to produce fruit. And to produce an abundance of them. Giving them the proper time. It says in verse 28. The earth produces by itself.

It's kind of a weird language, isn't it? The earth produces by itself. First the blade, then the ear, and then the full grain in the ear. When the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.

How many of you know the word automate? We think about this in technology nowadays, right? There's machine automation. Or artificial intelligence.

Or we think of software, right? These big machines that are automatic. I don't know if I can trust automatic cars yet.

[5:50] And I mean self-driving cars. I need to be specific here. Because I use an automatic. I'm talking about self-driving. One that drives itself automatically. We think about this.

In the world that we live in. Things that happen automatically. Things that are self-driving, as it were. Using, utilizing technology. The language that is used in the Greek is automate.

That the earth produces by itself. Now, something that's very interesting in here. When we're looking at scripture for a second here. That language, scattering the seed on the ground.

And the earth producing by itself. It's the same Greek word. Where it's talking about the soil. Isn't that interesting? Because it's connected with how we understand scripture.

And how we understand parables. Do you remember how important it is for our heart. Our soil. To be good ground. Right?

[6:50] To be good earth. To be planted in. And so. When it's talking about scattering seed into the ground. You could say the soil. And that in the proper soil.

Well. The plant will grow. Over time. Church. Does this make sense? I mean it makes sense when we think of the physical world. But when we're thinking of the spiritual world.

How our heart posture needs to be correct with the Lord. That we need. We need to ask God to change our minds. And to change our hearts. Because our God is the God of transformation.

Renewal. Putting on the new self. We think about this. This parable is not necessarily about man's ability to grow the plant. But it also shows the importance that.

Well. The person who plants the seed into the ground. There is still work that has to be done. But it is God that grows the plant. It's kind of like how you work with the Lord.

[7:53] It's much like how we are called to pray. And God answers our prayers. It's much like how we are to spread in the good news of the gospel. How we are called to do good in the name of Christ.

And let God take care of the rest. Church. Do you see how important it is for us to respond? There is certainly work that we are to do.

We're not saved by that work. But because of us being saved. There is much that we are supposed to do. And it is understanding that we partner with God as it were.

That there is this sense of human responsibility. And yet divine sovereignty. It's somehow there is this balance between the two. And when we think of.

Well how we just had family dedications. And we think of Mother's Day. We can not only think of gardens. But we can also think of children. How many of you.

[8:52] Even I am included in this. You don't have to raise your hand. But you went to bed one night. And you woke up. And your child like grew.

And grew a lot. And you think. What in the world just happened? It's a very similar. It's a parallel that we can see when we consider children. And we consider.

Well. The spiritual. And the physical. It's important for us to recognize this. And growth. It happens in stages. It happens in seasons.

Much like in Ecclesiastes. That in everything there is a season under heaven. Or for those of you who like listening to the 60s. You'll probably know the song. Turn, turn, turn.

By who? The birds. There you go. There you go. Thank you Matt. Perfect. Quoting scripture. Even though the band wasn't a Christian band.

[9:47] Still utilized. Utilized those. Those verses in there. And so. We think of how we must sow. We have to think of how we plant the seed.

How God. Entrusts us to do this. But there's this divine. Well. This divine mystery. As it were. That growth does happen.

And we may not fully understand it. Do you understand that we all. I mean we all grow in different stages and seasons. Isn't it weird how one child will just sprout up really quick.

And the other one won't. I think of my own two daughters right now. They are taller than my twin boys. And yet the twin boys are a year older. I can't explain that.

But yet that happens. You can think about that with your children. You can think about that with our own spiritual growth. Where you're at in your own spiritual journey. Is going to be different than the person next to you.

[10:49] But we should be all headed in the same direction. Of knowing who Jesus Christ is. And growing in him. So that we too like plants. Can produce fruit. Do you see how all of this is connected?

It's really remarkable. And this is connected with. The mustard seed. Daniel 2.35. The stone that becomes the mountain. Even in John 15.5.

Where Christ says. Apart from me you can do nothing. It's all connected in here. And so what do we do with this then? Because here at Ontario Community Church.

Sorry. What can we learn from this? My bad. At Ontario Community Church. It's important for us to turn to the text. And know what in the world is going on. What are the lessons then we can learn?

And what do we do about this? So what can we learn from this? Number one. Growth is God's work. Not ours alone. Does that make sense church?

[11:50] The seed grows. Just as the man didn't know how. There is a mystery to that. But it does happen nonetheless. And it's a call for us to trust in the process.

To trust in God's divine timing. Much like how we teach our children. Or how we grow in learning about scripture. Or living it out.

What it means to live in love like Christ. That growing does take time. We think about children then. Well. The call to plant.

And to nurture your children. And to pray. That God will give them growth. And it's important for us to recognize. Look. Much like how I can't force my wife to love me.

Much like how I can't force my children to obey me. Right? We can't. God gives the growth.

[12:49] We continue at it with our children. We continue at it in our marriages. We continue at it in our family. And let's face it.

We have to rely on God with our lives. Why don't we rely on God? For healing and restoration in our marriages. And in the growth of our children.

The second thing then. Is that growth is invisible before it is visible. That's why you have so much of this language. Of seeds being planted into the ground.

Well they're hidden. I mean most plants. I don't know of any plant that just. It just sits on top of the ground. Do you know any off the top of your head? It's not. I can't think of any.

So let's go with that. You have to plant it into the ground. So it's hidden for a while. But you give it time to cultivate it. So that it will grow. Well the man sleeps and rises.

[13:46] Is he micromanaging the seed? He's not. I mean otherwise he'd be there 24-7. Can you imagine if that's what we actually had to do.

When we're planting plants or crops. I mean I know we can say raising children is a full-time job. But we still sleep. I mean at least I hope we do right? We think about that.

And parents and even discipleship. It can feel slow. It can feel discouraging. But let us remember that God works behind the scenes.

And I always think of one of my favorite verses is from Habakkuk where basically you have the prophet who's saying, you know, God I don't understand why all of these things are happening. And in the book of Habakkuk, that's one of the only times in scripture where God responds by saying, I'm doing something. I'm paraphrasing here. That if you even knew what I was doing, you would not be able to fully understand it.

[14:47] And then he goes on in explaining what he is, what he's doing. And the premise of that is to show that God works behind the scenes in our own lives.

And as we continue to sow, right? As we continue to pour out our love to our children. Think of how mothers do that. All the time they're pouring out their love to their children.

You keep going at it. You keep at it. You trust in the Lord. You pray to the Lord that your children will grow much like our gardens will grow kind of thing.

We think about how God works in such remarkable and hidden ways.

Sometimes we don't see God at work. Sometimes we think, why isn't God working in this person immediately?

[15:43] Not you, Mark. But why is God not working in this specific person? You keep at it, remaining faithful to God. Let us remember that God works in ways that we cannot understand.

And sometimes, very often, hindsight is 20-20, amen? You don't understand it at first. But later on, you do in the grand scheme of things.

And then the third thing that we can learn here is that growth follows God's timing, not ours. I wish it was on my timing. Don't we all wish it was on our timing?

Don't raise your hand. Right? We wish it would be on our own timing. But we place our trust in the living God in His divine timing. Much like how it is when it comes to our prayer life.

When it comes to patience, right? That's the classic example we can think of. How many of us have prayed for patience right now? You see the problem with that prayer, right?

[16:44] Because God's going to make you wait a little bit. We think about that. We think that when the verse is saying in there, verse 28, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.

It's sequential. It takes time for these things to happen. And I know for a lot of us, especially in the culture that we live in, we have packages that get delivered, maybe not here, in an hour or the same day delivery.

How many of us pay for that extra charge to get it? You can be honest here. I know I do. Or instant ramen noodles. It's not really instant, though.

Because I wish you could snap your fingers and the ramen's there. But the idea being speed and time, we like that. But when it comes to the spiritual matters, it's on God's timing.

It's all in Him. We have to wait upon the Lord, not on our own will, but on God's. And so what do we then, because you see, growth, growth, growth.

[18:02] What do we do about this? And how do we live this out? Well, parents, specifically mothers as well, dedicate your children and trust in the process.

You don't have to have all the answers. Oh, do we wish we do, though? We wish we had all the answers. You keep sowing faith, love, and truth into your children or whoever it is you are caring for.

When it comes to children, even if it's foster children or adopted children, or maybe someone you're just taking under your wing, maybe someone you're mentoring even, you're not doing this alone.

Ask God to help lead and guide you. Ask for guidance from the Holy Spirit, because essentially, that is what we are called to do. Planting the seed into the ground and waiting for God's timing for the plant to grow.

It's the same thing with children. It's the same thing with us. That it takes time. And it takes a lot of trust as well. For the church, what does it say?

[19:24] Be a garden. Not a factory. Why did you put that there, pastor? That doesn't make any sense. Well, you think about factories, you think of mass production, pollution.

You think of all of these different things with factories. They demand output. But gardens, though, it requires trust in the process.

That each plant will take time, but they will all grow together. In other words, as a church, we are to cultivate spiritual formation, knowing that each and every one of us, we have our own backstory. It's a reminder for us that, look, for some of us in this room, you may have a pretty wild backstory, and I don't have to know it, but you know it.

It doesn't matter where you come from. It doesn't matter what you have been through, what you are going through, or quite frankly, what you will go through.

[20:28] Know that God loves you, and He calls for you, and ask God to mold you in your life. I don't know about you, but knowing that when crisis or trials or tribulations enter my life, I don't want to do that alone.

I want to trust in the living God when crisis hits. Because we live in an imperfect world, and we're certainly imperfect people. And so, when we think of us as a church body, as a congregation, it's not about quantity.

It's about quality. It's about us growing into the man, the women, the individual that God wants you to be. And we should help in that process.

Much like you read so much in Scripture about the body of Christ working together, you think you don't want your hand to do something it's not supposed to, or your foot doing something strange. Every part of the body has to work together in order for it to, well, to work properly. How is that any different than when we think of the body of Christ, the church?

[21:51] And we have to think of the quality of fruit that is produced, not quantity. How many of you have ever gone to the store and you bought maybe an apple, and it just didn't taste the same as having a locally grown one?

I've had that experience. Apricots are a particular one that I've experienced. Gone down to Weezer, gotten a local apricot.

Juicy. Went to Walmart. Not so good. I'm sure many of you can identify. It doesn't have to be apricots. You don't even have to like apricots, but understand the concept with this.

When we're thinking about mass-produced factories, it's a pretty good example. You think of the amount of time things get shipped and all that, all the things that go into that. The idea being, focus on the quality rather than quantity.

Because God wants us to grow and to produce fruit. So let us respond by having quality fruit in our walk with the Lord.

[22:59] And then finally, the third one for all is for everyone to keep planting even when you don't see the progress. We think about this in our families. We think about this in our friendships.

We should think about this with our children. In our marriage as well. Not everyone is perfect. But we keep sowing those seeds into people.

And even if you are separate or even if your family is divided or broken, that doesn't mean you can't pray for them. Even if there is any sort of dysfunctionality or unhealth that exists in families, we can still love through prayer and asking for God to soften hearts.

We think of how we are called to share in the gospel. It's the same thing of scattering the seed so that transformation will happen to other people. That is what we are called to do.

We plant, we water, but it is God that gives the growth. And so let us consider how important it is for us to know the Lord, to grow in Him, and to be moved to do good in His name.

[24:24] It is the continuation of that agricultural language. For us, when we became Christian, it's receiving that seed and letting it grow in our hearts.

If you don't know the Lord, let this be a call for you to respond to the gospel message. Secondly, may you grow and produce fruit, living and loving like Christ.

And thirdly, may you respond by word, by action, continuing the process, just as God has done by sending His Son.

Whether you're a parent, a mother, a grandparent even, a young believer, remember that God is the grower.

Plant those seeds. Trust in the Lord. Trust in the process. And let God work in and through people. You may not see fruit today, but you're still a part of the process.

[25:33] Let's pray together. And Father, we thank you for this time and this opportunity for us to come together as we've gone over this very short parable about a man who scattered seed into suitable soil.

And basically, he went to bed. Day and night, he didn't understand how the plant grew. Going to show that this person trusted in the process of growth.

May we learn from this parable the importance of scattering the seed, not just in physical plants, but how we pour into people and how we share the gospel.

may we trust in you and may we trust in the process so that we can produce fruit, but also so that lives can be transformed.

We pray specifically for the mothers today and just all that they do and how beautiful it is for us to celebrate all of the mothers, all of the mamas, and all of the grandmas here today.

[26:50] May we celebrate that today. We pray for all the children who have been dedicated. Ten children is but a blessing from you.

We pray that this church will be a place where your grace is overflowing. we know Father that you are working in this place in some remarkable ways.

And we may not even realize it. We may not even see it, but we know you're at work. Father, I pray for healing in this place, restoration, transformation.

May we all come to know you, grow in you, and continue the process by going out in the world and doing good in your name. It is in the name of Jesus Christ that we pray and we all say together, Amen, Church?

Amen. Thank you for listening for this week's message from Ontario Community Church. I pray that you are encouraged and strengthened in your walk with Christ.

[28:00] For more sermons and resources, visit [OntarioCommunityChurch.org](https://yetanothersermon.org). May God bless you as you live out his grace and truth every single day.