



The Reverend Dr. David V. Silvernail, Jr.
Mark 4:21-34

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English Standard Version

“Modgník / Kingdom”

The 10th Sermon in a series on The Gospel of Mark entitled
“The King and His Cross”

Mark 4:21-34

“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? ²² For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. ²³ If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.” ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ 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.”

²⁶ *And He said, “**The Kingdom of God** is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. ²⁷ He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. ²⁸ The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”*

³⁰ *And He said, “With what can we compare **The Kingdom of God**, or what parable shall we use for it? ³¹ It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, ³² yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.” ³³ With many such parables He spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. ³⁴*

He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to His own disciples He explained everything.”

*Heavenly Father, this is Your Word and we need it. Thank You for giving us the Scriptures and making us Your people. You have brought us to this amazing Gospel to learn more about your Son, Jesus. Thank You that today we're learning once again from Mark, a follower of Jesus, as he shows us the life of Christ. We ask You this morning to give us the grace to understand a few hard-to-understand parables. They don't make a lot of sense to us. Everything seems upside-down and backwards. And yet You teach us that's how the **Kingdom** of God works. Help us to hear it, understand it, believe it, and obey it. And so we pray, speak through the Gospel of Mark this morning, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, help us see Jesus, for in His name we pray, amen and amen.*

INTRODUCTION: A Stick Figure Named Jake ¹

In 1989, two brothers from Boston started a T-shirt business. For five years Bert and John traveled the East Coast, hawking their shirts in the streets and selling door-to-door in college dorms. They lived on peanut butter and jelly, slept in their van, and showered when they could. As they tell it, they didn't make much money, and the girls weren't impressed. In the summer of '94 they arrived home from a road trip with \$78 in their pockets and were ready to give up.

It was their practice to gather friends at their apartment following such trips to share stories and to ask their friends to comment on drawings and sayings for future shirts posted on their living room walls. On this occasion, one drawing received considerable favorable attention from their friends — the head of a beret-wearing, smiling **stick figure named Jake**, and a simple phrase that captured their imagination — *“Life is good.”* Inspired by their new friend and his contagious grin, they emptied their bank account and printed up 48 Jake shirts for a street fair in Cambridge, Massachusetts. They laid the shirts out on a rickety card table. By noon, all of those tees were gone. A star was made ... and a business was born.

Not just a business, but a movement. Bert and John were no longer just selling clothes; they were on a mission to spread good vibes wherever they could. Today, Life is good, Inc., is not only a \$150 million company with thousands of outlets operating in over 30 countries. It's a movement that's raised millions of dollars for charity, drawn people together, and shaped contemporary culture with its message of optimism, simplicity, and goodness. And my guess is, many of us have one of Jake's shirts at home.

There's something to love about that story, isn't there? Maybe because it's the story of a couple guys who made good. Maybe it's that there's still a market for simplicity and quality. Or maybe it's because it speaks to a longing we all have to work at something we love, something that makes a positive impact on the world around us. We all want to believe that life can be good, that work can be meaningful, and that we can make a difference in the world.

I've got Good News for you, news that can put a smile on your face like Jake's. What happened to Bert and John can happen to you, no matter what line of work you're in, no matter

¹ The Introduction has been adapted from the sermon *“Brothers, Interrupted”* by Dr. Bryan Wilkerson, Grace Chapel, Lexington, MA, January 2010, www.preachingtoday.com

how successful or disappointed you've been with life up to this point. Today I'd like to introduce you to another story whose message is able to capture the imagination. Today we've come to a set of parables in **Mark 4**.

Now parables are stories Jesus tells to make a point, or to teach a principle. Parables are not illustrations; they do not support, elaborate or simplify a more basic idea. They are not ideas at all, nor can they ever be reduced to simple theological statements. They are the portals to another world; one preacher called them "Postcards from Heaven." And that's because they give us postcard size glimpses of another place ... another world ... a new understanding of how things are really supposed to be.

But they can be confusing ... because things are not now as they should be. And it's easy to get the feeling that the parables are telling us that we're doing things wrong. And we have a hard time with that. Most of the time, we're trying to do things right! And now Jesus is giving us parables so that we see and understand that the ways of **the Kingdom** are not the ways of the world. Things are upside-down and backwards in **the Kingdom**. Hence the title of this sermon — **Modgnik** — which is **Kingdom** spelled backwards ... and is also the name of our youth retreats. And one of the key lessons of **The Parables of the Kingdom** is that the way up is down. You get rich by giving it away. You gain power through serving. You get full by emptying yourself. You gain happiness by making others happy. **The Kingdom of God** is very different from the world. And you have to be able to be, think, talk, and act differently than the world ... if you want to be in **The Kingdom of God**. And that's what Jesus is teaching in our passage this week, **Mark 4:21-34**, in order to show us how **The Kingdom of God** works. So, here, Jesus is going to give us three short parables in order to teach us three short principles about **The Kingdom of God**.

And the first principle is that **The Kingdom of God** is ...

v. 21-25: **A KINGDOM OF WISDOM** ²

At first glance, you might get the impression that Jesus was trying to hide the meaning of **The Kingdom of God** or that Christianity was a secret society in which only certain people got the inside information. In the beginning of this passage, He says, "No, no. Just as it would be silly to have a lamp unless it's out in the open where everybody can see it, there's no use in the lamp otherwise, so **The Kingdom of God** is here to be revealed." Now, as we read **verses 21-25** you might hear some phrases that are very familiar ... so listen carefully ...

"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?" ²² For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. ²³ If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ 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."

2 The Exposition of the text is adapted from the books, The Story Telling God: Seeing the Glory of Jesus in His Parables by Dr. Jared Wilson, pages 161-174; The Message of Mark: The Mystery of Faith by Dr. Donald English, pages 97-104; and Focus on the Bible Commentary – Mark: Good News from Jerusalem by Rev. Geoffrey Grogan, pages 87-100. **And the sermons, "Light and Measures" by Dr. David Strain, First Presbyterian Church (PCA), Jackson, MS, 3/3/19, www.fpcjackson.org; and *"The Openness of the Kingdom"* by Dr. Tim Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, NY, 3/19/06, *The Tim Keller Sermon Archive*, Logos Bible Software 8.8.**

You may remember that Jesus uses this rather silly image of hiding a lamp under a basket elsewhere – **Matthew 5:15**, “*Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.*” In that context, He uses it to teach His disciples not to hide their own light but to be good witnesses to the world for Jesus Christ. Don’t hide your light under a basket; let it shine. Let people see that you love the Lord Jesus Christ.

Or you may remember that He used the metaphor of the measure we use being measured back to us in **Matthew 7:2**, “*For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.*” In Matthew, He used it in the context of a **warning** not to engage in unjust judgments, lest the measure you use to judge others is used by God on you and you find yourself being judged in turn. And when you see that, when you notice these phrases that Jesus uses in other places, you might be tempted to try to force them here in **Mark 4** to mean the same thing as **Matthew 5 & 7**.

And that would be a mistake. Jesus, just like the rest of us, is perfectly capable of using the same expressions, the same metaphors, and the same stories in different contexts for different purposes. Anybody who speaks publicly will find themselves returning to familiar expressions and phrases and adapting them in different situations for different purposes. So here’s a principle of good Bible interpretation to keep in your back pocket when you’re reading the Scriptures. Just because Jesus is using the same image or the same expression or the same phrase in more than one place, doesn’t mean that He intends to communicate the same message in every place. We have to pay attention to the context.

And so in **Matthew 5**, Jesus is urging us to do something. We’re not to hide our lights under a basket. But here in **Mark 4**, Jesus uses the same language but He’s not urging us to do anything. Instead, He’s promising us something wonderful about the destiny of the Gospel in **The Kingdom of God**. We might sum up the message of **verses 21-23** like this – in **The Kingdom of God the future is bright**. Or take the other image in our text – the image of the measures. In **Matthew 7**, Jesus uses the same metaphor, but He’s warning us about the way we are judging others, lest we ourselves be judged. But here, in **verses 24 and 25**, there’s still a note of warning, but the focus falls on our hearing the Word of God.

And learning how to understand all of that is a matter of wisdom. You see, a light is used to illuminate everything around it, and nothing remains hidden forever. Jesus is saying that there’s a mystery (seen still as something hidden which only God can reveal) but that it won’t remain hidden forever. The implication is that God is now revealing the hidden secret, in Jesus. Therefore, they should pay attention even more carefully. Those who hear His teaching, see His miracles, are under an obligation to make the right response. Note that neither the teaching nor the miracles **automatically** produces the right response. Somehow He is calling on them for that. We have to **listen carefully** and **exercise wisdom**. We’re into the area of ‘serious, persistent, perceptive faith’. They could see how true that was in terms of everyday life. Jesus says it’s just as true in the hidden realm, the spiritual realm, as well.

We take a step towards understanding if we follow Mark’s approach in this gospel, namely to see Jesus as the clue to all that he said. The parables do not have within themselves the force to persuade or convince. They weren’t intended to, any more than the miracles. But they are pointers, signposts, avenues which, if followed, point to the One who does convince and persuade, namely Jesus Himself. And the attitude which helps one to follow the pointers, the signposts, the avenues ... is serious, persistent, perceptive faith.

If you remember from last week, Rev. Dorst preached on the Parable of the Sower. There Jesus gave the parable and then gave the explanation of the parable. But right in the middle, between the parable and the explanation, we read, **Mark 4:11-13**, “*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,¹² so that “they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.”¹³ And He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?”*”

And so these next parables compromise a sort of test. You didn’t get that one and I had to explain it, so let’s try some more. I’ll give you easier ones this time, but you’ll have to **listen carefully** and **exercise wisdom**. **Verse 24** says, “*Pay attention to what you hear.*” I think a more literal translation of that is “*See what you hear.*” It’s an appeal to engage your imagination, to use the insight of your mind, to use the eyes of your heart ... after all, that’s how Paul prays in **Ephesians 1:17-18**, “*... that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him,¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you ...*” Here then we see that hearing **is not enough**. There must be reflection on the stories, because none of them is told as an end in itself, none is intended just to entertain; far from it. The stories are simple and clear, but their understanding requires **spiritual wisdom** on the part of the hearer.

Jesus tells His disciples that the secret of **The Kingdom of God** has been given to them (verse 11). How can it be described as a secret when it was in fact the theme of our Lord’s public preaching? **Mark 1:15**, “*The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.*” Due to their God-given faith in Christ they had begun to understand a most important truth, that **the Kingdom** promised in the Old Testament had drawn near in the presence of Jesus. This means that they, and us, already have the key to understanding the parables. Surprise, they’re about **The Kingdom of God**, and **The Kingdom of God is all about Jesus**. But it requires us to **listen carefully** and **see what you hear**. Because it’s a **Kingdom of Wisdom**. That’s the first principle.

The second principle is that it’s ...

v. 26-29: A **KINGDOM OF GROWTH**

²⁶ *And He said, “The Kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground.²⁷ He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how.²⁸ The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”*

This parable is unique to Mark’s Gospel, and it captures what Mark’s Gospel is all about: big results from small beginnings. We had two guys selling t-shirts from a rickety card table grow into a \$150 million company operating in over 30 countries. That image of small beginnings and big results is the image of **the Kingdom**. In the womb of a virgin the God of the universe is conceived by the Spirit. Into the tiny town of Bethlehem the Lord was delivered. In an insignificant village Jesus began His public ministry. Into a unlikely group of fishermen, tax collectors, and zealots Jesus poured His wisdom. In a hostile and broken world did Jesus’s friends turn everything upside down, even the world itself (**Acts 17:6**). Why? Because at the cross, Jesus is victor, and from the grave, He is conqueror.

Jesus breaks all the rules. He can do this, because He made the rules. And as He’s writing a new chapter in human history with His blood, those accustomed to managing the rules

— the “powers that be” — are freaking out. Even the citizens of the **Kingdom** are left scratching their heads! No one could have anticipated **this upside-down Kingdom!** But they should have. It’s been forecasted throughout the Old Testament. **The Kingdom of God** was the worst-kept secret in history, but it still manages to surprise us.

Just look at these verses, the scatterer of the seed, **verse 27**, “*sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how.*” This is one way life in the **Kingdom** keeps a Christian humble. Time and again we think we know how this thing works, but time and again we’re wrong. Jesus’s disciples thought they knew how **the Kingdom** would come; you bring it with a sword. But that’s not how it came, and Jesus rebuked those who tried to bring it by violence.

Time and again the church thinks we know how people change. Of course , We tell people to get their act together. And then we’re surprised when this doesn’t seem to work. Why can’t we **nag** someone into spiritual maturity? It seems that the more we lead with law, the more we stifle spiritual growth. The more programs we throw at our church, the more inward it becomes. The more strategies we bring to the table, the less spiritual wisdom holds sway. As one pastor said, “It’s amazing what you can accomplish without the Holy Spirit.”

We stay busy, brooding, working, asking God to bless our efforts, and then pat ourselves on the back when the Spirit works in spite of our ignorant attempts to quench Him. Time and again we think we have the killer program, the special system, the new strategy, the secret for achieving Christian maturity and church growth, but **John 3** tells us the Spirit blows where He wills, like the wind. We cannot generate a movement of God; otherwise it would be called a movement of **US**. The emphasis today mirrors the emphasis of yesterday. Reach the cream of the crop, plant churches in the power centers, send missionaries to the cultural influencers, convert the CEOs and celebrities, and then you will see “trickle-down” **Kingdom** expansion. Seminary professors warn ministers-in-training away from rural areas and urban poverty. It would be a waste of their talents. It’s the same “winner’s circle” evangelism strategy I remember from my time in Christian high school and college groups. If you want to see the gospel take over your school, we were encouraged to reach the quarterback, the head cheerleader, and the student council president.

Of course, all of these power people need the gospel! We should not **not** take the message of salvation through repentance and faith to them. But as a principle it seems to miss the tone of Jesus’s ministry, which was largely on the outskirts, among the people on the fringes. Jesus is specifically looking for the forsaken. He’s intentionally selecting the weak and the foolish. And He builds His church not through entrepreneurial ideas or clever strategies but through His gospel. This bothers us. This is not how the world works. We want to **make things happen!** How do we get people to grow in Christ? Scatter the seed, we’re told. How does it take root and grow in people’s lives? (shrug) I don’t know. And that’s okay. The seed is scattered, but it grows — without coaxing. No seed grows because the sower wills it to, **verse 28**, “*The earth produces by itself.*” This is a picture of the gospel, a power unto itself. It is like a seed that grows. It is purely a work of the Spirit. The gospel is powerful in and of itself ... **Romans 1:16**, “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*”

1 Thessalonians 1:5, “*... our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.*”

Colossians 1:5b-6, “...*the gospel*,⁶ *which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth.*”

Yet I find **hope** in **verse 29**, “*But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.*” And I find hope because that verse not only tells us what **will happen** when the harvest comes, but it tells us that the harvest **will come!** I have the great privilege of pastoring a great church in Northern Virginia. One thing someone new to Northern Virginia learns rather quickly is that each town has its own personality and particular culture. Yet there is something all of Northern Virginia shares — a general spiritual dryness. There are a few places experiencing growth in the faith, but for the most part, Christians scattered throughout Northern Virginia are trudging along fighting off discouragement and praying for a fresh move of God in our area.

I don’t know what the Spirit is doing here. I don’t have a crystal ball. I don’t know what He’s doing in Loudoun County. Sometimes I look around and I can’t help but groan. I spend a lot of time in Leesburg and the brokenness is obvious. All I know is, according to **the parables of the Kingdom**, it’s not my job, or anyone else in the church’s job, **to make stuff happen**. It’s our job to scatter the seed, to nurture the seed, to work hard at sowing the seed, and then to pray and love and laugh and rest while the Spirit does His job in the gospel. **Galatians 6:9**, “*And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.*” The grain will grow ripe in God’s timing. The grain isn’t ripe yet, but it will be. **The Kingdom** is unstoppable. No rocky soil in Northern Virginia will be hard enough to stop it. No sheep of the good shepherd’s will be too lost to be found by Him. **The Kingdom of God** runs counter to our wisdom and works in spite of us. And that’s because it’s a **Kingdom of Wisdom** and it’s a **Kingdom of Growth**. The third, and last, principle is that it’s ...

v. 30-34: A KINGDOM OF GREATNESS

³⁰ *And He said, “With what can we compare **The Kingdom of God**, or what parable shall we use for it? ³¹ It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, ³² yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.” ³³ With many such parables He spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. ³⁴ He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to His own disciples He explained everything.”*

The smallest of all the seeds? Well, not really, but remember the parables aren’t scientific treatises. They’re stories employing figures of speech. The mustard seed is **really small** – that’s the point. Like you and me, the mustard seed isn’t much to look at. If you were designing a movement to take over the world, you wouldn’t come up with Christianity. Which is why every made-up religion has at its root self-help and self-righteousness. Only Christianity says, “You can’t do it. But God will do it for you.” That doesn’t appeal to the flesh. That won’t produce the self-worship of Osteen or Oprah leading the audience in a chant of “I am strong. I am healthy. I am rich.” I am being brainwashed.

Grace for sin? Who would make that up? The God who delights in making the “smallest seed” His primary means of miracle, that’s who. Proving the wonders of His grace, God chooses the younger brothers, the spotty brides, the know-nothings and nobodies. He chooses the

sinner. He chooses the ones we wouldn't. When the disciples try to shuffle the children off, the King says, "No, let them come. The **Kingdom** is for the littlest and the least." (**Matthew 19:14**).

In **1 Corinthians 2:1–5** Paul writes, "*And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. ³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, ⁴ and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*" We want to see the **Kingdom** grow, and so the emphasis in the evangelical church is on bigness. Big programs, big churches, big names. Obsession with production, coolness, and cultural credibility. We forget that Jesus is looking for the littlest and the least. And what we end up revealing is our **fundamental distrust of the gospel**.

When you think of all we've thrown at the problem of evangelical decline, of the collegiate Christian dropout problem, of the pitiful level of charitable giving within the church, of the ineffectiveness of the church in contemporary society, you'd think we'd realize it's time to admit we're out of new ideas and stop coming up with pathetic variations on the old ones. There's nothing new under the sun, my friends. There are only so many "God at the Movies" and television show tie-ins you can do before you have to stop calling yourself innovative and relevant. The world will always do entertainment better than us. But it will never **have** what we **have**. Where does our faith rest? Does it rest in how well we're doing church? Or does it rest in what **God is doing** ... even when we can't see it?

The beauty of the gospel is that you don't have to be great to wield its power. As we have seen, it actually helps **if you're not great**. Because the gospel's **greatness** is enough. Through the news of the saving life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the same God who made **humans from dirt** will make a great church out of dirty people. That's the point. Look at **verse 32**, "*yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.*" The tiny seed grows into a **Kingdom** that will welcome people from every tongue, tribe, race, and nation. The **greatness** of **the Kingdom of God** is unstoppable and unfathomable. Everywhere the gospel goes, the gospel is doing its work. As the sowers scatter the seed — preaching the gospel, testifying to its truth with good works, making disciples, planting churches, sending out sowers to replicate the work in new places — the branches begin to grow out, spreading to embrace the sun of righteousness that gives them life. And the disciples make disciples who make disciples. And the gospel does not return void. The whole world will eventually be covered with the knowledge of the glory of God.

Listen, I think that's the great encouragement of this passage. **The Gospel of the Kingdom**, the coming of Christ, cannot stay hidden. Nothing can obscure it. No shadow can engulf it. He shines into the darkness, into the gloom of the hearts of rebel sinners and chases the shadows away in the Gospel. The light of the Gospel is chasing away the shadows of unbelief. The people who walked in darkness are seeing the great Light. That's the message of Jesus' parables too.

Jesus is an unparalleled sower, and **the Kingdom** is growing because Jesus is tending to its growth. Even now, through His Spirit, He's tending to the growth of **the Kingdom**. The Spirit of God is **still** building His people, **still** carrying them along, **still** equipping them for every

good work, **still** ministering to them and **still** helping them. Yes, He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it. And the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

Go back through these parables. You see a lamp under a basket. You see a seed going into the ground. You see the smallest of seeds becoming the biggest of trees. Who do you really see there? Jesus is the light of the world, and they tried to put Him under a basket, but He broke out. Jesus is the seed. They put Him into the ground, but He came out. Jesus became the smallest of seeds? If Jesus had stayed up, we would've gone down, but because Jesus went down, we've been brought up. He's the Lord of the universe, with immensity and infinity, and He became small. "Oh, you mean he became a man." Before that. "Oh, you mean he became a baby." Before that. "Oh, you mean he became an embryo." Before that. The Lord of the universe literally became a single cell, the smallest of seeds. Why would he do that? For you. He came that far down in order to be born in a manger. He became the smallest of seeds for you. He went down to bring us up.

In fact, the gospel is always scaled to eternity, even in our down times, lean seasons, and suffering days. Eternal life means exactly that — eternal. Declared from the foundation of the world, promised in the covenant, secured by the incarnated and crucified and risen and glorified and ascended and reigning and returning Son, granted by the Holy Spirit, guaranteed in heaven where no moth or rust can destroy. Foreknown by the Father, merited by the Son, and sealed by the Spirit, there is eternity written in your heart, such that **you will find it out**. If you are in Christ now, you have that life **now**.

We can have confidence in in Christ, and in His Gospel. You and I can't stop this thing or control it. Reflecting on the growth of the church in Corinth, Paul writes, **1 Corinthians 3:6**, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth." So let's not worry that we don't have the answers, that we can't quite articulate the gospel perfectly when we're put on the spot. The power to chase the shadows away, the shadows of unbelief from human hearts, doesn't lie with us. It never did. It lies with the Lamp. It lies with the Sower. It lies with the Seed. It lies with Christ. It lies with the Gospel. **And that's Good News.**

Think about that. You need to pray.

Take a moment to do that, and then I'll close.

*Our Lord and our God, thank You that You have spoken to us by Your Son. Open our eyes that we might see our sin and then see our Savior. Thank You that You have given us a King, Your Son, our Savior. Thank You for giving us a picture of how the **Kingdom** grows and how the gospel works. Thank You that it's not dependent on us, but on You and Your Spirit. So, Father, I pray the people here realize we don't always have the answers, we don't always know what to say, we don't always feel up to the task of representing the **Kingdom** of God in our neck of the woods. Thank You that You choose the littlest and the least to accomplish the greatest and the most. Father, forgive us for our lack of faith, forgive us for being afraid to admit we don't often know what You're doing in our lives, or in anyone else's life, and so build our faith this year as we live with Mark, a follower of Jesus, as we hear what he hears, given to him by eyewitnesses of Christ. Thank You for these parables of the **Kingdom**. Teach us to respond with a greater trust in You, and in Your Word, and in this Gospel, to draw us ever closer to Your Son, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.*

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1 Corinthians 3:6-7

“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.”

Philippians 1:6

“And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”