

Mark(19) 4:1-20

- According to God's eternal decree, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has finally come with his eternal kingdom. God the Savior came as a man to save His chosen people and to call them to the eternal kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of heaven. This is the gospel. So far in Mark, we have seen the reality of His salvation in Jesus' ministry-- he healed the sick, cast out demons, called disciples, formed the new heavenly families, and preached the gospel.

- In today's passage, all the miracles and gospel teachings that Jesus performed during his public life must be understood in light of the reality of the salvation of the heavenly kingdom, which Jesus will accomplish through His death and resurrection. With this context, when we come to today's text, Jesus speaks in parables. In other words, he is preaching the gospel through parables. But Jesus, who spoke in parables in front of a large crowd, interprets the parables to his disciples. After today's text, He continues to speak in this pattern of sharing parables with the crowds and at the end, interpreting his words to his disciples.

- Mk.4:33-34, "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."

- In today's text, the first parable, the parable of the sower, is given. In verses 1-9, Jesus speaks in parables, and in verses 10-20, he interprets the parable to his disciples. First, when Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom, why did he have to speak in parables? Was he speaking in parables to make it easier to understand? No, his parables were very difficult to understand. There is a clear reason for Jesus speaking in parables. First, Jesus is fulfilling the Old Testament promises.

- Ps.78:1-4, "Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! 2 I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, 3 things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. 4 We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done."

- Jesus is fulfilling these Words of Psalms. He is revealing the reality of the gospel of the kingdom, which has been hidden since ancient times, by speaking parables. It is a reminder that the time has come when the gospel of the kingdom will not be hidden anymore but revealed. Therefore, Jesus, who has preached the gospel of the kingdom in various ways such as miracles and teachings and revealed the reality of salvation in heaven, is fulfilling the promises of the Old Testament by speaking in parables in today's text. In the Gospel of Matthew, which records the same event as today's text, Jesus says:

- Matt.13:34-35, "All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. 35 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.""

- Jesus' parable reveals a hidden mystery, and today's text tells what the mystery is about.

- Mk.4:10-11, "And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. 11 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."

- The hidden secret is the secret of the kingdom of God, that is, the secret about the kingdom of heaven that Jesus brought. Mark 4:26 and 30 also say this.

- Mk.4:26, "And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground."

- Mk.4:30, "And he said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it?"

All of Jesus' parables are about the kingdom of God brought by Jesus. The Gospel of Matthew speaks of this as heaven. It is to reveal the secret of the kingdom of heaven, the gospel about the kingdom, through parables. We need to understand this first. It is difficult to interpret the parables, but they should be interpreted as centered on the heavenly kingdom. The parable of the sower in today's text is also about the kingdom of heaven, and it is the gospel about the salvation Jesus accomplished for us. Therefore, in today's parable, four types of land are presented. If you look at this parable seeking to know what kind of land you resemble and what you must do to become the good land that bears much fruit, you will miss the point that this parable is making about the gospel of the kingdom. Jesus clearly said that this parable is about the mystery of the kingdom of God. And there is a second reason why Jesus tells the secrets of the kingdom of heaven through parables. Verses 11-12 say:

- Mk.4:11-12, "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.""

- This verse 12 is a quotation from Isaiah 6. Speaking in parables is not meant to make it easier to understand, but rather to make it difficult to understand.

- Isa.6:9-10, "And he said, "Go, and say to this people: "'Keep on hearing,[a] but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' 10 Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.""

- So if we connect all of Jesus' teachings about parables, we can see that what Jesus is saying in parables has two meanings or two purposes. Now the time has been fulfilled, the mystery of the kingdom of God is revealed and, at the same time, hidden. In other words, it has the purpose of revealing the gospel of the kingdom and hiding it from some. From this, we can see that Jesus divides the world into two groups. Those to whom the gospel is revealed and those to whom it is hidden. As verse 9 of today's text says, He divides those who have ears to hear and those who do not have ears to hear. Those who hear and understand and turn and receive forgiveness of sins, and those who hear but do not understand nor turn and receive forgiveness of sins. Therefore, the parable is dividing the world into two. The content of the parable also has this meaning. It is the same as the meaning of the gospel. Matthew 13 explains this in more detail.

- Matt.13:11-15, "And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12 For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: ""You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive." 15 For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them."

- Matt.13:16-17, "But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. 17 For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

- Jesus says that the blessed are those who hear, that is, the people of heaven, to whom the Holy Spirit gave them faith through regeneration. In today's parable, they are the ones who are the good land. Finally, Jesus, the promised Savior God, came with the kingdom of heaven, accomplishing the salvation of the kingdom, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom. Blessed are those who see and hear this. Blessed are those who hear this, understand it, turn, and are healed, that is, those who are saved.

- Therefore, we must clearly understand who the truly blessed are and what the greatest blessing is. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, those who hear the gospel about Jesus and the kingdom of heaven, believe, understand in their hearts, repent, and receive salvation are truly blessed. It is you and me. However, in the time of Jesus, the scribes, Pharisees, and many Jews did not understand even though they saw Jesus, who is God the Savior, and His performing of miracles and preaching of the gospel of the kingdom. But where will the kingdom of God be established? Those who hear the voice of Jesus, believe and will be saved. The parable of the sower is about this. The secret of the kingdom of God is here. The Apostle Paul tells us about the mystery of the kingdom of God that Jesus' parables testify to.

- Col.1:26-27, "the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. 27 To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

- The secret is Christ. The mystery of the kingdom of God, the mystery of heaven, and the mystery of the gospel are Jesus. The time has come when this secret was previously hidden and not fully revealed, but now it is revealed. It is because Jesus came to accomplish the salvation of the kingdom of heaven as the promised Messiah, Christ, and Savior. And through the death and resurrection of Jesus, it is fully accomplished, and after that, it is no longer hidden through parables, but the gospel of the kingdom that has been fully revealed. Yet, sinners who are hardened in heart and are spiritually blind and deaf still do not hear nor understand.

- In verse 3 of today's text, the sower sows seeds, but in verse 4, it falls on the roadside and birds come and eat it. In verse 5, it falls on rocky ground, and the soil is not deep, and it sprouts and is scorched and withered by the sun. Verse 7 says that the seeds fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up and clogged the robe, and they did not bear fruit. But according to verse 8, they fall on good soil and grow up healthy, but it multiplies and bears fruit 30 times, 60 times, and 100 times. Now, Jesus explains to his disciples what this parable means, and the first thing he says in verse 14 is:

- Mk.4:14, "The sower sows the word."

- The seed of the sower is the Word of God. Matthew 13:19, which records the same word, is called the word of the kingdom. And it is Jesus who sows the seed of the word of the kingdom. Jesus came and preached the gospel of the kingdom of God. And He calls His people with the gospel of the kingdom and establishes and expands the kingdom of heaven. He is saying that seeds are sown on good soil and bear fruit 30, 60, and 100 times. And he is speaking of the sinners of the world who reject the gospel of the kingdom, that is, the sinners of the world who hear but do not understand in their hearts and cannot be saved. So, Jesus' parable gives examples of four lands, but in reality, there are two lands. Good land and bad land. In other words, they are the people of God and the people of Satan. That is, believers and non-believers.

- We have something to remember here. Even if there are people who do not understand the Gospel because they have no ears to hear and deny the Gospel because of them, it does not mean that the work of Jesus, the Sower, fails or that the kingdom of heaven cannot be established or expanded. All the people of Jesus who were chosen from before the ages hear the gospel and are saved.

- Jn.10:25-28, "Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, 26 but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."

- Those who are not the sheep of Jesus will not hear or believe, but the sheep of Jesus will hear and believe and have eternal life. The ministry of the church on this earth must be understood in the same way. So Jesus divides the world in two through the gospel of the kingdom. Even in the first creation, he divided the light and the darkness by the word, "Let there be light," and now he divides the children of light and the children of darkness by the word. So, the gospel ministry is the work of the new creation. Pointing this out, in today's text, He speaks of those who hear the gospel and understand and are saved, and those who hear but do not understand and are not saved. Now, in verses 15-20, Jesus explains this to his disciples.

- Mk.4:15-20, "And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. 16 And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. 17 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. 18 And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, 19 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. 20 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.""

- First, the word that was sown along the path means that after hearing the word, Satan came and took it away. Satan is the father of lies, and he tempts us with lies to make us abandon the gospel of truth. Second, it was sown on rocky ground, it seems that the Word has been received, but when tribulation or persecution comes, they throw it all away. It is a picture of those who denied Jesus and apostatized him due to severe persecution in the early church. The third thing that was sown among the thorns means that the worries of the world, temptations, and greed block the Word and do not believe. They are all different types of unbelief, and these people are not Jesus' sheep. And lastly, what was sown on good soil means hearing the word by the grace of the Holy Spirit and bearing fruit. This is the image of God's chosen people. So, in Jesus' parable, there are four types of land, but they are the bad land, and the good land. It is to establish and expand the kingdom of God on the good land.

- But if you look at the example of this bad land, don't you see us too? Are there times when we too follow Satan's false temptations and live without the Word? Sometimes we abandon the Word due to various sufferings and trials, and sometimes we live our lives blocking the Word because of worldly worries, temptations, and greed. So, isn't there a time when our faith is shaken? However, we do not completely abandon our faith or forsake Christ. Rather, through these processes, God reveals our weakness, allows us to hold on to the grace of Jesus more, and refines our faith to become like gold so that we may bear fruit and grow. And again, the seed sown by the roadside, on rocky ground, and among thorns does not bear fruit, it is not because there is a problem with the seed or the person who

sows it. In other words, there is nothing wrong with Jesus and the gospel of the kingdom. Rather, Jesus accomplishes God's will, and God's will is done.

- Isa.55:11, "so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."

- Jesus is now preaching the gospel through the church and carrying out the work of salvation and judgment. That is why we, too, must faithfully preach the gospel. If we faithfully preach the gospel, there will be no failure. It does not mean worldly success. It means that even though no one listens or believes, it is not a failure. Rather, if you do not preach the gospel faithfully, even if you succeed in the world, that is a failure.

- The parable of the sower in today's text reveals the salvation accomplished by Jesus. Through the gospel ministry of Jesus, the sower, a new era of fruit-bearing 30, 60, and 100 times has begun. The time when Jesus sowed the seed to bear much fruit, and the time of the last harvest, when the Holy Spirit reaped the fruit, has begun. Lastly, we can see the parable of today's text again like this.

- Jn.12:24, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."

- Jesus is the seed that fell on good soil. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, He first became the first fruit and bears many fruits in Him, and those fruits are His people whom Jesus saved. We are the fruits that Jesus bore. Until the day when Jesus comes again, He will save all His chosen people, bearing fruit, 30, 60, and 100 times, and complete the kingdom of heaven. And he does all this through the gospel. Those harvested fruits have entered heaven.

- Rev.14:3-5, "and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. 4 It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb, 5 and in their mouth, no lie was found, for they are blameless."

- Dear saints, therefore, the parable of Jesus in today's text is the gospel of the kingdom. Even now, Jesus has called you and me to sow the seed of the gospel and to bear fruit 30, 60, and 100 times. Therefore, we must faithfully preach the gospel. I pray that God will not let our faith be shaken by Satan's lies, sufferings, trials, worldly worries, temptations, and greed. I hope that there will not be a moment when the gospel is not heard. I hope that we will hear the gospel, understand it in our hearts, turn away from our sins, enjoy the grace of salvation, and witness the gospel of salvation that we enjoy.