

Mark: The Mysterious Messiah

Week 8: Mark 4:21-34

Introductory Exercise. What phrases from our Sunday morning worship songs are most memorable?

In the last couple weeks, Jesus has used parables mainly to give shape to his own ministry. As a matter of review, what do the parables of the strong man and of the sower say about the character of Jesus's mission?

When Jesus talks about an oil lamp, what function of the lamp is central, and what verbs does he use to relate it to larger realities? When he tells his followers to be careful about hearing, what phrase from weekly synagogue life is he invoking? (Hint: it's in Deuteronomy 4:6.) What measure does the regular call to synagogue worship set up for the faithful worshiper, and what has been "given" to those who recite that call to worship?

When Jesus compares the kingdom to seed (as he's already compared the word to seed), what reality of his own ministry is he illuminating? What temptation of his followers does he seem to be anticipating?

Just to guard against weird translations, how does your translation render Mark 4:31? What function does the mustard bush perform in this parable, and what about the Kingdom does the comparison illustrate? Why does Jesus go for a bush rather than for a mighty tree?

In the epilogue to this collection of parables in 4:33-34, what does the narrator of Mark note with care? Why do these points remain important in the course of the book?