



Rockbridge Church Small Groups Lesson 4

Mark 4 – Real Jesus (Read Mark 4)

Introduction to the Parables:

In Mark's gospel we find this statement of Jesus: "How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it?" (Mark 4:30) Through the use of parables, Jesus tells the crowds what the kingdom of God is like. He often explains parables in further detail to His disciples, because their hearts were receptive. Through these parables Jesus' disciples are to examine their own lives in light of the kingdom of Christ, and bring them into conformity to kingdom standards.

"A parable is a fictitious story, true to life, designed to teach one specific truth about the kingdom of God." They are usually designed to solve problems, or answer a question. Parables help us live more faithfully as kingdom citizens, and more fruitfully as kingdom ambassadors.

Questions:

1. What do you see in Mark 4 that helps you know what Jesus is like?
2. In what ways do you see Jesus hard at work, on a mission, with a purpose, loving people?
3. What one thing about Jesus stands out to you in this chapter? (What about Jesus astonishes you, amazes you, challenges you or comforts you?)
4. In Mark 4, who encounters Jesus, and how do they respond to Him?
5. How are you responding to the Jesus you encountered in Mark 4?
6. What was most instructive, and what did you appreciate most from Sunday's sermon?

Check out the additional notes on The Kingdom of God on the next page.

The Kingdom of God

*And Jesus was saying to them,
"To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God." (Mark 4:11)*

What is the kingdom of God? Is it the church, or something different? Is my belonging and allegiance to the kingdom or to the church, or to both? The following points should help you get a better grasp on the kingdom of God.

- God's kingdom is a realm (a place, region, sphere or jurisdiction) with subjects over which a King rules
- The kingdom of God is His dynamic and living presence and purpose and reign in our world and in our lives
- God has always been King – the Sovereign One, the Ruler over all (*Psalms 103:19*)
- Satan attempted to usurp God's reign; failing, he established a counter kingdom of darkness and deceit, then lured man into his kingdom to live under his hateful rule
- God's kingdom agenda throughout history is to rescue people for Himself and to reclaim (or restore) His kingdom reign over all
- Jesus Christ is the center of God's kingdom plan
- At His first coming Jesus gave His life to rescue people– for God *"rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins"* (*Colossians 1:13-14*)
- At His second coming He will make all things new and restore God's kingdom reign *"from then on and forevermore"* (*Revelation 21:5; Isaiah 9:6-7*). This is when *"the kingdom of this world will become the kingdom of our LORD and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever"* (*Revelation 11:15*). This literal, tangible kingdom will exist on and in the New Heaven and New Earth.
- Today Jesus rules in the lives of people who claim Him as their King and Lord. He reigns in marriages where He is given the first and central place, and He reigns over the church as its One Head and Lord. The kingdom of God is a present reality carried forward by kingdom minded people living under Jesus' authority and rule.
- The church is a vital part of the kingdom of God, but the kingdom is larger than the church (see *Acts 1:1-3 and Acts 28:30-31*)
- The kingdom of God right now is alive and growing and spreading into a mighty dimension that will one day be the home of all living things (*Luke 13:18-19; Philippians 2:9-11*)