

Call to Obedience #289
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
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“...HE KNOWETH NOT HOW.”

By Pastor Reimar Schultze

“And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come” —Mark 4:26–29

This parable is about the kingdom. Verse 26 says, *“So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground...”* It talks about things growing, and it says of the man sowing the seed, *“...he knoweth not how”* it grows. To make it more precise, we don't know how the kingdom of God works any more than the sower knows the method, the process or the means as to how a seed, though unattended by man, can become a stalk of wheat or corn, or an apple tree, or a tomato plant. In another passage, the kingdom of God is compared to a grain of mustard seed. In other places, it is compared to leaven, to a treasure hid in a field, to a merchant seeking pearls, to a net catching fish, to ten virgins, and so forth.

My friend, Jesus came to establish the kingdom of God, a kingdom so great and multi-faceted that you can take practically anything in nature or in human affairs and make a parable of it.

Now, Matthew records by far the most parables about the kingdom of God. But in Mark's whole gospel, we have only two, both of which are found in this chapter: the Parable of the Sower and the Parable of the Mustard Seed.

This kingdom of God parable about the sower going forth to sow and not knowing how the seed grows must not be confused with the Parable of the Wheat and Tares from the gospel of Matthew. In the parable of the wheat and tares, Jesus stresses an entirely different point, and that is, we need to be very careful in judging people because we don't always know whether somebody is going to be wheat or a tare, or whether somebody is going to be a real Christian—all for God—or if somebody is putting on a show. So, we are told to leave the judgment up to God.

In *this* parable, however, the focus is on, *“he knoweth not how.”* It is a focus on the mystery of the kingdom of God which shall never be fully understood in this life. But, although it will not be understood now, the growth of the kingdom of God can certainly be observed: as observable as the seed bringing forth a blade, as the blade turning into a stalk, getting taller and stronger, as a stalk forming an ear, and then, as an ear being filled with corn so no one, *no one*, can doubt the reality, the marvel of the growth of wheat. And so no one can doubt the reality of the growth of the kingdom of God. Just as there are hidden forces at work in nature to produce growth to the point of reproduction, there

are hidden forces at work in the kingdom of God that cause it to ever expand.

One of the points of the parable is this: you don't have to understand before you believe. You don't have to understand how in *one* seed you can have the species of the plant written in that seed, and not only the species but the particular stalk of corn that grows up, how tall it will be, how strong it will be, at what point the leaves will come out of the stalk and at what angle. All of this is written in that little seed. How much fruit it will bring forth is also written in that seed and what that fruit will taste like. Oh, my friend, we have to recognize that of most everything we see, although we don't understand much about it, we certainly see it working.

We don't understand electricity. Even the greatest of scientists can talk about electricity and make certain observations, but he really does not understand how it works. Yet, our children at two or three years of age can turn on the light switch. Although they can't explain anything at all about electricity, they see it works, and they can make it work. The child "knoweth not how," but he or she sees the reality and the power of it.

I lived in Alaska for a couple of years, and along the coast line of that state there are salmon streams. My wife and I would go to a mountain stream and watch how the salmon would come up from the ocean and jump up these rocky streams. We watched as they spent most of the time out of the water, just trying to get in another jump, endeavoring to rise a few inches higher by jumping over another rock, and then further and further up with great effort. We observed them jumping like this until they finally came to a quiet little pool of water—totally exhausted. There, the salmon would lay its eggs, depart a ways away, and die. Then, my friend, when those eggs hatch, the fry work their way to the ocean where the salmon grows up. Then he'll come back. Oh, there are so many little streams coming off the glacial mountains in Alaska, but that salmon knows exactly which one to pick. He knows exactly where his birthplace was, and so he makes his way up there, up the same stream, to lay eggs for the next generation. Well now, you explain *that* to me! I would say, "We know not how!"

I don't know how one chicken can run around free in the barnyard, and eat grubs and worms and seeds and bugs and spiders and make an egg out of that; and how another chicken can be in a chicken hatchery, in a little cage, and only eat corn and can make an egg out of that, too. Tell me how! Oh, friend, what a parable we have!

The kingdom of God is as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up—he knoweth not how. How true it is in nature, and how true it is of the kingdom of God! While the man who sowed the seed sleeps and rises each day and night and goes about all kinds of business, that little seed grows up and eventually has a full ear of corn in it, and "*he knoweth not how.*" That is, there's something within that seed as it's placed into the earth, some power that makes it all happen of itself.

All of this reminds me of a great gospel song that goes like this, "I know not why God's wondrous grace to me He hath made known, Nor why, unworthy, Christ in love redeemed me for His own. But I know whom I have believed..." (*I Know Not Why God's Wondrous Grace* by Daniel W. Whittle, Hymns of Faith and Life, The Wesley Press,

Marion, Indiana, hymn 395)

I was saved in England at age sixteen. For a full year after returning to Hamburg, Germany, my home town, I did not meet one single Christian there to help me, to instruct me, or to invite me to church. But one year after conversion, saturated with reading the Word of God, believing the Word and praying, a young man named Helmut came to my door, saying “I just came from Copenhagen, and I heard that you’ve found the Lord Jesus. I want to invite you to my church.” As he looked at me a year after my conversion, although I’d been all by myself as a young Christian, he saw in me a seed that had brought forth a blade, and a stalk progressing upwards. And “*he knoweth not how.*”

Dear friend, there’s such a power in the gospel of the Lord Jesus and the Word of God! As the kingdom of God is being sown in our lives, it is indeed like a grain of wheat that gives forth a blade, and then a stalk, and then an ear, and then the full ear with the corn in it. Hallelujah!

There’s a beautiful passage in the second chapter of Acts, where it speaks of devout Jews having come from all over the world to Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost (2:5). It says, “*And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.*” The passage lists the lands of the Parthians, Medes and Elamites, Mesopotamia and Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia—all these different countries spread from Greece to Babylon. And on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit began to come into their lives, the seed of the kingdom of God was being sown in their hearts. Because they were all devout men, they were all good soil. Brother and sister, if you put the good seed of God together with good soil, there will be an explosion in the heart of man, and the kingdom of God will begin to grow in those hearts.

Next, follow these people as they went back home—one went to this village, another to that village, another one or two went to another place, to an island or a country home. Now, return to those same villages later and observe these people in all their different countries, and what do you see? You would see that, in many cases, not only a blade had sprung up in their lives, but indeed, you could see now the full corn in a year. And in some places, there had been multiplication. So, years later, when the apostle Paul went to some of these places where there had been only one Christian, now there were thirty or sixty or a hundred more. Indeed, such is the kingdom of God!

Now, we must go a little deeper with this parable and observe the last verse because it tells us that this parable is not primarily about the growth of the kingdom of God in the heart of a person. Rather, it is primarily about the growth of the Church from its tiny beginning when a Seed (Jesus) was placed into the womb of Mary, the virgin; and how, since that time, that Seed has produced a blade, the blade has produced an ear, and that ear has then produced full corn. We then view how the seeds of that corn were scattered abroad over all the world through the apostles and disciples. And now, at the end of the age, when harvest time comes, there will be a world-wide harvest. The angel of God will put in a sickle and bring in the harvest, and the Lord Jesus Christ will come through the sky to take his children home into his everlasting habitation in the throne of God, and the wicked will be cast into outer darkness. When it comes right down to it, this is really a

parable about the growth of the kingdom throughout the age of the Church, from the Seed that was placed in Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit all the way until the great Holy Ghost awakening in the end of time.

My friend, there are all kinds of trouble in the world: there are wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, pestilence and famine, and various disturbances that trouble many a heart; but through this little parable, the Christian is assured that when all is said and done, that little Seed that was sown by the Holy Ghost 2000 years ago will bring forth a harvest of abundance. No matter what happens in this world, Jesus' kingdom will triumph, and Jesus will have the last word. To him be all the praise, honor and glory. Amen!

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