

# Mark 4

by Norman Meeten

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*The mystery of the kingdom of God is given to those who are willing to receive it, but it is hidden from those who are not.*

**Duration:** 1:18:57

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Mark 4:3-15

**Topics:** "Gospel"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of doing one's homework in studying the word of God. He emphasizes that relying solely on preachers for spiritual nourishment can lead to spiritual malnutrition. The speaker refers to the parable of the sower in Mark's Gospel, specifically focusing on the first condition of the soil, which is the wayside. He explains that when the word of God falls on the wayside, Satan immediately comes and takes it away. The speaker encourages the audience to diligently study the Bible and apply themselves to understanding its teachings.

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## Transcript

There's only one piece of homework being set in the course of this conference so far. You were exhorted, if you were taking notes, to note it down and do it. Have you done it? Some people look rather blank and are wondering what it was that they were supposed to have done.

My boys sometimes come home like that from school, having forgotten their notebook and they have to ring up some friend to find out what it is that they're supposed to have done or what they're supposed to be doing ere they make an appearance the next day. Have you done your homework? You may think that we as speakers liaise with one another. We don't.

We have no idea what the other is going to speak about, but it's amazing how God, in that great and glorious way, mixes our hearts together and by that one Great Spirit leads us along lines of truth and revelation that all seem to weave and blend together and serve to enhance one thing after another. Your homework was Mark chapter 4, and in verse 11 it says, unto you are given to know the mysteries, the mystery of the kingdom of God. But unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables, that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted and their sins should be forgiven them.

And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? And how then will ye know all the parables? And the great preceding parable is the parable of the sower. In fact, it falls on either side of those verses that we've just read. First of all, there is the telling of the parable, and then there is the enlargement upon it by the Lord Jesus to his more intimate company of disciples.

But if you've done your homework well, you didn't stop at the reading of the parable of the sower, but you went on and discovered that in this same chapter there are two other parables also related to seed. They relate to the mystery, they relate to seed, they relate to revelation, they relate to crucifixion, they relate to resurrection. It's all interwoven together, and one of the commonest of illustrations that Jesus never tired in taking up was his very simple illustration of the seed and its behaviour and development.

And gross! Unto fruitfulness! If you were to read the parallel passage to this one in Mark chapter 4, which you would find in Matthew 11, you will find that there is inserted yet another parable, and dear Edgar, in his preaching this morning, even brought that in for us. I said, thank you Lord! That was the parable of the man who went to sleep at night, and having sowed, and you know how a wicked man came and sowed hairs amongst the seed. That's the one which is missing in Mark.

It's sometimes good to do comparative reading, and if you do that, beloved, you will find that God will always enlarge. That's one of the purposes of four glorious Gospels. And why? If you find something repeated in one after another, it's not just because there is what is known as a synoptic pattern, but because God, by the spirit of revelation, and because of the great spirit of repetition, is wanting to make an impact upon the hearts of men and women when they apply themselves to this lovely book, and thoroughly study it, and do their homework.

I want to tell you, beloved, if you don't do your homework, if you merely depend upon what preachers can give to you, sooner or later you will suffer from malnutrition spiritually. Hallelujah! Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God, and that in itself, beloved, is a tremendous thing, and has many elements that rise out of the pages of the New Testament. For instance, in the second letter of the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians, and in the second chapter we read of the mystery of iniquity that already works.

John puts it in slightly different words in his first epistle, where he talks about the Antichrist, and he says the Antichrist is already at work. The mystery of iniquity is working. That's the great mystery of sin.

And then, if you turn over into the first epistle of Paul to Timothy, and in chapter 3 and verse 16, you will read of the mystery of godliness, which is the great antithesis to the mystery of iniquity. The mystery of godliness. That works as impeccably and as automatically and as gloriously, beloved, as formerly the mystery of iniquity worked in the hearts and lives of men and women.

Paul puts the mystery of iniquity in a slightly different way in writing to the Ephesians, where he talks about the prince of the power of the air working in the children of disobedience. And, of course, he was writing out of the deep experience of his own life. He knew, he'd known that mystery, that inexplicable operation of iniquity, of sin, its law, the terrible inevitability of it operating within his own being.

That's what made him cry, beloved, and inscribed in the Roman epistle, the good things that I want to do, I don't do, and the things that I hope myself are doing, I do. By that time he understood what it was all about. And that tremendous definition in Ephesians 2, beloved, is the explanation as to why men and women live and behave, act and react as they do.

It's a working of a mystery, iniquity, a law called sin, that has an inevitability about it all the time it is present within, until it is dealt with and overcome by the great mystery of godliness. Hallelujah! And then, if we move into the fifth chapter of the Ephesian epistle, we come to another aspect of the mystery, the end of that great exposition on marriage, and how marvelous that is. And it enables us to prove, beloved, that the mystery of godliness has become operative in a man's life.

It will be and be outworking in the context of a relationship, beloved, that is supposed to be the acme of love. The context in which that great mystery should work most perfectly. Where the exhortation comes to men again and again that they should be even as Christ to their wives.

That's a tremendous challenge to any man. And when a man lives like that, beloved, and that great mystery of godliness is really operating within the depth of his being, then in that context, beloved, it will find its outworking. Glory to his name! That's the answer, beloved, to every marriage that's going to work according to the will of God.

The mystery of godliness pulsating in the heart, within the depth of the being of a man, that enables him, beloved, to be as Jesus to his wife, and then to his family, and then beyond that realm, beloved. Glory to his name! And ultimately, Paul comes right down and he says, this is a great mystery. I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Hallelujah! And then he goes, he finds and quotes that lovely definition of the mystery. I suppose the embodiment of it all. From Colossians chapter 1 and verse 27, this is the mystery, hidden from ages and generations, Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Hallelujah! And that's why when our brother spoke of the great mystery and its relationship to the resurrection last night, the calm and glory and wonder of it all, operating within one's being, bringing you into a dimension of living, beloved, that is consistent with the testimony of Jesus as it manifested in the great gospel record, realizing that men and women down here on the earth, when that mystery becomes an unveiled secret into the depths of your being by the revelation of God's Spirit. And that was the testimony of the apostle. He said, it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by His grace to reveal His family in me.

That was the mystery. That was the dispelling of that great revelation of the person of Jesus into the depths of his being. And suddenly he had disposed to him all the fullness of the Godhead, bodily walking on the inside of him.

No longer just a historical figure. No longer a sequence of events spanning time from the incarnation to the ascension and glorification of Jesus. But the realization of those great historical truths worked out in the person of Jesus, and reproduced in the individual life and within the corporate body of Christ by the operation of the Holy Ghost.

That's the mystery. And, of course, there are larger lengths and breadths and depths and heights of its wonder. Praise the name of the Lord.

He said, it's given unto you to know the mystery. In another place, beloved, in Luke's gospel, he said, I've hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto thee, for so it seemed good in my sight. If you'll but obey, beloved, and feel that you're just beginning in a conference like this.

May God cease to reveal these great truths and unfold the great mystery of His own life to every one of us without exception. I love that. I sometimes get a bit exercised in my heart, wondering whether we're going above to the place where men and women are.

But when you come to a great theme like this, and themes which have been touched upon in these days, glory to your name, His name, you suddenly realize, beloved, it's for the faint. Not only for the faint, but for the young people and the youth. Glory even unto full maturity and stature of godly men and women.

Hallelujah. And in these great stories of Jesus, beloved, the mystery of God in all its fullness gets unfolded to our hearts. In the first great parable, beloved, the main attention is placed upon the condition of the soil in which the seed, which Jesus tells us is the word of God, is to be planted.

That soil, beloved, the human heart that has formerly been the venue, an area where the Prince of Iniquity has worked, and where the mystery of iniquity, beloved, has inevitably operated, has to be wrought upon by the word of God and the Spirit of the Lord before it is in a fit condition to receive the seed of God. Amen. And that's the first thing that I want us to look at tonight.

I want us to look into the early verses of this fourth chapter of Mark's Gospel. And there are four types of soil, four conditions that Jesus enlarges to our understanding. Verse three, hearken.

Behold, there went out a sower to sow, and it came to pass, as he showed, some fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air divided up. If you go down into verse 15, Jesus enlarging upon that, he says, These are they by the wayside where the word is shown. But when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately and taketh away the word that was shown in their hearts.

Here's the first state and condition which Jesus points out to us. The wayside, where the word of God is shown, where it falls, and no sooner has it fallen upon the ground, Satan comes and snatches it away. The wayside, beloved, is hard and rocky.

Even in countries, beloved, where they don't have tarmac and roads, the road becomes hard and rocky. And that is the state and condition of a human heart, a state under which the word of God often comes. And because it is so hard, and because it is so rocky, it has no ability to find entrance into the soil.

And therefore the wicked one comes and snatches it away. And that can happen, beloved, even in a conference like this. Men and women can come into a gathering like this.

They can listen to the word of God. They can mentally attend to the preaching. But if the state and condition of their heart, beloved, is still hard and unworked upon by the Spirit of God, ere they get from this place, beloved, that wicked one will come and snatch away that tree.

Jeremiah talks about breaking up the fallow ground. Ezekiel speaks in a more specific way when he's making reference to the state and the condition of the human heart, that heart which Jeremiah defines as deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? There is God's definition, beloved, of a heart outside of Christ.

And then Ezekiel takes up the great theme and he says that God will come and take away that stony heart. Praise God. And in its place he will give us a heart of flesh, and he will give us a new spirit, and into that new spirit he will plant his spirit.

And as the word of God falls into that condition, there will be response to it, and an inevitable ability, beloved, to obey it. It doesn't say you might do or you will do if you'd like to, but he says you will. Glory to his name.

But there's the initial state that the word of God encounters. And there are many people, beloved, to whom the word of God comes. There are many to whom you and I will minister.

And it's like hitting your head against a brick wall, and it's a very sad, a very pathetic position to find oneself in. The second condition is described in verse five. It says, Sun fell on stony ground, and it had not much earth, and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth.

And when the sun was up, it was scorched, and because it had no root, it withered away. Verse 16, These are they likewise, which are shown on stony ground. But when they have heard the word immediately, they receive it with gladness, and have no roots in themselves, and so endure but for a time.

Afterward, when affliction or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they are offended. The second stating condition, beloved, is described, Ground, in which there is no depth, and as a result of there being no depth, there is no root, no depth. You and I are going to receive the word of God, and know the working of its mysterious activity, within our own being, and the impact, and the outworking of that word, that seed of God, through the totality of our life, beloved.

God has to get hold of you and me, and handle us, and deal with us at depth. Many people, beloved, are quite happy for a superficial imposition of the word of God in the form of blessing, in the form of encouragement, in the form of answer to prayer in a multitude of other things. And God does this.

God does heal. God does deliver. God does answer prayer.

Hallelujah, that's His mercy. That's the disposition of His heart. He can't help but give, and give, and give.

You see that illustrated in the gospel record of time and time again, beloved, when men came to Him with ulterior motives in their hearts. For instance, there were ten lepers who came to Him, were told that He healed all ten of them. Only one came back to give glory to God.

Praise God, He didn't condition His activity, beloved, by what He found in the hearts of men and women. The love of God wasn't regulated by what was out there or the response that would come back as a result of what He was doing. We see again, I suppose, the classic record which appears in all four gospels, the feeding of the five thousand.

They were all fed, beloved. They were all filled. They were all had as much as they would.

That's how the great record of the parable ends. They were all full. They all had as much as they would.

There were twelve baskets over. Amen. But when it came to the crux and when it came to the core of the great issue, when Jesus explained what it was all about and the significance of what that great word was, beloved, that had found a measure of essence, they received the bread.

Remember, Jesus said, I'm that bread. But when He told them what it was all about, beloved, and when He explained to them that He was wanting to get into the depths of their being and that He was wanting to work Himself out through the totality of their life, what did they do? They quit. They said, this is a hard thing.

this offends us. And they left because they weren't prepared, to God, to deal with them and minister to them at death. Praise God.

The first reference to the work of the Spirit of God in the Scripture is right back in the book of Genesis in chapter one at the time of the creation where it says that there was darkness over the deep and the Spirit of God moved. And when Jesus is referred to, beloved, as the Word of God, He's described as that great store of the Spirit that divides between soul and spirit, that discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart and declares that we're all naked and open before Him with whom we have to do. Beloved, I want to tell you that when the store of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, is given liberty to work in the heart and life of a man or a woman, He will divide between soul and spirit.

He will penetrate to a depth, beloved, that no human being can ever reach and discover the foundations of your nature and the depths of your being, beloved, in a way that no one else can. That's why the woman who met Him at the well cried, the well is deep! She was describing the inward state and disposition of her own life, the unpalatable depths of her own personality, beloved, which were an enigma to her. She tried this, she tried that, she's gone here, she's gone there and never found an answer to that which constantly erupted from deep within.

And I talk to many people and anyone, beloved, who finds himself in a ministerial position will sooner or later discover as he deals with this one and that one that the majority of people, beloved, can't tell you where it comes from or where it began. It goes too far back, it's too deeply embedded and entrenched in their personality and God was psychiatrist, God was psychoanalyst, beloved, He cannot help you. You can only get there so far and no further.

In fact, just before I came away I had a gentleman on the phone to me with a request from a leading psychologist and psychiatrist in the district in where we live confronted with a problem, beloved, for which he has no answer. And I want to tell you that some of the leading men in this sphere, beloved, those who have elements of honesty within their being are constantly being confronted with the fact that they've got no real answer. They can alleviate, they can make life bearable, they can drug it down, they can shock it away back, beloved, so that it doesn't resurrect, but it only lasts for about four years and then law comes up again and again.

That's why when you come into the New Testament, beloved, God doesn't cover anything up. I know that it occurs in the epistle of John, beloved, that love covers a multitude of sin, but I want to tell you that when the love of God comes in the power of the Holy Ghost and is allowed access and entrance right deep down into the depths of human heart, beloved, it doesn't cover up, it brings it all up. Amen.

Not to shout about it to anyone else, beloved, God didn't shout the condition and state of that woman he met at the well to anyone else, beloved, he devoted it to her own heart and when she went back home she said, I found a man who told me all things that I ever did. He's not the Christ, praise God. She was made another vessel, beloved, the vessel that she carried on the head, the symbol of her old life and her old sins.

She left it behind. There is a penetration of the Word of God in the person of Jesus into the depths of our being, beloved. There it is then.

God doesn't want just to skim over the surface of our life, beloved, and deal with the superficiality and symptoms of our problems. He's come to plumb the depths. What did Jesus say in another parable? You'll

find it in Luke's Gospel chapter six at the end.

Lots of us think it's a Sunday school story where he talks about a wise man and a foolish man. And the wise, the foolish man, beloved, you know how the story goes. Built his house upon the sand.

The wind came, the rain came, the floods rose, beat vehemently on that house and it fell and great was the fall of it. But the wise man, it says this in Luke's record, the wise man digged deep. Oh, praise God, he digged deep.

Beloved, I want to ask you tonight, are you prepared to allow God to dig deep? There are many people, beloved, and it happens again and again. They get so far. They get blessed.

They get their problems alleviated and they go on for a little while and then they collapse again. And it all rises up again. Trees that fall into that ground, beloved, have no root in themselves.

No root, no depth. We'll never know the working of the mystery. We will never unfold, nor the unfolding of the great secret and all its repercussions that is going to integrate it into the fullness of God's purposes and plans, beloved, for His church and for the world unless we're prepared to allow Him to go deep.

Let the word come as a hammer, beloved, and break the stony hard hearts. Let the word come as a sword and penetrate the depths of our being, beloved, and create a condition in which God can work in a way that's consistent with His own nature and thrills His own heart. And then it speaks of a third type of ground.

It says, and some, verse 7, and some fell among thorns and the thorns grew up and choked it and it yielded no fruit. Verse 19, no, verse 18, and these are they which are sown among thorns such as hear the word and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and the lust of other things entering in choke the word and it become unfruitful. Another sort of soil that seed is planted, the ground is thorny, unweeded, unprepared, and the weeds grow up.

Jesus refers to them as the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and the lust of other things that contend with and contest the supremacy of God's word and the life of God's son in the hearts and minds and men and women. And thus sought an abortion and this sought and prevent the development of that glorious word of God sown in the heart and ultimately prevent it from bringing forth any fruit. There's only one way in which to deal with all of those things which contest the word of God and usurp the place of the seed of God and that's again that seed called sin.

And you do know that the law, in nature is only the natural illustration of the same great law that's operative in the spirit and that the seed called sin that is the inheritance of every single man and woman born upon the face of the earth all the time it remains and works as the mystery of iniquity in the depths of your being usurping the place of the word of God and manifesting itself, beloved. As sin cares of this world deceitfulness of riches and lust for other things only another way of change talking about the manifestation of sin. You know that all the time that that seed remains, beloved, there will be an inevitable outcropping and a fruitfulness called sin or the work to the flesh.

And there's only one solution and praise God He's provided a solution and He calls the greatest of the prophets, beloved, to declare it in relationship with the coming of Jesus when He spoke of Him who would lay the axe to the root of the tree. Hallelujah. Now, pick off the fruit, beloved, not deal with the symptoms, not pluck a little from here and a little from there, but go right to the root of the problem and lay the axe to it, beloved, and bring a cessation to its growth and its development and its outcropping.

Radical, isn't it? That's why when Jesus was crucified, beloved, He was hanged upon a tree. And that's why God chopped Him down and cut Him off. That's another great truth that rises up through all of this glorious truth, beloved, intertwined.

Glory to His name. We call it the doctrine of the circumcision that by the Spirit is applied to the heart and the apathy of that doctrine, beloved, found it out working at Calvary when Jesus was cut off out of the land of the living. When we talk about cutting people off from their background, cutting people off from their involvement, cutting people off from their inheritance, cutting people off from the powers and activities of Satan, beloved, that's the language.

That's where it comes from. It's a great lucifer operation, the surgery of the Divine. Oh, the Divine Father sending the sun, to lay the axe to the root of the trees, all those weeds, beloved, that extol and prevent the Word of God from springing up and bringing forth fruit in your life.

Praise God! That hard highway, beloved, has to be broken up by the hammer of God's Word. Jeremiah talks about it. Those deeps of human hearts, beloved, have to be plunged by the Word of God described as a sword that will go right down into the depths of your being.

Those weeds that grow up to prevent and hinder the Word of God from coming forth unto fruitfulness, beloved, have to know the axe, the axe of God's Word coming to the root of the egg and bringing an end to it. One of the things that I love about this glorious book, and all that God portrays to me in Jesus as He unfolds the mystery is the radical intervention of God. There's nothing sentimental, there's nothing half-baked, beloved, there's nothing partial about this great book that's found its fulfillment at Calvary.

It's radical, it's lethal, yet it's not, beloved, it's unsatisfactory. Sometimes we're obliged to present it in that way. Glory to His name.

You've known the hammer of God's Word, beloved, breaking up and destroying the old stony heart disposition. Do you know the plunging of God's Word by the Spirit into the depths of your being, beloved, discovering the foundations of your relations, dividing between soul and spirit, exposing all the thoughts and intents of your heart? Have you known, the acts of God's Word coming, laying itself at the very root and the beginnings of issues in your life, beloved? There is a thorough clearing of the ground and a preparation of the state of your heart and my heart to receive not just upon the surface, not just under all the superficial layers, but into the very depths of my being, devoid of all antibodies. Glory to His name, so that that Word of God can bring up.

And that brings us to the fourth great condition that God points out to us, and that's the good ground. Amen. And it says in verse 8, And another fell on good ground, and it yielded fruit, and sprang up, and increased, and brought forth some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred.

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. Verse 20, And these are they which are sown on good ground, such as hear the Word of God and receive it and bring forth fruit some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred. Glory be to God.

And if you were to read Luke, the count of his same glorious parable, beloved, you would find that he omits the thirtyfold and the sixtyfold and only speaks of the hundredfold. Amazing. Good seed, which is the Word of God in the good ground.

Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. And when the Word of God gets mixed with faith in your heart and my heart, you tell me, what is there to stop us believing for a hundredfold? Glory to His name. Jesus, the Word of God, beloved, is the good seed in your heart wrought upon by the Word of God, bringing the effects and benefits of Calvary to bear upon your life at depth.

Glory to His name, removing all that will interrupt the process of God's plan in your life and create a condition, beloved, whereby faith can rise to enable you to impress what God says. Amen. And believe Him for a hundredfold.

Amen. That's what God wants. We read in John, chapter fifteen, beloved, that the vine will bring forth fruit.

And we're also told that the vine will bring forth much fruit. And we're also told that the vine will bring forth more fruit. Amen.

Not just fruit, not just much fruit, but more fruit. Glory to His name. And I believe that that's one of the reasons why God gathers together in conferences like this, beloved, to work upon us in His faithfulness and love, to plant deep within us seeds that is good with an expectation in His heart that we're going to be a fruitful company of men and women.

What's the use, beloved, of listening to the Word of God if we don't mix it with faith and act upon it with expectation and belief that as we move out bearing it, beloved, this precious seed within our own hearts, believing that God is going to fulfil His own worth. Amen. And bring it to pass in our life.

Find it again. Define for us in John, chapter twelve, where he talks about a corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying. Praise God.

He said if it dies it will bring forth much fruit. Jesus was talking of Himself, beloved. He fell into the ground and died.

Isn't that wonderful? And you're part of the fruit of that dying because we wouldn't be here, beloved, if He hadn't fallen into the ground and died. And the great principle that applied under Him, beloved, by the operation of God's Word in your life and my life applies in us. Amen.

And there's a guarantee of God behind His own Word, beloved. God doesn't make superficial statements. God doesn't make live utterances.

God doesn't make promises that He's not prepared to substantiate, beloved, and bring to fulfilment. And if we will lay hold upon those, beloved, and endure, praise God, we will see the outworking of what God says. And even if we don't, we don't live to see the outworking of it all, God will still fulfil His Word and keep His promise.

I believe that the explanations of many great movements of God in the world in these days, beloved, is because people have gone before with hearts bearing the Word of God, falling down into the ground, and they die unheard of, unknown. Amen. And today, there is fruitfulness, God fulfilling His Word and keeping His promise.

I guess you need a lot of faith, beloved, to go to a place where you fall into the ground and die without notice, unheard of, unspoken of, never to be remembered again. There was a sense in which Abraham, beloved, never saw the real fulfilment of the promise. He saw some of the promises fulfilled under his own

experience, promises that God made to him for the full implications of all that that great promise meant, beloved, was only to find its fulfilment in later days.

Praise God. So there is the first great parable. That's why Jesus said if you don't understand this, beloved, you won't understand anything.

It's the mystery. The secret. It's either the mystery of iniquity, beloved, or it's the mystery of Christ manifesting itself in godliness, in resurrection life, and in church fulfilment and union.

Glory to His name. And it can only come to pass and be outworked in the hearts and minds of those who would submit themselves, beloved, to the Word of God in this radical form. Amen.

Our second parable begins in verse 26 and goes down to the end of verse 29. And Jesus 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. Do 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.

And when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he puteth in the sickle because the harvest is come. Amen. If the true word of God, beloved, had been planted in good soil in your heart, then God says it will grow.

Amen. It will grow. You don't know how, but God says it will grow.

If it is the good seed of God's Word and it's gone into good soil because you've allowed God to deal and prepare your heart to make it suitable condition to receive that good seed, once it is planted there, beloved, God says it will grow. Amen. That lovely scripture in Philippians, chapter one, is a tremendous word of encouragement, beloved, to any who have faith to read it and believe it.

He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it or perfect it unto the day of Jesus Christ. That's wonderful. If God has begun a good work in you, if God has planted the seed of His Word in you, beloved, in good soil, then what He hath planted, beloved, He will bring to perfection.

Amen. That's God's promise. That's the commitment of God's heart.

He says it will rise up night and day. The seed should spring and grow up. He knoweth not how.

You know, the problem with many people, beloved, is that they keep doing to their spiritual seed what they would never do to natural seeds. You plant seeds in the garden, beloved, the best thing to do is leave them alone. Because if you keep going and digging them up and examining them and looking as to how they're getting on, beloved, you won't have a chance.

You do that with natural seeds, that's your city dwellers, not country bumpkin like me. Amen. I do a little gardening even now.

Praise God, I go out and I look. After I've planted my seeds, I go out and I look. I go out every morning and look to see how they're getting on.

And I certainly don't poke around. I don't dig them up and talk to them and say, how are you getting on? I know that some people talk to their plants. Some people teach you, beloved, that if you talk to them and if you treat them nicely, they'll perform much better than if you rough handle them.

Whether that's true or not, I don't know. But I know, beloved, if I plant seeds in the garden, the best thing that I can do is leave it alone, apart from watering it. Amen.

If I dug the ground, put in all the necessary requirements, beloved, that are conducive to the reception of that seed, once I've planted it, I leave it alone. Amen. I believe that there are lots of hypersensitive people, who don't know how to leave the seed of God's Word alone.

And they're constantly going round in circles, and having spiritual traumas because they haven't believed that what God's done and what God has promised is sufficient, beloved, to bring them through unto perfection. I think one of the first sermons that I ever heard Mr. North preach, and that's a long time ago now, up in Liverpool. I think it was in the Criminal Mental Hospital.

That's where he found us. You don't believe that, do you? That's the first place where we met. We weren't patient.

One of the first things that I remember, and I've never forgotten it, I could almost tell you all the things that God has spoken to me powerfully and significantly over the years. I could tell you where they were said, and the area of my life where they became operative, and the sequel to those events in my own experience. Glory to His name.

Things that God has said to me, beloved, have formulated in the depth of my being, have throbbed, praised God, and come to fruition. Hallelujah. And I believe that there's yet a going on in many of those things.

I remember one of the first things he said. Do you know when he used to first come to us every time he preached to all of us? Without exception, we'd be out at the front of the meetings. Everyone, every meeting.

You couldn't keep us in our seats. Why? Because we were so desperate, we were so hungry, we were so ravenous for God's Word, beloved. We weren't going to lose anything.

We weren't going to fail to respond. We sometimes find it difficult to know how people remain seated on their seats, beloved, when God speaks with clarity, significantly, to constraints and conditions that are so obvious. There's God and there's no movement, there's no response, there's no reception to the Word of God.

It's amazing that everyone must have a holiday where they're constantly plucking it away. The other night there was that most remarkable prophecy related to deliverance and freedom and so on. You know, there was a soul left in the place, beloved, with a problem if they heard the Word.

It's a tremendous responsibility, beloved, to put yourself in a position where you're the subject to the ministry of God's Word. In John chapter 15, beloved, it says that after Jesus had come they were without excuse, beloved, they had no clout for their sin anymore. It's an awesome thing, to tell men and women that God has come and provided an answer for sin.

They're put in a position of moral responsibility before God's end. I remember one of that first words and it was this. It related to the first word.

He said, whatever God originally said to you that found lodgment in the depths of you, don't you ever move away from. He said, hold on to it, praise God. That word, beloved, that original beginning, that original seed of God's Word that found lodgment in the prepared churn of your heart and had meaning and significance, beloved, laying foundations, origins within the depths of your being that have explanations in the outworking of the mystery of God.

Don't let go of it. Don't let the devil lead you away from it. Don't start digging it around and examining it, looking at questions, wondering whether it is or whether it isn't.

Believe God. Amen. Get your life, beloved, firmly buried upon that great rock of Christ Jesus.

Let the devil rave. Let the devil rule. Let the devil shake, beloved.

Let the devil confess. Let the devil argue. If it's God's Word born in you by the Holy Ghost, then he must stand.

Amen. I wouldn't be here tonight if that wasn't true. It's an affront to God, to question.

That which you love without a shadow of doubt is the Word of God planted in the good soil of your life. You don't know how it's going to grow. You don't know how it's going to work out, but let it grow.

Amen. Let me ask you, beloved, do you know that it's time? Has God begun a good work in you tonight? I know there was a time when I came home from one of those meetings Oh, they were devastating meetings. Don't you find trips devastating, beloved? I've had ten of those early meetings and they were devastating.

You sometimes come out and you think, where am I? Have I begun or haven't I begun? Am I born again or am I not born again? Am I so? Oh! People were talking like that. They said, are we in their direction or are we not? Have we got the revelation or haven't we? Oh dear! I remember last year. Was it last year or the year before too? Lovely girls came up to the front and they said, we know that we're born again, we know that we've got pure heart but we've never been circumcised.

You see, they were hearing the gospel in another set of terminology, another form. You know, this book is a very wonderful book, beloved. It only has one thing to say.

Once it dawns on you, beloved, there's only one explanation to the mystery. There's only one answer, beloved. Once you get it on the inside of you there's an inevitability about it.

It's the alternative to the mystery of iniquity. Once you've got it, beloved, you know that there's only one thing to say. It's dressed up in all sorts of forms.

Praise God, when he's talking to the architects he'll talk about buildings. When he's talking to a guy in ecology he'll talk about birth. Amen.

When he's talking to the farmers he'll talk about seed. That's why in the country, beloved, he's talking to us about seed. You see, the whole of this book is written into nature.

That's why it's called Visual Art. Excuse if you will read it, it's the creation, beloved. It's a book.

Most people are blinded. That's it, old people, because the mystery of God is being worked out in everything that God has ever touched. Once you've got eyes to see, then everything, everything begins to talk.

Absolutely everything begins to talk to you. Praise God. Take your Bible away, beloved, it won't let out what God's doing.

Glory to his name. I tell you, we used to come home from those meetings wondering where we were. And I remember once, once outside of Queens Road I had a little green mini God taught me a big lesson over that too.

First new car I'd ever owned. And a couple of days after I got it, a group of young people came to me and said, can we borrow your car? Go to London. My new car.

You know what I said? No, you can't. I knew the moment I said it, beloved, I'd said the wrong thing. But that's what I said.

Most of us learn our lessons the hard way. The day they left for London my car was stolen. And I knew why it would be stolen and the day they came back, beloved, my car was returned.

Miraculously. I'd never owned a car since then, beloved. Oh yes, I've been legally responsible for cars, beloved, but I've never owned a car anymore.

Amen. God taught me lessons. Hallelujah.

Through that green mini. And I can see that little green mini standing outside of the old wreck of a church which was opposite our derelict house. I don't know which was the biggest wreck.

I tell you, beloved, most of you would never have come to live with us in the early days. Amen. We didn't have three different meals a day.

Do you know what we had for the first six weeks of our lives together as a group? Same. Breakfast, dinner and tea. Tomato soup, lentils and onions.

Sometimes with hard-boiled eggs. It was some Egyptian concoction that a friend of ours discovered that you could cook all in one pot because we only had one pot and that was a bucket. We used to cook it on an open fire and our fuel was the ten layers of linoleum that former occupants had laid down on the cellar floor.

We hadn't got anything else. We didn't get three nice meals a day. Praise God.

Same dinner, breakfast, dinner and tea. Lots of people left us then. And now I can see that little green car outside and I bang my hand down on the roof and I said, Lord, I don't know where I am.

But one thing I know, you've begun a good work in me. Amen. And that settled all my doctrinal hang-ups and reservations and arguments whether I was or whether I wasn't.

One thing I knew, praise God, and that was, beloved, that God had begun an infallible work in the depths of my being. I recognized later, beloved, that it had started a long time before I ever appreciated what it was all about. And He'd known and followed me and once I got born again, the Spirit of God, beloved, I

knew the significance of events that had preceded that day with such clarity within my heart that I came to a point where I knew that God had begun.

And having begun, beloved, I had the great guarantee within my heart it would perpetuate. Amen. And then, Peter talked about receiving the end of your faith.

He was excited at the end, to see the end of your faith. Well, get a hold of the beginning. I'm the Alpha and the Omega.

I'm the beginning and the end. I'm the first and the last. Glory to His name.

The Christ, beloved, the living of God planted in the depths of your heart. You don't know how it grows. So, when it comes, beloved, embrace it with all your being and let it grow.

Let it look straight. Unfold. Stop questioning it.

Stop arguing about it. Stop digging it up, examining it, and looking at it and wondering whether it is or whether it isn't. But I believe what God's done.

Amen. Don't believe what you feel. That's the trouble with most people.

They're the victims of their feelings. They're victims of their environment. They're victims of what other people say.

They're the victims of the up-and-down of British weather, beloved. They're victims of their suffer. Amen.

They get up and up the cave. I often do. Amen.

That doesn't affect my relationship with God. That doesn't condition my behavior, my actions or my reactions. Glory to His name.

Don't lie down, beloved, under things that will attract me and contest me from without. I'm lost. I've got one on the inside of me, beloved, who's greater.

And once he's there, there's an inevitability, beloved, of his ongoing working. Glory to His name. Says it's going to grow.

Paul tells us to grow up, doesn't he? Anyone ever told you to grow up? My dad often told me to grow up. Especially if I was acting like a child. He said, son, for goodness sake, grow up.

Amen. God tells us to grow up. Hallelujah.

It doesn't all happen in a flash. You see, that's another thing. You come to a conference like this, and you think, oh, I should be at the pinnacle of it all.

Now I know that you can't telescope time, beloved, and you can overtake your elders and outstrip your contemporaries. If you've got a disposition, beloved, that will embrace the Word of God and obey it and do what He tells you to do, beloved, you can, oh, I tell you, you can move at a tremendous rate. But it's not an instant thing.

The imposition of God's Word, beloved, is instant. The encounter, the revolution, the very look in the faces of your being, beloved, is something that happens bad like that. Just as radically and really, beloved, as it happened that Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road was not in the same shape or form, not with the same evidences around, but it has to be as radical and as real and as significant as was his.

Glory to his name. But then he said, the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself. First the blade, then the ear, after that, the full corn in the ear.

Now, I'm not Peter says, grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. There is the instantaneous impact and impartation of the Word of God, beloved, but then there is growth, there is development, there is enlargement, there is increase.

Glory to his name. First that which is natural, then that which is spiritual. It's all in the same glorious context.

You'll find that again and again and again and increase. Amen. Don't think that you'll arrive there.

We live in a day, beloved, where everyone wants everything instant, instant, instant. Tea, coffee. They want religion in the same way.

God doesn't work like that. I've discovered, beloved, that God is neither in a hurry, nor is he late. That's wonderful.

I said to some folks in Liverpool the other day, if in order to get you where he wants you to be, that is God, beloved. beloved, it requires that you have a breakdown. May God allow you to have a breakdown.

Not that God wants you to have a breakdown, but he's not afraid of you having one. God's concern, beloved, is to bring us into that place where we ultimately will bring forth proof that he faithfully handles, deals with our lives. Wasn't that illustrated for us beautifully this morning in that whole great picture and figure of the potter? We saw that it can be a thing, beloved, that relates to our present state and condition.

We saw that it can be the progressive thing that goes on throughout our lives. Hallelujah. Amen.

And then it says in verse 29, and when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he put it in the sickle, because the harvest is come. Amen. You plant the seed, it grows.

First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear, unto fruit, and then in the sickle. Praise God. You say, does that stand the whole of life? Well, you can interpret it in that way if you like, beloved, but you will read about the great tree of life in the last book of the Bible, in fact in the last chapter, where it talks about the tree of life, which is the outcropping, beloved, of the seed of life.

Amen. And that tree brings forth fruit every month. Amen.

Isn't that lovely? Harvest every month. Praise God. There's not only going to be one harvest.

There is going to be a great harvest in that day. Glory to his name. But God's not just wanting one harvest off of your life, beloved.

It's every month. Of course, if you have a mathematical mind, beloved, it immediately goes into action when you say something like that. Praise God.

And you count out the people in this room and think, well, how many are there going to be in a month's time if they really believe what God says? If they've got the tree of life, beloved, and they're allowing it to develop and grow, and they're believing that in a month's time they're going to bring forth fruit, praise God. You don't have to wait a lifetime to get fruit, beloved. On the day of Pentecost, they got the seed of God in the morning, beloved, and they brought forth fruit in the evening.

Amen. Not just one, either. In one month, beloved, twice this number.

In two months, four times this number. In three months, eight times this number. In four months, sixteen times this number.

Amen. I know that you can't reduce God to a mathematical formula, but the simplicity of it, beloved, is often a challenge to my own heart. If every soul, beloved, realistically believed the Word of God, and the operation and growth and development of that seed.

Yes, I know under the reproduction of the life and nature of Jesus, that's one definition of fruitfulness, but also under the reproduction of that same life and nature in other men and women. And that in one month, beloved, we were to believe God for one soul. Pray, care for, love, minister to, and seek to win one single soul in a month.

You wouldn't have to have great crusades, beloved, to bring about the salvation of men and women throughout the ends of the earth. Praise God. Let me say again, I know that you cannot reduce God to a mathematical formula, beloved, and work it out in those terms.

Amen. But I tell you, it simplifies it. It's not just the hearing of God's Word, beloved, it's not just the seeing of truth and saying, fruitfulness.

Lord, I want to be a fruitful vow. I don't just want to be, bring forth fruit. I want to bring forth more, much fruit, more fruit.

Well, beloved, sometimes you can get so overwhelmed with the thought of what that's going to involve, but if you start where you are, praise God, in the street where you live, or in the home where you live, or in the school, or the college, or the place where you work, and believe God for someone there, you'll see the reality of that seed, the mystery of God working. Amen. That's what the church is all about, isn't it? The outworking, the reproduction, the multiplication of that seed, bringing in the glory to his name.

Not just good soil, beloved, but good seed. It is now to find its lodgment in your heart, and then its development under the husbandry of God's spirit, and the cooperation of your spirit joined to his spirit. Believing God to bring about fruitfulness in our own lives.

Glory to his name. Let's just go on very briefly to our third. The significant thing about the parable that is not included in this lovely little parable, beloved, is about when the man slept, which you'll find in Matthew's Gospel, and that the tares and the wheat were there growing together.

The servant of the man said, should we go out and tear out all the wheat, all the tares? Should we put up the tares? Very interesting to notice what Jesus said. I suppose we would be of the disposition we want to get rid of all the tares. Amen.

You know what Jesus said, don't you? He said, I'll let them both go together until the time of harvest, and I'll sort them out. Sometimes that's difficult to accept, isn't it? Verse 30, and Jesus said, whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God, or with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which when it is sown in the earth is less than all the seeds that be in the earth. When it is sown, it groweth up and becometh greater than all the herbs, and shooteth out great branches, so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. Amen. First of all, he says the seed is like the least of seeds.

Likens it to a mustard seed, and isn't that just what Jesus became, beloved? That's the great mystery and wonder of incarnation, that God in Christ was prepared to identify himself with something as insignificant and small and unnoticeable as a mustard seed. The analogy, beloved, and the type that Jesus often used to describe his own nature and identify himself with in the scripture are so wonderful. He called himself water, he called himself bread, he called himself light.

Here he likened himself, beloved, to a mustard seed, the smallest or the least of all the seeds. Praise God. Made himself of no reputation.

Praise God. That's the nature of God. Amen.

He didn't claim or try to be anyone or anything, and of course the person who receives the word of God, beloved, will imbibe the disposition and nature of Jesus. Amen. And we'll come to that place, beloved, where he's prepared to be the least.

You know the story, beloved, of how the disciples argued to be the best, the greatest, wanting the most important places in heaven. And Jesus overheard them and he said, this is how the world behaves, this is how the men in the world act and react towards one another. He said, it shall not be so among you.

If you want to be great, then you be the least. Praise God. The least of the seed, beloved, becomes the greatest.

Glory to his name. And that little seed planted ultimately becomes the great, great seed of God. Again, the seed that fell into the ground and died, beloved, within a very short time, multiplies and reproduces way and beyond all the limitations that it had originally had.

Glory be to God. I tell you, that frustrated the devil. He thought if he could exterminate the one seed, then he'd solve his problems.

His father was, beloved, that in exterminating that one seed, he only caused it to multiply and reproduce. Amen. The first multiplication, beloved, or addition, was 120, and then it was 3,120, and then it was 5,120, then it was 8,120, and then God stopped adding and began to multiply.

You'll read it in the Acts of the Apostles. Praise God. What had been so small, beloved, suddenly became so great and has continued to grow.

Glory be his name. That which was the least becomes the greatest. And I tell you, beloved, when the seed of God's word comes into your heart and is allowed to develop and grow, it will get greater and greater and greater.

Blessed be his name. And then he says in verse 32, And when it is sown, it groweth up and becometh greater than all the herbs, and shooteth out great branches, so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it. Amen.

I want to ask you a question, beloved. You're one of two things here. Either you are lodger, or you are branch.

Which are you? Which are you? Fowls of the air came and lodged under the shadow of it. Praise God. They enjoyed the benefits of it.

They enjoyed the security, the cover, the shadow, the comfort, the blessing of it. But they were only lodgers. And there are lots of people, beloved, who become lodgers in this great tree of God's church, who know nothing of the mystery.

They're outside of it, they're attendees to it, they enjoy the benefits of it, they're recipients of its blessing, they can partake of its fruit, but they know nothing of the mystery of it, they know nothing of the life of it. The person, beloved, only the person who becomes a branch of that great tree. We can change the analogy, the nature of the tree, beloved, from a mustard tree to a vine here.

Jesus said, I'm the vine, you're the branches. That's the mystery. Hallelujah.

And you will know that the majority of the vine, beloved, is branch, isn't it? But the branch is the expression of the nature of the vine, it's the visible extension, beloved, the outgrowing of that seed. It's the life that comes up from the seed, via the sap into the branches, that gives the life, that brings forth the fruit. The lodgers don't bring forth any fruit.

The lodgers don't know anything of the essential life. They might know the blessing, but they don't know that constant, continuous, life-giving, upsurging flow of the water of life. That flow into the vine, glory, flows out through the branches that makes them fruitful.

Glory to his name. There is the mystery of the church, beloved, which is the mystery of Christ. Hallelujah.

Not sufficient, beloved, that you perch on the field, for that you avail yourself of the benefits and the blessings that are attributed and belong to the church. Praise God, it is only by the spirit, beloved, men baptized or grafted into the very nature and life of the tree itself, which will become a part of that great mysterious activity of what God is talking about in these lovely pictures. Amen.

It begins small, beloved, it becomes great. Neither for a part, a branch, a part of that glorious life, or merely sitting like some bird, perhaps singing a very nice song, if you're a nightingale, not a crow like me, a very nice song, enjoying the comfort of the branch, beloved, but you're not partaking of the essential life. Hallelujah.

You've got to have a heart condition, beloved, in which there is suitable soil for the good seed to be planted. You've got to allow that tree, the Word of God, to find its beginnings in you, and then grow and develop progressively unto fruitfulness. Not just in the end of time, but repetitively throughout your life, ultimately to find its expression, beloved, in the great tree of God's church, of which you are a part.

It has the privilege of producing the fruit, amen, that does lend itself, beloved, to bring comfort for others to come and search. But beyond that, wants you and me to be a part of that glorious life, and thus be

involved in the great secret, the great mystery, the great revelation of all that God is talking to us about in Christ. Christ comes into the soil of my heart.

It's Christ that goes up through my life. It's Christ, beloved, who's the head and explanation to all that happens in the church, and the only place in which that which relates to the mystery of God and the Kingdom of God, beloved, that will guarantee fruitfulness that is eternal, will be that which finds itself in that life. Hallelujah! Beloved, is the soil of your heart suitable to receive the Word of God at death? Are you convinced tonight that God has begun a good work and planted that genuine seed in your life, and you're letting it grow? Do you know, beloved, that you're no longer just a fresher enjoying the blessings, but you're a part of that which once began small, and now it's a great tree? You're one of those branches that has faith to believe that that Word planted in the form of seed, beloved, mixed with faith, is going to bring forth fruit, much, much more fruit.

Gain fruit unto a hundredfold in your life. Amen. Let us pray.

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