

A Sermon for Dayspring Baptist Church
By Chris Fillingham
“The Parable of Dayspring”
For Our Annual Meeting and Celebration of 2015
Mark 4:1-34
January 17, 2016

Welcome

Welcome to a very special service. This morning we are remembering and giving thanks for the ministry that took place this last year. We’re doing this not to toot our own horn. That’s not what this is about. But it is important for us to stop, and remember, and give thanks to God for what God has been doing in us and through us.

In Mark 4, Jesus gives several parables about what the Kingdom of God is like. Listen to how he begins:

[Read Mark 4:1-9]

“**Pay attention,**” he says. That’s what we’re going to try to do today. The Kingdom of God is mysterious and hard to understand a lot of the time. One thing we can say for certain is, the Kingdom of God is much bigger than the Church. It’s bigger than Dayspring and bigger than the Church universal. But at the same time, here in the church, we get to be part of it. We get to be participants in what God is up to in the world.

Of course, that doesn’t mean we always do it really well, or that we’re efficient or that our efforts will always bear the fruit we hope. But apparently that’s how it is in the Kingdom. Jesus said that in God’s Kingdom, seeds of new life, seeds of grace are scattered indiscriminately... on all kinds of soil. Some of it turns into lasting fruit, but most of it doesn’t. So, don’t get too attached to the results. The key, the invitation, is to keep scattering the Great Gardener’s Seed.

That’s been happening in so many ways this year. And so we’re going to pay attention to that as we worship together today through stories and testimonies and reflections. But before we do that, let’s stand and greet one another in the Name of Christ.

Sermon

We’ve already heard a number of stories about how God has been working in us and through us in the last year. But, the truth of the matter is, most of what happens through the ministry of a church is unseen. It happens in hidden secret places... secret places in our hearts and in our lives.

And so, the reality is, there is so much more that hasn’t been named... and that may never be named. God’s work --in our lives and in our church-- is mysterious that way.

We don't know how to name it or even how to recognize it much of the time. But we scattered seeds, and we wait and we hope and we trust... night and day, day and night, that somehow a harvest will come.

And it does. There is fruit... some fruit we see... most of it fruit we never see. That's how it is in God's mysterious Kingdom.

It's hard to grasp just how God is working in this world, and what God's ways are like. And so parable after parable Jesus is trying to explain this mysterious reality to us... this reality of God's kingdom that is breaking in our world. You can tell he's searching for images and for stories just by the way he asks in vs. 30 **“What's a good image for God's kingdom? What parable can I use to explain it?”**

When I think through this last year here at Dayspring,
and when I read through the reports that your Leadership Team has put together,
and when I think about all the generosity of this congregation...
the generosity of heart,
and time and talents
and yes, of our treasures...

I find myself wanting to answer Jesus' question: **“Well, Jesus, how about the parable of Dayspring?”**

I mean, take a look. [PowerPoint pictures begin]

“Pay attention”...and you just might marvel at the way this mustered seed is producing large branches that the birds in the sky are able to nest and find rest and healing and hope in.

The Kingdom of God? Well, it's like our Sunday School teachers who faithfully teach our kids week after week...our teachers who have been so intentional and creative in this last year.

It's like a small children's ministry that some might not realize just how incredible it is here. There is excellent programing happening at a child to adult ratio that any large church couldn't come close to touching.

It's like all those who so faithfully lead our Children's Ministries and our Youth Ministries, and our MOPS ministry that's helped us to minister to more and more young families.

Or how about this Parable Jesus? The Kingdom of God is like the Teenagers among us... especially the ones who have the courage to be like Jesus in their school, even when it's not popular.

It's like **Toni Hayes** who week after week sets up refreshments and wed Lunch, or it's like **those of you** who so faithfully keeps in touch with our homebound members. It's hidden. It's unseen... and it's beautiful.

What is the Kingdom of God like? Well, it's like a community of people who care for each other, even when they don't agree with each other's politics or interpretation of scripture.

It's like so many of you who keep going to Gateway 180 week after week, or those of you who serve in the International Ministry Food Pantry.

It's like a small church, dreaming big dreams, and giving sacrificially to the next generation of this church.... because in the Kingdom of God there's a lot of hoping in a future we cannot yet see, but planting the seeds anyway.

It's choir members who lead us in worship. And a **music minister** who works so creatively with them, and **an accompanist** who is so thoughtful as she leads us in worship.

It's prayer retreats that open us up to experiencing God and prayer in new ways.

It's planting seeds with Mission Possible and Mission Trips

It's planting seeds by asking hard questions and wrestling with difficult issues.

It's all of you, who do so much to make this place what it is... from the nitty-gritty of budgets and numbers, to cooking meals, to challenging us, to praying for us, to inviting us into your home... to helping out in ways you'd rather not... but you do it because you know it needs to be done. I can't begin to describe how deeply grateful I am for you... who make this church what it is.

Yes, like I said at the beginning of our service today, the Kingdom of God is so much larger than Dayspring Baptist Church. But if you want a parable for what the Kingdom of God is like... then look around ...because it is here, in those mysterious moments when the Divine breaks into our hearts and minds and opens us up in the most surprising ways.

So, thanks be to God for all of you. And thanks be to God for Dayspring... for this church that helps us to believe when it's hard... and this church that keeps opening us up to God's life poured into us.

Amen?

Let's Pray Together:

O God, we are deeply grateful for this place... and the ways you have used it in our lives... and used it in our world. Help each of us to remember that this church is yours... not ours.

We ask that you would grant us vision for the coming days...

that we would have courage and creativity...

that we would be full of grace toward one another and grace toward your world.

Form in us your life... and help us to be all that you are creating us to be.

We ask these things in the Name of the One who taught us to pray saying, "Our Father...