

Mark 4-5

Jesus powerful kingdom

Read 4: 26-41

Theme - To teach and demonstrate that despite the seeming weakness of the kingdom of God, through the sowing of the word God will bring in his new kingdom in power.

Aim – Trust the power of Jesus' word in our lives. Rely on Jesus, rejoice in him and proclaim him to our broken world: hold out the word (gospel) of Jesus to others, trusting that He can work through it in their lives?

Sermon

I'm subtitled this message "Tiny beginnings, but great conclusions". We're in mark 4-5. Jesus' powerful kingdom.

So, power. What is it?

- It is the possession of a controlling influence.
- The ability to get something done
- It sometimes comes by the holding of an office or position
- It sometimes is expressed through physical strength
- It's the number of horses it takes to get my car up the hill.
- And the number of watts to make these lightbulbs work.

When we reflect on power.

- We see power struggles – in politics, at work
 - We see weak against strong
 - In a democracy, we give power to our government (democracy literally the rule of the people) and our governments forever talk about handing it back into the hands of the people.
 - We see radicals trying to gain power into their own hands.
 - And United nations trying to take it away from the corrupt.
- But on a personal level, we conclude power it is normally something other people have. We would like more of it for our daily lives. Power over our choices, power over our thoughts, power over our bodies, power to determine the future.
- And in the Christian life we talk of power. The power of Jesus. The power of God in your life. But I wonder if you are left feeling that that it doesn't look or seem all that powerful after all?

But I want to show you from this passage that Jesus Kingdom is powerful, and that this makes a tremendous difference to us who trust in Jesus.

But the first point is that:-

1) The power of Jesus' kingdom is a hidden power.

I'm sorry, but it is one of those weekends for sports fans. With the FA cup, one day cricket against Australia through the night, and Andy Murray going for his first grand slam win this morning.

So yesterday first. You had a team like Manchester United come through from a losing position to win – great for Man U fans. But you expect such things of a team with such resources. The most victories are won by the underdog though!.

Like little non-league Crawley Town reaching the fifth round yesterday beating Torquay United, Hardly a giant killing feat, we're not into David and Goliath territory yet, but Crawley's nickname is the Red Devils, so it would be no surprise who they have their sights on knocking out in the next round. (of course, well done Brighton too – and good luck Andy Murray.)

Now as we look down at our passage, in Mark 3, it is as though there is little to no chance of the cause of Jesus Christ coming through. It just is not going to work. How can he possibly win because at every point the odds are stacked against him?

3:6 talk about this as the odds against you. READ
So the ruling authorities want Jesus dead.

His disciples seem a hopeless lot, containing as they do a tax collector, some fishermen, and then v.19 Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

Well, you think at that point surely he will be supported by his family. Surely his family will be with him.
3:21READ

So chapter 3 is all about opposition and misunderstanding – the situation seems hopeless and the people he is calling to be in his new kingdom seem so insignificant. But there they are v.34 seated in a circle around him listening to him teach.

What is Jesus' response to the situation.

Turn over 4:33

Here is the strategy for winning. Here is the power of Jesus.
READ

He teaches the word.

The key to winning. Jesus' power. He teaches.

But it is a hidden power isn't it.

- **It seems so insignificant.**

Like the mustard seed.

v.30-32 READ

A mustard seed is about the size of the end of this ball-point pen. It is so small that if you look at it in a patch of soil you can't tell that it is there. But these tiny seeds grow into plants that are about 12 feet tall – well our ceiling doesn't go that high.

So the insignificant seeming mustard seed can grow into a large plant and indeed such a large plant that the birds that could have swallowed it without even noticing could later find shade in its branches.

And Jesus says Gods kingdom God's rule, starts small, pathetically small like this. It is tiny.

Which challenges our expectations.

We'd expect if God's king has come then his enemies would immediately be defeated and overthrown, we'd expect every knee to bow and tongue confess straight away, we'd expect that everything in every place should be under his rule. God's king has come.

Surly v.30 that's what Gods kingdom should be like - isn't it. That is what power in our culture looks like.

But no. no.

You see this starts so pathetically small.

Jesus just teaches.

It's unimpressive. But mark my words says Jesus, this is how it starts but it is not how it ends.

[] I imagine Jesus arriving at the pearly gates and is met by the Angel Gabriel... (1 minute)

It seems so small, the word of God, the kingdom of God. BUT it will have a very great end.

In this little parable Jesus gives that contrast, between...

Tiny Beginnings and Massive Conclusions

So this is what Ap John sees in his vision of heaven in Rev 7:9. This is where history is heading.

“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb”

Innumerable. That is how it ends. A very small start but a very great end.

And the same is true in the life of an individual. It starts with a seed planted. The word sown.

[] For me a conference, a camp, a conversation about Jesus – Andy do you realise that God has a plan and purpose over your life, that Jesus is Lord - will you let him rule in your life. And I've spend the last 25 years trying to work out that moment from when the seed was planted.

How was the seed planted to you?

Because that is the process in v.31 isn't it and in the parable of the sower. How shall we see the kingdom of God? What has to happen to get the kingdom of God the rule of God in people's lives? The word, the seed is sown, it is planted, produces the kingdom in people's lives.

But how does this work? It is a mystery.

Have a look at previous parable in v26-29

The power in Jesus Kingdom is a hidden power – it works unseen.

- **It works unseen**

v.26-27 READ

And we see here that the seed the farmer sows possesses its own power to germinate and bear fruit.

V.28 READ.

Through its own power. So whether the farmer sleeps or rises whether he understands crop growth or not, the seed sprouts and grows all by itself.

And it may appear to our eyes that nothing is happening. But all the time the seed is at work unseen to produce the harvest. What we read of here is an organic growth that is going on underground. What are you going to do if you are the farmer, you don't dig it up to check! You have to let it work unseen. But eventually if there is real life it will burst out. The hidden kingdom will burst out aboveground

That was one of the points of the parable of the sower wasn't it. What you can see at the start isn't necessarily what will remain at the end. And what isn't there yet, may well sprout later. There were only two end results of the word being sown. There were only two types of soil. In the first three cases the word may have produced activity but no fruit, for different reasons and in the fourth the seed worked away in the soil and eventually produced a harvest out of all proportion to what was sown.

4:20 READ

You see it is amazing. From a tiny mustard seed, to a great plant. From one seed to a harvest out of all proportion. The seemingly insignificant, unseen power of God's kingdom in the seed, the word of God. And it does it "all by itself".

- **It grows all by itself**

That phrase "all by itself" in the Greek is where we get the word AUTOMATIC. The same core root word. It is the idea of being self-acting without visible cause.

The farmer sows. And then waits. He has to be patient and trust that the seed in his field which he has sown is growing. He has to plough and sow and wait before he can harvest. So we can't make the seed grow, we can't even explain how it grows, but never the less it does.

So this is what Martin Luther the great reformer wrote

“After I preach my sermon on Sunday, after I return home, I drink my little glass of Wittenberg beer and let the gospel run its course.”

He says, I’ve opened the bible. I’ve taught it. Lord I leave it with you. I’ve thrown a few little seeds into the ground, Lord It is in your hands. I’ve planted the tiny word, I wait to let it grow.

Isaiah 55:10 - Have you heard this promise?

“As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”

And the same is true as we proclaim the gospel. There is delay while the tiny little mustard seed becomes a great plant. And this is a mystery – the results are not instant.

[] the great missionary to China Hudson Taylor said there are three great qualities for missionaries. Patience, patience, and patience.

And the secret of growth is not in our hands. We just have to trust its hiddenness, that the word is doing its work.

But here is the question. Where do you think the power is?
Where is the power?

It is so easy to lose our nerve that the word will do its work. Here we are in Westdene and I announce we’re going to teach a book from 2000 years ago – so in your home group this week people will come and you’ll open this book and say here is the power. Tuesday lunchtime at school we’ll play a game then open this book – here is the power. Again Wednesday morning Squibs –toddler group – we’ll stop briefly for a song and open this book for a story – we’re saying we believe here is the power in the message of Jesus. Again and again.

Whatever events we may run, whether there is food or whatever that brings people in – the power of Jesus kingdom is in his word. And the danger is we’ll think let’s dress it up. Or dumb it down. We can easily lose our nerve, when actually we need to sow the word.

And Mark tells the next four stories, to give us reassurance of this. Because his disciples were very slow to grasp these things. They are still blind to the true identity of Jesus which Mark has helpfully given us in his introduction Mark 1:1 “The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ the Son of God.” Human and divine.

Because of their blindness to Jesus, and ours. Mark records the next 4 incidents. He has told us the power of Jesus kingdom is in the Word. And then demonstrated the power of Jesus word in these four important encounters. Notice, v.35 “that day, that evening”. This follows straight on.

2) The Power of Jesus Word is Demonstrated.

And all four are hopeless situations, in which the apparent weakness of Jesus is highlighted yet the power of his kingdom is demonstrated.

But this I’ll have to leave this largely to your reading in the week ahead.

It’s something I’ve not remembered to do until now, but I would like to lay this challenge before you as we go through this term together, to read along with us. Would you read the whole of Mark’s gospel between now and Easter. At least once? In your own time. It is the shortest of the four gospels. It is very manageable even in one session a lazy Sunday afternoon.

Because one of Jesus’s own applications to us from this passage is in 4:3 Listen! He says. v.9 He who has ears to hear let him hear. V.24-25. READ

Let me encourage you in the build up to Easter to read the word for yourself. For it is the power of Jesus’ kingdom.

And as you read ch 4-5 let me give you some pointers of what to look out for as Mark demonstrated the power of Jesus' word in peoples lives. Each situation is seemingly hopeless. It is Croydon Town vs Manchester United in the fifth round.

In the first.

v.35-41

The disciples (remember they are mainly fishermen) are drowning in a furious storm and **Jesus is asleep** on a cushion. The humanity of Jesus. His inaction looks like weakness. But they wake him "Teacher, don't you care". And at his word the storm is stilled and the lake becomes calm.

v.39 Quiet, be still.

I can't even do this with my bath water.

Who is this they ask.

This is the one who rules over his creation.

And asks: why do you have fear and not faith?

In the second.

5:1-20

A man is overpowered by a Legion of self-destructive evil spirits. V.3 lives in the tombs, he's unruly. But at Jesus word v.8 the demons leave him and destroy themselves along with a herd of pigs. Jesus shows himself to **be the one who redeems form evil and restores** this man to his rightful mind v.15 by the power of his word.

Out of fear the **locals reject Jesus** but the man whose life was set travels wide and far to tell people what Jesus has done for him. This rejection looks like weakness. Despite rejection the word spreads and the kingdom grows.

In the third

v.25-34

It is an unusual one. **Jesus seems apparently unaware** of the needs of a particular woman who has no human cure for her illness, v.26 no doctor has helped – they have made matters worse. And touching Jesus robe, she is healed.

Jesus stops and makes a point of saying her faith in Jesus power healed her.

In the fourth

Which surrounds that story

Jairus comes to Jesus as his daughter is sick. But as **Jesus is delayed** the girl dies. Jesus encourages Jairus v.36 don't be afraid (remember the disciples?) don't be afraid just believe. Have faith not fear. And Jesus wakes her with a touch and a word as easily as we would wake the sleeping. **The power of Jesus kingdom over death.**

Four incidents of seeming weakness, but Jesus word is powerful to rule, to redeem, to restore and to give life. And Jesus says have faith not fear.

Let me then say three brief things to conclude.

a) Rely on Jesus alone in this broken world.

These characters that drop into the story of Jesus for a few verses come from all sorts of backgrounds, with huge problems, they illustrate our broken world under the shadow of death. They show us hope. Each comes to Jesus the doctor empty and broken. In each Jesus rules, redeems and restores. He deals with the disorder of nature's storm, he drives out demons with a word, de deals with chrinoc disease, he destroys death by command.

In our difficulties, fear comes when we take our eyes off the powerful word of Jesus and instead let ourselves to be overtaken by the vast problems around us. Jesus says to us don't be afraid, just believe. Do you rely on Jesus alone?

b) Rejoice in Jesus who alone heals this broken world.

He is not indifferent to it. God promises to heal this broken world in Jesus. It doesn't happen in the same way now that Jesus is returned to heaven. I don't need to say that life as a Christian won't be constantly happy and healthy. But these small snapshots of life with Jesus build up a picture of what life will be like when Jesus comes back. God promises to heal this broken world in Jesus and one day we will be part of that future. A place with no more disorder

and natural disasters, no more demons or evil or sin, no more disease or death. Our brothers and sisters all over the world are longing for the coming of Jesus. Do you rejoice that God promises to heal the broken world.

And finally:

c) Teach Jesus' saving power to this broken world.

Jesus kingdom grows as his word brings salvation and transformation, relationship with God. So we teach that word because it is a powerful word, it brings life to the dead, it brings salvation to the broken hearted, it brings freedom for those oppressed by evil and sin. Teach that word to each other. And lets work together to teach that word to the world. That was Jesus' method, that is Jesus' hidden power. Let's not lose confidence in the power of Jesus' word to save.

So rely on Jesus alone, rejoice that God promises to heal, and teach Jesus's saving power for this broken world.

From Tiny beginnings, to a great conclusions.

"Consider carefully what you hear. With the measure you use, it will be measured to you – and even more".

End

Post Script:

You may have heard that the little 'red devils' were indeed drawn to play the big 'red devils' in round five of the FA Cup. I was left thinking after Sunday's message that perhaps it wasn't entirely clear why I compared the four encounters in Mark ch4-5 to Crawley Town taking on Manchester United. It is because of what it looked like. It looked as if Jesus was weak: he was asleep in the boat, he was rejected by the town across the lake, he was unaware of the woman's ailment and he was late for Jairus' daughter, having been delayed. However in each case the reality was not what it initially seemed - Jesus was in control, compassionate, powerful and indeed able to rule, redeem and restore. Just as he taught in chapter 4 his kingdom seems insignificant but from tiny beginnings it will have a great conclusion. Be encouraged this week!