

KEY INGREDIENTS

SHARE

To you, what makes a person hospitable?

SEEK

Hospitality

The Gospel of Mark presents us with some very telling parables of hospitality. In Mark 4.24-25, it is clear that those who give will receive in a likewise manner. But even more in the context of the passage, those who receive God's word and are obedient are like those who are faithful with what is given to them. Here we are presented with God giving for the benefit of others.

In 4.26-28, we are given a parable about the mysterious growth of scattered seed on the ground. To ancient farmers, it was always a divine mystery how seed grew into eatable material. For this reason, whether a farmer was pagan or not, most would turn to the gods for blessings over their crops. This parable is related to God's blessings and His expansion of the kingdom.

Lastly in 4.30-32, the kingdom of God is likened to a tiny seed that grows large enough for birds to come and rest. In a few instances in Ezekiel (consider Ezekiel 31.6), birds are likened to Gentiles (those outside the Jewish faith). Here God provides a space for "outsiders."

In all three instances we are given an image of a gracious and hospitable God. He gives gifts to us and through us for the sake of others. He causes His kingdom to advance and for goodwill to happen beyond our own strength. He even provides a place of refuge for, and looks after those whom many think are outsiders. Over and over we are presented with a God of super hospitality.

SEE

BE HOSPITABLE AS GOD IS HOSPITABLE

TAKE A LOOK AGAIN AT THE PARABLES NOTED ABOVE. NOT ONLY ARE THESE PARABLES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD, BUT THEY ALSO TELL US ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SAY THAT GOD IS HOSPITABLE?

CONSIDER THE SECOND PARABLE OF THE SCATTERED SEED AND THE MYSTERIOUS GROWTH. A SEED CAN BE PLANTED, WATERED, AND GIVEN GOOD SOIL...BUT THE OVERALL GROWTH IS STILL A MIRACLE, MUCH LIKE THE FORMATION OF A BABY IN THE WOMB. WHAT DOES THIS TEACH YOU ABOUT GOD'S HOSPITALITY? HOW MIGHT GOD'S HOSPITALITY AND YOURS "WORK TOGETHER" FOR MAXIMUM BENEFIT?

IN THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED, HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THIS VERSE IN LIGHT OF EZEKIEL'S MENTION OF BIRDS? IF THE BIRDS REPRESENT GENTILES (THOSE OUTSIDE THE FAITH), WHAT CAN YOU GLEAN ABOUT GOD'S HOSPITALITY?

GOD'S HOSPITALITY IS LOVELY, AND IT IS ALSO CHALLENGING. IT IS EASY TO BE HOSPITABLE TO THOSE WE LIKE, BUT WHAT ABOUT THOSE OUTSIDE OUR SOCIAL CIRCLES? HOW MIGHT YOU BE HOSPITABLE TO THOSE WITH WHOM YOU COME IN CONTACT THIS WEEK? WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT INVITING THEM TO ATTEND SOME OF YOUR GROUP ACTIVITIES?

Please take a few moments to pray with and for one another