



SPORTS IN FOCUS

THE SERVANT SPEAKS IN PARABLES

Mark 4:1-34 • Lesson Three

READY

- What is the best coach or school teacher you ever had and why?
- What other individuals have marked your life by their ability to explain God's truth to you in a way that you could understand?

SET

Context of Mark 4:1-34

In his gospel to Gentiles Mark depicts Jesus as the ultimate Servant. The Son of God is portrayed as a Man of action. Though Mark's emphasis is more on what Jesus did than what He said, Mark does include in his narrative some examples of the Lord's teaching. Such is the case in Mark 4. Here we find a series of stories or parables. The parable was a common form of Jewish teaching. The term for parable is a compound word made up from the Greek verb that means "to throw, lay, or place," and the prefix meaning "alongside of." Thus, the idea is that of placing or laying something alongside of something else for the purpose of comparison.

Keys to Text

Kingdom of God: Jesus made it clear at the beginning of His ministry that He was bringing in an altogether different kind of kingdom, which was manifest through the rule of God in people's hearts through faith in the Savior (see Luke 17:20-21).

GO

Read Mark 4:1-34

1. According to this parable what different responses are possible when God's word is proclaimed?
2. What reason did Jesus give for teaching in parables? What does this mean?
3. What comment of Jesus from the "parable of the lamp" reveals that Jesus intended for the whole world to hear the gospel?
4. Read Matthew's version of the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:1-23.
What additional insights do you glean when you lay Matthew's account next to Mark's version?
5. What is (are) the implication(s) of the parable of the mustard seed?
6. What kind of soil described by Jesus best matches your own spiritual condition just now? Why? What needs to change?
7. Read 1 Corinthians 2:13-16. How do Paul's comments here underscore the points that Jesus makes in Mark 4?
8. Why are stories like this so effective in communicating spiritual truth?

SPORTS IN FOCUS

Rather than lecturing his audiences with big, obscure theological words and ideas, Jesus, the master teacher, told down-to-earth stories about every day life. He related simple parables to his listeners, featuring common objects and practices.

How can sports stories be used to teach spiritual lessons? What are some examples? Following the 40-yard field goal in overtime by a little-known kicker who could become as famous as jambalaya in New Orleans, the Saints football team was heading to their first Super Bowl. By battering Brett Favre and beating the Minnesota Vikings 31-28, they set off celebrations on Bourbon Street that locals never could have imagined in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. This is why Saints coach Sean Payton and quarterback Drew Brees came to New Orleans in the grim aftermath of Hurricane Katrina — to regenerate a lost franchise and re-energize a battered city's spirit. What lessons can be learned from this sports story?