

Mark 4:26-29 (F. L) 53765

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The 4th chapter of the Gospel by Mark contains, in verses 26-29, a parable or similitude of the kingdom not mentioned by the other evangelists. Following as it, does upon the parable of the sower and the Lord's exposition of it to His disciples, and bearing in mind that this Gospel presents our Lord Jesus Christ as the Servant-Prophet, the Minister of the Word, we shall see that these verses serve, if one may so speak, to maintain the spiritual sequence of the first part of the chapter with the last scene upon the lake, concerning which it is upon my heart to say a few words.

We have, first, in the parable of the sower, the new place the Lord takes consequent upon His rejection; that is, One bringing that which has life in it, instead of seeking fruit from men. The explanation follows, and then in the verses above cited there is an indication of what would succeed the time of seed-sowing by the Lord personally—that He would absent Himself from the scene of labor, and according to all appearance would not only take no active part in tending the seed, but so far as could be observed, would take no interest in it. It is as if He "should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how." v. 27. Let us observe, in passing, the expression "sleep, and rise," for this thought seems to recur at the close of the chapter. The earth brings forth fruit of itself, but at harvest time the Lord personally reasserts His place, and puts in the sickle. So will it be at the end of the age. The parable of the mustard tree follows, which develops the thought of what Christendom would become in the world during Christ's absence. Springing from the smallest of seeds, having the most circumscribed commencement, it would become great; as it is said, "greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches," so that the fowls of the air (the powers of evil; compare vv. 4, 15) may lodge under the shadow of it.

Now this is what we find true today. Christendom has become a worldly power, and for faith there is oftentimes the deep exercise. Where is Christ in all this? What a comfort that when they were alone "He expounded all things to His disciples." If we cultivated communion more with Christ alone, we should understand His things better. The slackness is with us, never with Him (compare Psalm 73:16, 17).

The evening has now drawn on the close of the day of toil, and one cannot forbear the comparison that the day of seed-sowing and salvation is rapidly drawing to an end. What has the heart of the disciple to steady it in a world like this, which becomes a foreign element to him when he knows Christ? Oh! these blessed words, "Let us pass over unto the other side" (v. 35). What security they breathe! what joy! In spite of the fact that the world sees Him not, we see Him (John 14:19), and in all the confusion of the present moment, His Word strengthens the feeble, and claims the allegiance of all. "Let us pass over unto the other side." What room for fear in the hearts of the disciples if they had seen what the words implied? They meant that He charged Him self with their safety right over to the other shore. And yet they cry out in the presence of what appears danger with the unbelieving thought that He cared not if they perished!

Yes! but you may say He was asleep. Beloved reader, after that word, "Let us go," whatever happened, they were secure. It was only to sight and sense that He seemed to take no interest in their welfare, but neither the storms of life nor all the powers of evil can engulf us if we confide in Him. He slept, but at their cry He arose (compare v. 27), and rebuking the elements, the disciples see the power and love that was with them all the time, though they knew it not. "And there was a great calm" (v. 39). Is it too much to say that spiritually such a juncture as this occurs in each history? The power of death affrights the soul, but acquaintance with Christ's word and the knowledge of His presence quiets every fear for the journey. It is only in unbelief that He cares not. And when our hearts know Him thus, with us "all the days, until the completion of the age"

(J.N.D. Trans.), what fear can remain? Is there not "a great calm" in the soul?

O dear reader, do you know it? In the midst of all the dangers, the heaving and tossing and threatening of the billows, do you know that voice that speaks not only peace to the elements, but a great calm to the heart, by the same almighty power? The Lord give all His saints to know Him better in this way.

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