

Miracles of Jesus 12-06-10a

This is Sunday, the 10th of June, 2012. We continue our study of the miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ. This morning we're going to be looking at two linked miracles.

This will also occur next time where there is a close relationship. We're going to be in the Gospel of Mark, chapter 4 and chapter 5. Let's take a moment as we begin to go to the Lord in prayer. It's an opportunity to focus our concentration and set aside the distractions and other thoughts that might be nibbling at the edges of our minds, causing them to wander in the trackless wastes of unfruitfulness.

So let's take just a moment to go to the Lord in prayer and then we will begin. Father, we are grateful for the day that you have granted us. Your mercies are renewed every morning and we recognize your faithfulness and your compassion on us in providing for us and preserving us in ways that we are often unaware of, in giving to us circumstances that are for our benefit, are designed to encourage our growth and our reliance on you through your Word and through the presence of your Spirit.

We thank you for this opportunity to spend time together in studying your Word and refreshing our minds in your point of view on the things that so easily consume us and drag us down to a subjective and mundane level. May God the Holy Spirit invest our lives through the things that we studied this morning with the sight and the perspective of heaven, of eternal things, of opportunities to learn and grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray these things in his name, amen.

The first miracle we will cover this morning is one that is perhaps one of the most well-known of the Lord Jesus. It is one that takes place as he crosses the Sea of Galilee in a boat and it is memorialized in hymns and even the knowledge of unbelievers. Most people are aware of Jesus' stilling of the storm.

We have a great song on this, "'Carest thou not that we perish, and peace be still," and so on. This is going to be in Mark chapter 4, verses 35 through 41. However, before we get to that, we need the context.

You cannot properly appreciate what Jesus does here. It's fairly obvious. They're in a boat.

They're going across the lake. Jesus is asleep. A great storm comes up.

The disciples panic. They wake Jesus up. He says, "'What's the matter with you? Be quiet.' And everything is calm." The bare outline of that is straightforward and we can immediately see that the Lord Jesus, as the disciples note when they say, "'What manner of man is this that even the wind and sea obey him?'" He is master of nature.

And if you think about this a little bit as the Lord of glory, as being invested with the

power and presence of the Holy Spirit upon reflection, and maybe when you're not in the midst of a life-threatening storm, this would make sense. It makes a lot more sense if we set it in the context that immediately precedes, and this in turn is going to be context for the miracle we will see in our second session this morning, which is the casting out of the legion of demons in the man on the other side of the sea. But we need to back up a little bit and this is going to be some Scripture reading.

And I'm going to do it rather quickly and summarily because we'll never get to our miracle otherwise. But this actually begins back in the earlier part of Mark chapter 4. And if you have a Bible with some helpful topic titles there, you will see that Jesus begins chapter 4 with the parable of the sower. If you look back just real quickly at chapter 3, you'll see a house divided against itself cannot stand.

And this is what we covered last week, remember? He casts out demons by the prince of demons and so on. So we're kind of moving forward from that. Chapter 4, the parable of the sower.

Jesus began to teach by the sea. We're already at the body of water that is going to figure in the miracle this morning. Jesus is by the sea, great multitude gathers.

He gets in a boat, sits in it. This will be the boat of miraculous fame a bit later. And he sat on the sea and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea.

So we're very much affixed here in and around the sea, yes? People on the land, Jesus on the sea. People sitting on dirt, terra firma, Jesus in a boat on the sea. Natural amphitheater, great acoustics.

He taught them many things by parables. Many things by parables. These are only representative parables that will now be included.

There are many, many he teaches for probably a number of hours. Listen, behold, a sower went out to sow. This is a great way to start, isn't it? And in verse 3, listen, look, edu, behold, means look, listen, look.

Here you are, you've got the Lord of glory about to give a Bible class and he says, listen and look. Behold, a sower went out to sow and it happened as he sowed that some seed fell by the wayside and the birds of the air came and devoured it. Some fell on stony ground where it did not have much earth and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth.

But when the sun was up, it was scorched and because it had no root, it withered away. Some seed fell among thorns and the thorns grew up and choked it and it yielded no crop. But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced, some 30 fold, some 60 and some 100.

And he said to them, he who has ears to hear, let him hear. And this is a bit of a little bracket there. How did he begin in verse three? Listen, if your ears are working, pay attention.

And if you have ears to hear, hear. Well, you're probably familiar with the structure and the basics of that particular parable. You know that, and Jesus explains it to his disciples because when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parable.

He said, to you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to those who are outside, all things come in parables so that, then we have our Old Testament quote from Isaiah chapter six, seeing they may see and not perceive, hearing they may hear and not understand, otherwise they would turn and their sins would be forgiven them. So why does Jesus speak in parables and then explain the parables only to his disciples? Because there are preconceptions. There are attitudes that are already existing.

People are gathered to listen. Why do they listen? What is the nature of their heart? He said to them, do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? Because, of course, he presented a number of them. The sower sows the word, and this is really the key to the parable, that the seed equals the word.

These are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. So the soil is the heart.

And Jesus is not only explaining the parable of the seed and what all of these different symbolic elements represent, but he is also explaining teaching in parables itself. The plant is not the seed, right? When the sower goes forth to sow, he doesn't have seedlings. He doesn't have plants that are in little pots and he's going to put them in the ground.

It's a seed, right? There is a husk on the seed. The potential, what that seed is going to become is not visible. It's just a seed.

That's the parable. The power and the design and the fullness and the fruit is inside. It's what you do with that seed.

If the seed never opens, if the contents inside never activate, never begin to do their supernatural work, these are those who hear the word and it just doesn't make sense. Why? Because they do not let it sink in. It has to sink in.

And in a nutshell, or in a seed shell, this sinking in process, hear me now, this is meditation. It's the same with a Bible class. You can hear me or anybody else present the word of God.

That's the seed. To get it down in the soil where it is going to open and become something, it has to be meditated upon. It has to be the object of thought.

That's what opens the seed. And in your particular soil, it is going to sprout and it is going to send out roots and it is going to become something that is capable of bearing fruit. The seed can't bear fruit.

The seed is in fruit. It's the opposite end. But you cannot get by on listening to Bible class.

You cannot get by on listening to Bible class. Do not think you are spiritual because you listen to Bible class. It's just seeds.

And it sits on top of the soil unless and until we think about it, meditate on it, digest it, work with it, let it sink down into the soil. Is there anybody that missed what I just said? Bible class, attending Bible class, listening in Bible class, taking notes in Bible class is not your spiritual life. Your spiritual life begins with meditation on these truths.

And if you do not do the meditation step, your spiritual life is missing, MIA, doesn't happen. And what will happen is that very soon, because we haven't thought about it, because we haven't digested it and incorporated it, it's going to leave and you won't even remember what was in that class. This is what Jesus says.

So or so is the word. There are those by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.

These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness, but they have no root in themselves and so endure only for a time. A little superficial understanding, hey, isn't that great, that was exciting, that was interesting, but there's no root. And as soon as pressure comes, tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble.

There's no root. It's not deep enough. It hasn't been well enough incorporated.

These are people who say, oh, I've tried Christianity, it doesn't work. Oh, you know, my church doesn't teach me what I need to know to get through my problems. God is not near.

Where is God when I need him? It doesn't relate, it doesn't pertain. Here's some Bible class in Christian truth and fellowship and stuff over here, but here's my real life and here's my real problems and this just doesn't impinge, it doesn't help. It's not solving my problems, it's not making me happy.

Well, it never got any roots. Why? I didn't value it enough to meditate on it, pray it up to heaven, converse with God about it. So, there are ones sown among thorns, these are

the ones who hear the word and the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches and the desire for other things entering in, choke it.

Yes, that was interesting. I'm sure it's helpful. I could spend time thinking about it, but I'm going to spend my time doing something else.

I've got something more interesting, more entertaining, more stimulating. I just really need to do this thing over here. I'll think about that tomorrow.

It's the Scarlett O'Hara syndrome. But these are ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and accept means bring to oneself, embrace, take hold of, and bear fruit, thirtyfold, sixty and some a hundred. And even in the embracing and the taking in and the meditating, there are variations on that.

There are degrees of it. There are people who take it in and, well, you get a thirtyfold, some twice that and some a hundredfold. This is the parable of the soils, is what I like to call it.

The seed is the same all the way through. Some people call it the parable of the sower, but the focus here is not on the sower and it's not really on the seed. What is the focus in this parable? It's the soils.

What kind of soil are you? So, they call it the parable of the sower. My Bible says parable of the sower and gives the parallels in Matthew and Luke. It's the parable of the soils, my opinion.

Then he said to them, is a light... Now remember, keep in mind, we're going toward the storm on the Sea of Galilee. We've got this, and of course, that's water, this is land. People are sitting on the land while Jesus is sitting on the water teaching them, right? There's a water and soil motif going through this whole story.

Light under a basket. He said to them, is a lamp to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand? For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret that it should, but that it should come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.

I'm going to go forward and then I'm going to come back. We have five, keep track of them now, there are five parables given before we get to the trip across the Sea of Galilee. We just covered two of them.

Parable of the soils, parable of the lampstand. The lamp. Where do you put the lamp? Now we've got another quick application from the Lord Jesus, take heed what you hear.

With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you. And to you who hear, more will be given. Whoever has to him, more will be given.

But whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away. This is commentary on the previous two parables, parable of the soils, parable of the lamp. And we'll see the outcome of this shortly.

Now we've got the parable of the growing seed. The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow. He himself does not know how, for the earth yields crops by itself, first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head, the seed in the head, and the seed in But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.

So I call this the parable of the system, because I'm alliterating here. We've got the parable of the soils, and we've got the parable of the system. Why would I call this the system? This is the system that God has set up for agriculture, right? A man takes seed and sows it.

The seed has got design, DNA, genetic information in it. You've got the earth and the water, and God sort of takes over at that point, right? If you plant the seed, the system takes over. There's a built-in design, there's a built-in progress, there's built-in watering and fertilization, and the roots go out and they know what to grab out of the soil and how to construct these parts that he mentions, the blade, the head, and the full grain in the head.

Then the man comes back after the system has done all the work and reaps the benefit, right? He pops in the seed, he goes away, he comes back, and the system has done its work. The man didn't design the seed, the man didn't say, you know, what I really need here is a blade and then a stalk and then a foot. It's all pre-designed, you just work in the system.

Then you have the parable of the mustard seed, and I call this, because I want to alliterate, the parable of the smallest. All of these are talking about seeds, so we've got the soils that the seed goes into, we've got the system that the seed is a part of, and now we're going to talk about the smallest seed. To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? What parable shall we picture it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth.

Do you remember when we encountered this word, earth, eretz, in Hebrew, that many times it means land, eretz Yisrael, land of Israel? People said, well, the mustard is not really the smallest seed, why in Africa they've got... This is the smallest one in the land. These people, when they encounter seeds, smallest seed they ever run across is the mustard seed. They don't grow whatever else have these microscopic seeds that people want to say, well, Jesus made a mistake, it's not the smallest.

It's in the land, it's the smallest seed in the land. He's talking to people who deal with

seeds, and he says, what's the smallest seed you ever come across in this land? It's the mustard. So don't panic on, you know, the skeptic's Bible, and it's not the smallest seed.

When it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all shrubs, greater than all herbs, not the tallest tree. Nobody says that, Jesus is not saying the mustard tree is taller than a redwood. By the way, no redwoods in the land, are there? Can't believe the way people just want to, you know, find a way to dismiss the Bible so they don't have to deal with its convicting power.

It grows up and becomes greater than all herbs. Mustard makes a big shrub, and shoots out large branches so that birds of the air may nest under its shade. And remember also, he's mainly talking about the kingdom of God.

He's not giving a lesson in herbs. This is not a horticulture textbook. He's using it as an example.

He starts small, and in the idea of the smallest here, we have a point, and we'll review these shortly. But quickly, counterintuitive, isn't it? Tiniest seed, biggest shrub, you've got bigger seeds that don't make as big of a shrub. It's counterintuitive.

It runs against man's wisdom. Man would say, small seed, small plant. Big seed, big plant.

Want a redwood? You're going to have to have an acorn the size of a, you know, prize-winning pumpkin or something. You've got a big tree, you've got to have a big seed, and he says, no, it's counterintuitive. It doesn't comport with what man would expect.

Then he has the comment, with many such parables, he spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it. He adjusts the teaching to what they can absorb. Doesn't fire hose them.

This is a great point to remember when we're trying to talk to somebody who expresses an interest. Don't wash them away with a sudden torrent of telling them everything you know in half an hour as they're able to hear it. This is a reminder that for me and for anybody else that tries to communicate the truth, whether formally or informally, watch your audience.

And if you've lost them, stop. If they've quit asking questions, stop. We do not do the captive audience thing.

And it is better to get one point across well than to try to get 15 points across and you've just left somebody feeling like they've just come out of a strong wind, which they probably have. Without a parable, he did not speak to them. When they were alone, he explained all things to his disciples.

Notice you hear it first, then when you're alone, it's explained. Guess what? If Bible class doesn't make total sense while I'm presenting it, go be alone. Let God, the Holy Spirit, explain it.

In the course of meditation, God will minister things that might not have seemed clear while they were being presented, but you jot things down, pray over your questions. Lord, I really didn't get that and I want to know, is there something here for me? Am I blind because my subconscious mind is fighting off a point of application? What is it? It's a good thing sometimes if it doesn't all come clear. You know, if you go to a class where you already know everything that has been said and you say, ah, yes, well, that was great.

You go on. Guess what? You never come back and meditate on that, do you? It all made total sense. I agreed with everything I heard.

I go on, I'm warmed, I'm fed, and I'm done. It's those things that challenge our understanding that we want to noodle on a bit. We want to chew on.

Something came to my mind. It seemed like when we were in another book or in another study. You all will come up with far better cross-references than I do.

There will be things that you remember in your soul that are meaningful to you, and the reason is because God, the Holy Spirit, is teaching you much more effectively than I can. I am one little human guy talking to a group. God, the Holy Spirit, is God Himself, and He is working one-on-one with you.

I try to get truth out there, meaty content from the Word of God, but God, the Holy Spirit, is the teacher, and He doesn't get a chance to have class if you don't stop and meditate, if you don't set aside time to think. When does God, the Holy Spirit, get His class? You very graciously and faithfully and consistently come and hear the teaching of the Word of God from a fallible human guy, but when do you give the Holy Spirit His Bible class? It ought to be more. It ought to be more time for Him than there is for me.

I can point out and kind of clear some of the debris away from some of these wonderful things that are in God's Word and bring them out and hold them out and lift them up and say, look at this, but it's God, the Holy Spirit, that is going to bring the interpretation and application that is pertinent for you individually, not me. I can't tell you how to apply. I don't know your circumstances.

I don't know your heart. Who does? Who knows exactly every circumstance, every priority, every factor, every pressure? The Lord God in heaven knows and has given us the Holy Spirit to be our teacher. He is the one that leads us into all... Jesus said, when the Comforter comes, He will lead you into all truth.

I just do like this little tiny bit at the beginning. The teaching and the affirming and the

growth is a part of that system that is all of God. So, when they were alone, He explained.

Just highlight that. When they were alone, He explained. It doesn't have to make total sense right now.

Feel free to ask me questions, by the way, now or later, but it will come clear when you are alone and He explains. Jesus said, I've got to go, but I'll send you another Comforter and He'll be with you all the time everywhere. They had to wait for Jesus to be done teaching and to go to a private place and have a little short session with Him on parables.

We've got the Holy Spirit. He can explain day, night, wake up at 3 a.m., tomorrow, anytime. That's why He sent the Comforter to us, to lead us into all truth.

On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, let's cross over to the other side. Now, let me just say there are these five basic examples or parables that are given. You've got the sower.

What is the emphasis in the parable of the soils? The sower spreading the seed on the soil. What is the big point? If I said right in one sentence the point of that parable, what is it? The emphasis is on our response to the Word. What do we do with the Word that is distributed to us? It comes in seed form.

Does it just stay a seed sitting on top and is soon gone? Birds of the air pluck it away? Does it just sink in a little bit? Has sort of a momentary effect, but sun comes up, pressure comes. It's out of my mind. Can't remember any of it.

Too busy trying to solve my problem here to be thinking about this Word of God stuff. I've got a problem to solve. Way it goes.

So the emphasis is on response. The man who plants the seed goes away, wakes and sleeps, wakes and sleeps. He's doing other stuff.

His days are cycling, right? Waking and sleeping, waking and sleeping. By the way, generations are coming and going. Waking and sleeping, waking and sleeping, right? This is the human race going forward.

But the Word of God is part of a larger design. It is part of a larger purpose and system. And it is the rightful... Remember on the other we're talking about reception.

So the soil is passive. Here comes the Word. What do you do when you receive it? Now the man has an active part, but what is his part? He's got to know his place.

He's got to know how seed works. He is there at the beginning in making sure the seed gets into the soil properly. And then he's there at the end when the whole system has

done its work, reaps the benefits.

So the design and the power of God are what make the whole seed system work. Man had nothing to do with designing seed. Man has nothing to do with the rain and the soil and the way roots and stalks and ears and all heads and things form.

Man had nothing to do with that. He is a beneficiary, but he learns to operate within God's system. He learns how to plant the seed.

He learns how to harvest the seed. So the emphasis there is on the design and power from God. On the smallest seed, again, it's counterintuitive.

Can't go by human wisdom. Big seed, big plant. Small seed, small plant.

No. Small seed, big plant. So don't expect everything to make sense to the human mind.

This is godly. It's His ways are higher than our ways. The lamp, nobody puts the lamp under the bed or under a bushel.

Among other things, what's going to happen if you put the lamp under the bed? We're talking about an open flame lamp here. Remember what beds were made out of in the ancient world, right? What they used to call a straw tick. What's going to happen if you put the lamp under your bed? Well, it doesn't matter if you've been smoking in bed or not.

If you put the lamp under the bed, there's going to be a conflagration. And if you put it under a bushel basket, what's going to happen? Notice He didn't say under a clay pot. He said under a bushel.

Why? Because a bushel basket is a woven basket. Again, it's going to catch fire. Everything is going to be destroyed.

If you take this power, this lamp, this illumination, the light of God, you've got to put it in the right place. You've got to know where to put it. And the application is related to its purpose.

Don't misuse the lamp. Don't put the lamp in stupid places. And there are people who take the Word of God and use it for stupid purposes.

Oh, if I bring the tithe into the storehouse, the windows of heaven will open. And so they try to put the lamp under their bed, hoping that it's going to warm them or something. Wrong use.

Application related to purpose. And then His comment about measuring, when He says, what you do with what you hear, in verse 24, with the same measure you use, it will be measured to you. And to you who hear, more will be given.

All of this power, the power of the seed, the power in the light of the lamp, God, in His design and in His purpose, has subordinated its effectiveness to human will, to human volition. Its effect, where we are concerned, is subordinated to what we choose. Take heed.

You need to take heed. This system will either work for you or against you. There's great power there.

But with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Notice He doesn't say, if I was a big Calvinist, what would I say? With the measure that He measures to you, you will measure. That would be predestination, right? Well, God measured great faith to me, I'm measuring great faith out.

No, He says, with the measure you use, it's going to be measured back to you. It depends on what you choose. So, these are all background for the storm.

And I have successfully run myself completely out of time and haven't even gotten to the storm. But you can't understand the storm without this background. You can't.

You just can't get there without this background. So, we're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we will look at the storm and we'll see if there's any time to get to the demon-possessed man.

I'm beginning to have my doubts. But we'll see. Let's pause here and take our break.