

That we must commit the seed to the care of Him who gave it, with patient waiting and faith.

That all our scholars may be sowers of this Divine seed.

Main Lesson.—*On hearing the Word.*—Four kinds of ground, or hearers: (1) Way side—hearts gospel-hardened, bad habits, bad companions, and bad passions, repel the truth and harden. Examples, Pharaoh, Festus—see John 12: 37-40; Heb. 3: 12, 13. (2) Stony ground—emotional, resolutions like the "morning cloud and early dew," as King Saul and King Herod—see Gal. 3: 1, and 5: 7. (3) Thorny ground hearers, choked by the world and its lusts, as Balaam, Judas, Ananias—see Matt. 6: 24; Rom. 12: 2; 1 John 2: 15. (4) Good ground hearers, bringing forth fruit, like Nathaniel and Lydia—see Rom. 1: 8; Col. 1: 3-5; Philemon 4: 5. To one of these classes all your scholars belong—which?

Feb. 26, 1882. } **THE GROWTH OF THE KINGDOM.** { Mark 4: 21-34.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon."—Ps. 72: 16.

TIME AND PLACE.—As in last; a continuation of that discourse.

PARALLELS.—With vs. 21-5; Luke 8: 16-18; vs. 26-29, is given by Mark alone. Vs. 30-32, with Matt. 13: 31, 32; Luke 13: 18, 19; vs. 33, 34, with Matt. 13: 34, 35.

HINTS TO TEACHERS.

Dangers.—Are not many in this lesson, even to the experienced teacher. Do not, however, be carried away by the minute details of the parabolic teaching, but try to grasp its meanings in the broad aspect. You may be very exact about candles and mustard seed, but lose for your class the glorious truths of Christ's kingdom.

Topical Analysis.—(1) The manifestation of the kingdom, 21-25. (2) The secret growth of the kingdom and its fruition, 26-29. (3) The marvellous growth of the kingdom, 30-32. (4) The teaching of the King, 33, 34.

What and How to Teach.—On the *first* topic shew that these parables are a continuation of the last lesson. There we see how much of the Divine seed is lost through the activity of the great adversary, the inconstancy of man, or the worldly passions that too often overmaster him, and choke the good in him. Now we see that, notwithstanding this, the kingdom is to be manifested, to grow steadily with wonderful increase, and to fill the whole earth; that though man is worldly and careless, and the devil active, the kingdom is to triumph over all, the mighty power of God. Teach here that as one means to this end Christ was shewing His disciples they were to have a part in this work—they were not to cover up, to keep the truths He had given, but to let them shine forth, that through their light the truth might be manifested; that nothing was to be hidden or kept secret; and that just according to what they gave they should receive. If they kept back Christ and His teachings, there should come to them a famine of hearing, and that the privileges they then enjoyed should be taken from them.

On the *second* topic shew that quiet growth is the law of God's kingdom. It is not in the tempest, earthquake, or fire that He is found, but in the still small voice. This topic carries on the idea of the first; it is the duty as well as the privilege of Christ's disciples to be workers together with Him, and they are here shewn what they can do and what they cannot (a lesson for you, teacher). All they can do—and that they ought to do—is to cast in the seed; then they must leave it to Divine influence, to the power of the

Highest; they can count upon that if they sow in faith and prayer. So learn yourself, and so teach to do what can be done earnestly and constantly, and leave the results to God.

On the *third* topic, you can point out how marvellously the history of the kingdom has illustrated the truth of this teaching. Small, how small, its earthly beginning in the manger at Bethlehem; how weak and insignificant its growth. It was indeed "small as a grain of mustard seed," but how mightily it has spread! How vast its proportions; how universal its influence! Sketch in a few words, as sharply and clearly as you can, what Christ's kingdom is to the world to-day; if it were possible to take it away, it would be like taking the sun out of the heavens; and then shew that this law of growth will continue until the whole earth shall be under its shadow, and in this, as the first topic shews, you and your scholars may have a part.

On the *fourth* topic little need be said, mainly to shew that the truths of the kingdom are only known to those who are Christ's; that if we love Him, serve Him, and keep close to Him, we shall understand and know Him and His—an earnest of the time when we shall know as we are known.

Notes and Comments.—Ver. 21. "Candlestick," lamp stand, "bed," or couch—under this, on a large measure, the little vessel filled with oil could be placed in safety; but as *Erasmus* paraphrases thus: "The light is kindled by me in you, that by your ministry it may disperse the darkness of the whole world."

Ver. 22. "Nothing hid," REV. "save that it should be manifested. God so designs, "manifested," as John 3: 21, gradually now, fully, as 1 Cor. 4: 5. Nothing is to be hidden forever.

Ver. 23. "Therefore," all have not—a proverbial expression following an important statement.

Ver. 24. "What," Luke reads "how," both important, lit. "see what ye hear." "With what measure," in proportion as you give to others shall more be given to you.

Ver. 25. "He that hath," this is not arbitrary, but a law of the moral world; use begets capacity—neglect, incapacity. Use the spiritual knowledge and power God gives you, and you will be able to receive and use more.

Vers. 26, 27. "A man," the representative of God and Christ. "Sleep," "rise," go about his daily round as usual. "Grow up," under thy Divine care. "He knoweth not how," that is, the sower.

Vers. 28, 29. "Earth bringeth forth," independently of man, so in the kingdom of grace; God works in both—but though secret in growth, it is manifested in its fruit. Now man's agency is resumed; he sows and reaps, but cannot make to grow.

Ver. 30. "Whereunto," etc.—so the rabbis began their discourse. "With what comparison," REV. "in what parable."

Ver. 31. "Less than all" of those used in Jewish husbandry, although there are smaller known; but the saying was a Jewish proverb for anything very small—as such this is to be understood.

Ver. 32. "Greater," not absolutely, but relatively. *Thomson* says that it grows "tall as a horse and its rider." "Fowls," birds—so they do—rest on its branches and pick its seed.

Vs. 33, 34. "Able to hear," they could not bear plainer language, they could only receive the truth by degrees. "Without the parable," that is, at this time and concerning the kingdom. "When they were alone," blessed privilege of Christ's disciples.

Incidental Lessons.—That those who have been enlightened by Christ should communicate to others.

That all now hidden shall be made manifest.

That in hearing the Gospel we should remember our responsibilities.