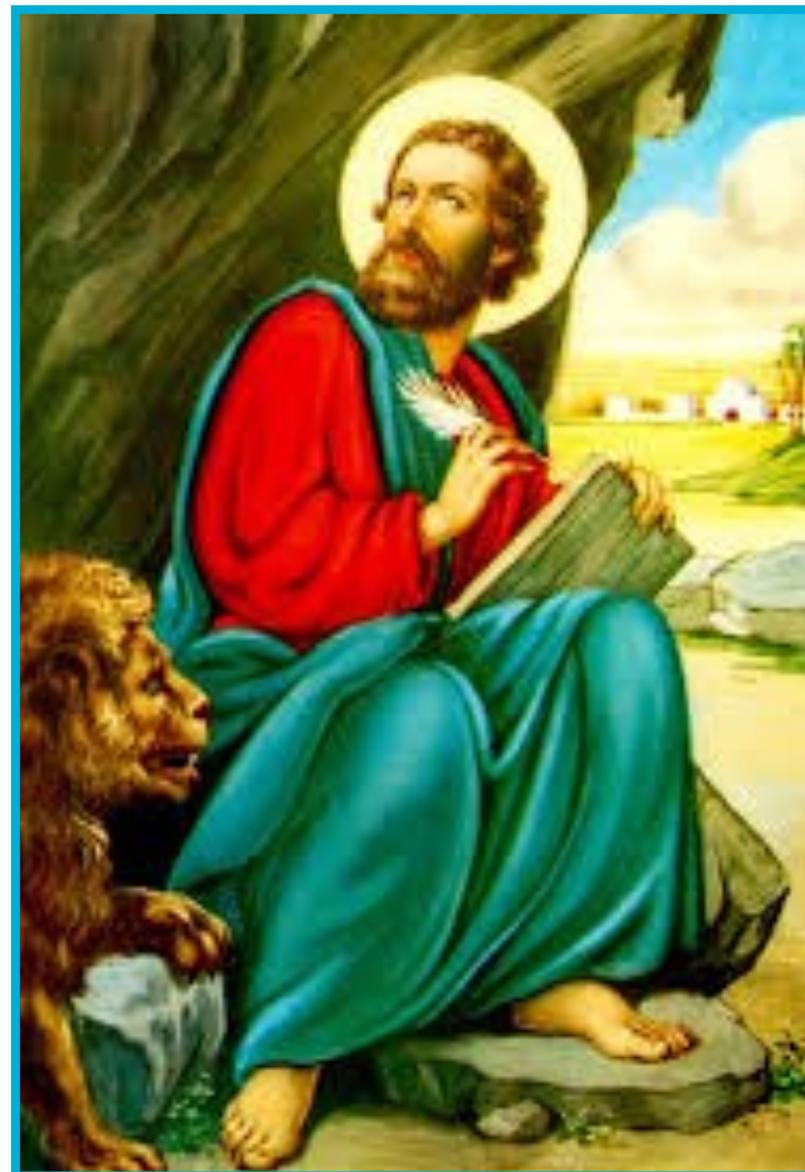




THE GOSPEL OF MARK

CHAPTER 4: 1-40



For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent* that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.

Mark wrote down Peter's account of the 'good news'. Peter was one of the first twelve of Jesus' disciples, and the first to publicly recognize Him as the Messiah. Peter, through Mark, shows us that Jesus fulfills all the criteria of the Servant-Messiah our Ransom, who was prophesied by Isaiah some 750 years earlier (Isaiah 42:1-9; 49:5-7; 52:13-53:12). Jesus is portrayed as a slave, caring for people and serving God (Mark 1:32-35). There are therefore no details of His birth, only of the beginning of His service (Mark 1:1,9).

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapide's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapide's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

Mark 4: 1-40

Douay Rheims Version

The parable of the sower. Christ stills the tempest at sea.

1. And again he began to teach by the sea side; and a great multitude was gathered together unto him, so that he went up into a ship, and sat in the sea; and all the multitude was upon the land by the sea side.
2. And he taught them many things in parables, and said unto them in his doctrine:
3. Hear ye: Behold, the sower went out to sow.
4. And whilst he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the birds of the air came and ate it up.
5. And other some fell upon stony ground, where it had not much earth; and it shot up immediately, because it had no depth of earth.

leads to advancement in good works. The *full corn* fructifies in *the ear* when virtue makes such great progress that it has its perfect work."

Christ here intimates that the Apostles, and those who work for the conversion of souls, ought with long-suffering to await the fruit of their labours, as husbandmen do. They ought to cherish those who are tender in the faith, and gradually lead them on to the height of virtue by teaching, admonishing, and exercising them. Let no one, therefore, says Bede, who is beheld to be of good purpose in the tenderness of his mind, be despised, because the fruit takes its rise from *the blade*, and becomes *corn*.

Symbolically: The Scholiast says the *blade* was in the law of nature, the *ear* in the law of Moses, the *fruit* in the Gospel.

Ver. 29. *And when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he pulleth in the sickle.* Greek, *ὅταν δὲ παραδῶ ὁ καρπός*, that is, *when indeed the fruit has brought itself forth*; for fruit is here in the nominative case. The Syriac has, *when it has become fat*; Arabic, *when it is perfect*. This is a Hebraism, for in Hebrew verbs in the conjugation *Hitpael* have a passive, or reflex, signification, by which the agent receives the action in himself, so that the agent is the same as the recipient of the action. Wherefore some codices read, *when the fruit has produced itself*. Otherwise Maldonatus explains, "When the fruit, that is, the seed itself, which was the fruit of former seed, shall have brought forth, that is to say, other seed from itself."

Ver. 33. *And with many such parables He spake the word unto them, as they were able to hear it*, that is, as they were worthy to hear, as Maldonatus says, from Bede and Euthymius. More simply and plainly, Theophylact and Franc. Lucas explain *with such*, *i.e.*, common and easy *parables*, which all could understand, not with what was abstruse; so that they might take in their literal drift, and perceive that there was something heavenly and divine lying beneath the surface, although they did not comprehend each particular. Thus, by what was known of the parable they were stirred up by Christ to investigate what lay hid.

Ver. 36. *As He was in the ship.* The disciples took up Christ upon the deep sea, that they might cross over it with Him; Christ, I say, as He was in the ship, namely, sitting and teaching the people standing on the shore. This is plain from ver. 1, for afterwards it appears that He changed His position, sleeping in the ship. It marks the ready obedience of the disciples, and in turn Christ's facile accommodation of Himself to their promptitude, that He might escape the tumult of the thronging multitude. The Syriac translates, *when He was in the ship*; the Arabic, *they took Him up in the ship*. And there were other ships with Him. It happened by the counsel of God that the many persons who were carried in those ships should be spectators and witnesses of the miracle very shortly to be wrought by Christ, namely, the appeasing the tempest.

applied and explained. Moreover, by *the seed*, as SS. Chrysostom and Bede rightly explain, both here and in S. Matt. xiii., is signified *evangelical doctrine*. By the *field*, *hearers*; by the *harvest*, the *end of the world*, or each one's *death*, is meant.

Ver. 27. *And should sleep*, that is to say, *the sower, and rise, night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up whilst he knoweth not*. Some refer the words *rise night and day* to the *seed*; meaning that the *seed* should germinate, it knoweth not how, that is, like a man sleeping. More obviously, S. Chrysostom, Theophylact, Maldonatus, and others refer the words to *the sower*, so that *night* pertains to the word *sleep*, *day* to the word *rise*. The meaning is, As the husbandman who has sowed is sleeping idly in the night, and is employed in various occupations during the day, and thinks not about the seed, that seed is germinating by its own innate force, and is growing up whilst the husbandman knoweth it not. So also it puts forth *first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear*. So, too, in the same manner is the doctrine and preaching of the Gospel. They were sown by Christ and His Apostles, that is, they were preached from small beginnings. But by degrees they grew insensibly into the mature and mighty harvests of the faithful, whilst Christ was, as it were, sleeping in heaven, and permitting the Jews and unbelieving nations and tyrants to rise up against His Apostles, and persecute and kill them. It increases, I say, and propagates itself gradually, until it fills the world, when, the *harvest* being ripe, the *corn*, *i.e.*, the elect, shall be gathered into the granary of heaven.

By this parable, then, is signified the power of the Gospel, which by degrees has pervaded the whole world, and is converting it to Christ. Tacitly, also, it is signified that preachers of the Gospel must not glory in their preaching, as though they by it were converting the world. For, as the Apostle saith, "Neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase (1 Cor. iii. 7). Christ further intimates that preachers ought not to be downcast if they see small and tardy fruits of their preaching, because God will, by the few converted by them, gradually convert many more. So S. James, by means of seven, or, as some say, by nine, whom he converted in Spain, converted the whole country.

Ver. 28. *For the earth of itself bringeth forth fruit; first the blade, then the ear, afterwards the full corn in the ear*. Arabic, *Because the earth alone bringeth forth fruit; . . . afterwards the ear is filled, and when the fruit is perfect, then the sickle is applied, because it is harvest*. Thus, in like manner, by the preaching of the Gospel, the faith of Christ and His Church grew by various degrees of increase.

Moraliter: Expositors adapt these three expressions, *blade, ear, full corn*, to a threefold increment of virtues and merits. For the *earth* of our heart germinates, first, *the blade*, when it conceives good desires; secondly, *the ear*, when it proceeds to earnest working; thirdly, *the grain*, when it brings the works of virtue to full maturity and perfection. Theophylact says, "*The blade* is the beginning of good; *the ear* is when we resist temptations; *the fruit* is perfect work."

Hear S. Gregory (*Hom. 15, in Ezek.*), "To produce *the blade* is to hold the first tender beginning of good. The *blade* arrives at perfection when virtue conceived in the mind

6. And when the sun was risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.
7. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.
8. And some fell upon good ground; and brought forth fruit that grew up, and increased and yielded, one thirty, another sixty, and another a hundred.
9. And he said: He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.
10. And when he was alone, the twelve that were with him asked him the parable.
11. And he said to them: To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but to them that are without, all things are done in parables:
12. That seeing they may see [*That seeing they may see: in punishment of their wilfully shutting their eyes, (St. Matt. 13. 15,) God justly withdrew those lights and graces, which otherwise he would have given them, for their effectual conversion*], and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand: lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.
13. *And he saith to them: Are you ignorant of this parable? and how shall you know all parables?*
14. *He that soweth, soweth the word.*
15. *And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown, and as soon as they have heard, immediately Satan cometh and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.*
16. And these likewise are they that are sown on the stony ground: who when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with joy.
17. And they have no root in themselves, but are only for a time: and then when tribulation and persecution ariseth for the word they are presently scandalized.
18. And others there are who are sown among thorns: these are they that hear the word,
19. And the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts after other things entering in choke the word, and it is made fruitless
20. And these are they who are sown upon the good ground, who hear the word, and receive it, and yield fruit, the one thirty, another sixty, and another a hundred.
21. And he said to them: Doth a candle come in to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?
22. For there is nothing hid, which shall not be made manifest: neither was it made secret, but that it may come abroad.
23. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.
24. And he said to them: Take heed what you hear. In what measure you shall mete, it shall be measured to you again, and more shall be given to you.
25. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, that also which he hath shall be taken away from him.

26. And he said: So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the earth,
 27. And should sleep, and rise, night and day, and the seed should spring, and grow up whilst he knoweth not.
 28. For the earth of itself bringeth forth fruit, first the blade, then the ear, afterwards the full corn in the ear.
 29. And when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.
 30. And he said: To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? or to what parable shall we compare it?
 31. It is as a grain of mustard seed: which when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that are in the earth:
 32. And when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches, so that the birds of the air may dwell under the shadow thereof.
 33. And with many such parables, he spoke to them the word, according as they were able to hear.
 34. And without parable he did not speak unto them; but apart, he explained all things to his disciples.
 35. And he saith to them that day, when evening was come: Let us pass over to the other side.
 36. And sending away the multitude, they take him even as he was in the ship: and there were other ships with him.
 37. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that the ship was filled.
 38. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, sleeping upon a pillow; and they awake him, and say to him: Master, doth it not concern thee that we perish?
 39. And rising up, he rebuked the wind, and said to the sea: Peace, be still. And the wind ceased: and there was made a great calm.
 40. And he said to them: Why are you fearful? have you not faith yet? And they feared exceedingly: and they said one to another: Who is this (thinkest thou) that both wind and sea obey him?

1 *The parable of the sower, 14 and the meaning thereof.* 21 *We must communicate the light of our knowledge to others.* 26 *The parable of the seed growing secretly,* 30 *and of the mustard seed.* 35 *Christ stilleth the tempest on the sea.*

Ver. 10. *And when He was alone:* Gr. *καταμόνας*, Vulg. *singularis, solitary, by Himself.* The twelve that were with Him asked Him. The Greek, Syriac, and Arabic have *with the twelve*, meaning that the seventy disciples, who, with the twelve Apostles, were followers of Jesus, asked Him what was the meaning of the parable of the Sower.

Ver. 21. *Doth a candle come in, i.e., is it brought into a house, to be put under a bushel or under a bed?* That it should be hidden under a vessel? No! but that it should be exposed publicly, and give light to all. Christ signified by this parable that it was not His will that the mysteries of this parable and the other doctrines of the Gospel

should be concealed and hidden, but that His disciples should unfold them in their time, and communicate to others who at that time were not able to receive them. It was His will that they should publish and preach them openly. This is plain from what follows.

Ver. 22. *For there is nothing hid which shall not be made manifest; neither was it made secret, but that it may come abroad.* This is the Greek and Latin reading. Although the doctrine of the Gospel and My deeds and words are as yet hidden and secret, I do not wish them always to remain so. At the proper time they must be openly proclaimed by you, O My disciples. So SS. Jerome and Bede. This is what Christ says in S. Matt. x. 27, *What I say unto you in darkness, that speak ye in light, &c.*

Ver. 24. *And He said unto them, Take heed what ye hear.* The meaning, says Euthymius, is, "Attend to the things which ye hear of Me, that ye may understand them, and commit them to memory, that when the proper time shall arrive ye may communicate them to others." And He assigns the reason, which, as Theophylact says, is, "That none of My words may escape you." Hear Bede, "He teaches us carefully to hear His words, in such manner that we should carefully digest them in our hearts, and be able to bring them forth for the hearing of others."

In what measure you shall mete, it shall be measured to you again, and more shall be given to you. He means, if ye largely and copiously communicate and preach My doctrine to others, I also will copiously impart to you more understanding and greater wisdom, grace, and glory, as a recompense and reward to you. Thus fountains, the more they pour out above, the more they receive from below. Therefore, let preachers, teachers, and catechists learn from this promise of Christ, that the more pains they bestow in teaching others, the more grace and wisdom they will receive from Christ themselves, according to the words, "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he that soweth in blessings," *i.e., abundantly, "shall reap also in blessings"* (2 Cor. ix. 6), *Vulg.*

Ver. 25. *For he that hath, to him shall be given; and he that hath not, that also which he hath shall be taken away from him.* *Hath*, that is, *uses*, and shows that *he hath* by using. For such a one hath indeed, but he who useth not a gift or grace hath it but in name. This is what theologians say, that he who uses his grace hath it in a second act; but he who uses it not hath it only in the first act, that is, in power and possession. The meaning therefore is, he who, by study or by imparting to others, uses learning given him by God, an increase of learning shall be given; but from him who uses not his learning, shall God take it away.

Ver. 26. *And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the earth.* This is another parable, different from that of *the Sower*, which precedes it. Both, however, are taken from *seed*, but differently