

**1. Read (Seek)** — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

**2. Meditate (Find)** — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

**3. Pray (Ask)** — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

**4. Contemplate (Taste)** — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence. **How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

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[1] CCC 546  
[2] Aquinas, Catena  
[3] ibid.  
[4] cf. ibid.  
[5] ibid.

# Quick Connect

**What is the Gospel saying? Mark 4:26-34** — Pg. 1

**What is the Church saying Past and Present?** Pages 1-3

**What is God saying to you through this passage?** Page 4

## Gospel Reading – Mark 4:26-34

Jesus said to the crowds: “This is how it is with the kingdom of God; it is as if a man were to scatter seed on the land and would sleep and rise night and day and through it all the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how. Of its own accord the land yields fruit, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the grain is ripe, he wields the sickle at once, for the harvest has come.” He said, “To what shall we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable can we use for it? It is like a mustard seed that, when it is sown in the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth. But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade.” With many such parables he spoke the word to them as they were able to understand it. Without parables he did not speak to them, but to his own disciples he explained everything in private.

## Spiritual Reading – Office of Readings

*From a treatise on the Lord’s Prayer by Saint Cyprian, bishop and martyr*  
Let your prayer come from a humble heart

When we pray, our words should be calm, modest and disciplined. Let us reflect that we are standing before God. We should please him both by our bodily posture and the manner of our speech. It is characteristic of the vulgar to shout and make a noise, not those who are modest. On the contrary, they should employ a quiet tone in their prayer. Moreover, in the course of this teaching, the Lord instructed us to pray in secret. Hidden and secluded places, even our own rooms, give witness to our belief that God is present everywhere; that he sees and hears all; that in the fullness of his majesty, he penetrates hidden and secret places. This is the teaching of Jeremiah: Am I God when I am near, and not God when I am far away? Can anyone hide in a dark corner without my seeing him? Do I not fill heaven and earth? Another passage of Scripture says: The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, observing both good and wicked men. The same modesty and discipline should characterize our liturgical prayer as well. When we gather to celebrate the divine mysteries with God’s priest, we should not express our prayer in unruly words; the petition that should be made to God with moderation is not to be shouted out noisily and verbosely. For God hears our heart not our voice. He sees our thoughts; he is not to be shouted at. The Lord showed us this when he asked: Why do you think

evil in your hearts? The book of Revelation testifies to this also: And all the churches shall know that I am the one who searches the heart and the desires. Anna maintained this rule; in her observance of it she is an image of the Church. In the First Book of Kings we are told that she prayed quietly and modestly to God in the recesses of her heart. Her prayer was secret but her faith was evident. She did not pray with her voice, but with her heart, for she knew that in this way the Lord would hear her. She prayed with faith and obtained what she sought.

Scripture makes this clear in the words: She was speaking in her heart; her lips were moving but her voice could not be heard; and the Lord heard her prayer. The psalmist also reminds us: Commune within your own hearts, and in the privacy of your room express your remorse. This is the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Through Jeremiah he suggests this: Say in your hearts: Lord, it is you that we have to worship. My friends, anyone who worships should remember the way in which the tax-collector prayed in the temple alongside the Pharisee. He did not raise his eyes immodestly to heaven or lift up his hands arrogantly. Instead he struck his breast and confessing the sins hidden within his heart he implored the assistance of God's mercy. While the Pharisee was pleased with himself, the tax-collector deserved to be cleansed much more because of the manner in which he prayed. For he did not place his hope of salvation in the certainty of his own innocence; indeed, no one is innocent. Rather he prayed humbly, confessing his sins. And the Lord who forgives the lowly heard his prayer.

### He Spoke in Parables – Lesson and Discussion

*“With many such parables he spoke the word to them”*

There are two levels to the gospel reading: the use of parables and the meaning behind them.

**Why does Jesus use the parable of seeds to talk about the kingdom of God?** One of Jesus' characteristic features when teaching is the use of parables. “Through his parables he invites people to the feast of the kingdom, but he also asks for a radical choice: to gain the kingdom, one must give everything. Words are not enough; deeds are required. The parables are like mirrors for man: will he be hard soil or good earth for the word? What use has he made of the talents he has received? Jesus and the presence of the kingdom in this world are secretly at the heart of the parables.”[1]

Let us break the parable down a little further.

**What is the “Kingdom of God”?** Saint Jerome teaches us that, “The kingdom of God is the Church which is ruled by God, and herself rules over men, and treads down the powers which are contrary to her, and all wickedness.”[2]

**What does the “seed” represent?** Again, we will go to Jerome who said, “For the seed is the word of life, the ground is the human heart,

and the sleep of the man means the death of the Savior. The seed springs up night and day, because after the sleep of Christ, the number of Christians, through calamity and prosperity, continued to flourish more and more in faith, and to wax greater in deed.”[3] The seed that was planted by Christ was not understood by the Pharisees and Sadducees, but to those who were humbled and believed in Jesus Christ who is the “word of life”. If we allow Christ's words to be planted in our hearts and we die with Him will also rise with Him. (cf. Rm. 6:8)

**What does the “sickle” symbolize?** The "sickle" symbolizes death or the time of final judgment on the world at the Second Coming of Christ. [4]

**How do we fit into this parable?** We all fit into this parable because we are allowed to co-operate in God's kingdom. We have to realize that in the grand scheme of things, we are but a speck of dust. However, God takes us and allows us to bear much fruit for His kingdom. We should stop and think of the great dichotomy of how great and large God is, and how little and insignificant we are. When we humble ourselves, then we are greatly exalted as illustrated in the first reading.

Saint Chrysostom said, “Christ himself is the man who rises, for He sat waiting with patience, that they who received seed should bear fruit. He rises, that is, by, the word of His love, He makes us grow to the bringing forth fruit, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand, by which is meant the day, and on the left, by which is meant the night of persecution; for by these the seed springs up and does not wither.”[5]

### Discussion Questions

How does this parable relate to our life?

(strongly encourage a Lectio Divina discussion on this question.)

What can we do to prepare our heart (the "soil") to be ready to plant and cultivate the seeds of God?