

GROWING IN SECRET

The Rev. B. David Holm

Lesson: Mark 4:26-29

“For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head” (Mark 4:28).

The lesson we read tells us how the Lord causes food to grow from the earth for us. Now you know that good food is important for us to grow strong and healthy. But the Lord gives us much more than food. He gives us each and every good thing we have. In the Word the “crops of the earth” stand for or “correspond” to the heavenly food the Lord gives us. And what is this spiritual food? It is the Lord’s good and truth—His love and His wisdom. This is the food we must have if our minds are to be fed, if our characters are to grow and be healthy.

How are we fed the Lord’s good and truth? Every time we learn from the Word the difference between right and wrong, between good and evil, we are being given the Lord’s good and truth. If we take these teachings into our minds and try to live by them, then we have (in a very real way) eaten of the Lord’s good and truth, and He will cause our minds and characters to grow strong.

Now, as you know, our natural food does not come to us, all prepared, straight from the Lord. First the seeds have to be planted. Then they must sprout and grow and produce crops. When the crop is ripe, it must be harvested and prepared before we can eat it and be nourished by it. We read about this in the Gospel of Mark where it spoke about the grain growing.

Now the same thing is true of the heavenly food from the Lord. The Lord sows the seeds. Each time we learn some true thing from the Word—something about the Lord or heaven or how we should live—each time this happens, seeds of truth are planted in our minds. Who sows them? The Lord, of course.

As we pay attention to these truths and take a real interest in them, the Lord causes them to sprout and grow in our minds. But we must tend these little new growing shoots of truth. We must keep them free from weeds and insects—from false ideas and evil thoughts that would choke and destroy them. If we do, they continue to grow in us and begin to influence our daily thoughts. We begin to think from the Word of the Lord.

And then a wonderful thing happens. We begin to think of ways in which we can *live* the truths we have learned. We think and plan of ways to fight evil and do good things in our lives. The plants in our minds begin to produce young heads of grain. As we try to live what we know is true, we really begin to do what is good and the heads of grain grow and ripen. Now the grain is ready for the harvest—ready for real use in life. So it is with us when we actually begin new and useful lives which *live* the truths we have learned. All this is what is meant by the text we began with: “For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head” (Mark 4:28).

But who does all this for us? Who is the one who sows the seeds of truth and causes them to grow, develop and bring forth grain in a good life? It is the Lord—although often it may seem as if we are doing it ourselves. It may seem as if we “bring forth crops” of ourselves. But we don’t; we can’t do it by ourselves. It is *always* the Lord who does it—but He does it in secret ways without our noticing it. This is so we can always be free. The Lord never forces His truth or good upon us. But, if we cooperate with Him and try to understand His truth and to live that truth, then He will bring us to the harvest. He will bring us into the good of life and nourish us with His good. Then, truly, we will feast in the presence of the Lord.

Amen.