Discussion Guide

Week of November 11, 2012 Mark 4:1–20

Passage Overview:
Mark 4 contains a series of parables about the kingdom, or "rule," of God. The OT speaks of a day when God will once again rule the earth after defeating the kingdoms of the world and saving his people. Accordingly, Mark portrays Jesus as God's King (Mark 1–3) who has come with God's authority to God's world to usher in God's kingdom. And yet it comes secretly (v11) through the word of God so that people have an opportunity to repent and escape God's judgment. But his kingdom's secret coming will give way to open glory and triumph in the future when God's rule will one day fill the world (v32) for all to see (v22).

Understanding God's Word—Read Mark 4:1–20.

- What is the main point of this parable (*hint: look at verse 9*)? What does it tell us about the kingdom of God?
- Identify the four types of soil (vv3–9). How does Jesus describe each type?

Living and Applying God's Word

- What are the various ways we mis-hear the word of the kingdom, according to Jesus?
- In vv10–12, who are the two groups of people Jesus is talking about? What characterizes each group? What is the "secret of the kingdom"? How does vv10–12 (v12 quotes Isaiah 6:9–10) speak to the sovereignty of God in salvation?
- Consider what this parable teaches us about the Christian life:
  - Nothing is more important in the Christian life than listening to and understanding the Word of God.
  - Most spiritual growth occurs slowly—not quickly or dramatically.
  - Self-deception is easy.
  - Fruit (see Galatians 5:22–23) is a necessary result of being a Christian.

Turning to God in Faith and Repentance

- Which of the four soils do you identify with now? Why? Which of the four soils have you identified more with in the past? Why?
- How should we react when people are indifferent to what we tell them about the Christian message? What if they instead respond enthusiastically, but never really grow or finally give up altogether? Have we failed? What hope does this parable give?
- How can this parable help us when we feel pressure or temptation to give up proclaiming the gospel, and to do something more attractive or comfortable instead?

Pray
Ask God to open the hearts of people you know that are like one of the unfruitful soils, so that they will see that Jesus is King. Thank God for his Word and for his faithful servants who are sowing it throughout the world. Pray especially for the persecuted church.

Announcements

- Adoption Roundtable (Nov. 11, 6–7:30 p.m.)
- Ladies' Lunch (Nov. 13, noon) *RSVP to sigourney@insidecrosspointe.com.*
- Community Group Leader Training (Nov. 14, 6:30–7:30 p.m.)
- Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes (due Nov. 18)
- Starting Pointe membership class (Nov. 30–Dec. 2) *RSVP to robert@insidecrosspointe.com.*
- Children's Ministry Orientation (Dec. 9, 9 a.m.)