

## Alone with Jesus

‡ **Scattering the powerful seed** (vv.26-29)

‡ **Watching God's kingdom grow** (vv.30-34)

In the name of Jesus Christ **Alone**, dearly redeemed fellow disciples:

Can you believe the bid for lunch with Warren Buffet? To benefit San Francisco homeless: \$2.1 million. It's not even a buffet with Buffet. It's just lunch! Can't they see that hearses don't have trailers? There are no "doggy bags" for dollars when you die. How perverted to pay for riches so unstable, and not answer the door when the Savior calls: ***"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."*** (Revelation 3:20 NIV)

It's a great concept. Moms and dads find as their children age from elementary into teen wonders how good it is to have a date with your daughter or time with just your son. I just discovered this is a major emphasis of Mark's Gospel the way Jesus worked for time **Alone** with His disciples. This flies in the face of American religion, but nothing is better than to be **Alone with Jesus**....

‡ **Scattering the powerful seed** (vv.26-29)

How do you measure success in life as a single mom trying to raise your son? How with an unresponsive wife and children who follow her? What is a successful ministry? Or career?

Bigger families are still the measure of success in our society, not the number of kids, but the size of time and toys. But will a big house and full bank account guarantee success in marriage and parenting? Pastors and congregations constantly trip on the Cornerstone thinking a building project is a sure sign of ministry success. Big plans and big bucks are the typical TV preacher's proof. But where would you find the true measure of success in all these things if you could look into the heart of God?

If only it were just young parents and pastors with this problem! But it does not go away with age. If anything, Martin Luther was right about the increased temptations of coveting position in the middle years and lusting after earthly wealth in the golden years. *How-to...* books on everything are a dime a dozen. And this mindset seems to fit the farmer in Jesus' first parable who doesn't really ***"scatter seed"*** (NIV). That's a fine translation in *The Parable of the Sower* preceding and *The Parable of the Mustard Seed* which follows. But here the Greek original (βαλλω) means "to throw," almost as if the man is aiming the seed to miss the path and rocks and weeds to hit the good soil from Jesus' *Parable of the Sower*.

Then Jesus drills the point of this *Parable of the Growing Seed*. Focus is fine, but ***"night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe,"*** i.e., *as soon as the seed allows, "he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."* Do you see? It doesn't matter how he throws or how he worries. The power is in the seed. At home or in church if we are busy **Scattering the powerful seed** we can leave the results **Alone with Jesus**.

Worry is a sin whether you're a pastor or a people, a mom or dad, worker or boss, kid in school or athlete professional – all of life begins and ends with God. And how it turns out for you on earth is all up to Him. He wants you to work hard, take advantage of opportunities and leave the results to His tender loving care for you. *"Not what these hands have done Can save this guilty soul; Not what this toiling flesh has borne Can make my spirit whole."* *"Thy grace alone, O God, To me can pardon speak; Thy power alone, O Son of God, Can this sore bondage break."* (TLH 389:1,5) There's something far more important than earthly success. And you'll always know what it is when you're **Alone with Jesus**.

Why did He keep leaving the crowds behind? Why ignore His mocking brothers' advice to make a name for Himself at the big feast in Jerusalem and instead go up unnoticed by the crowds? Why record such a shocking plunge in popularity from feeding the 5,000 at the beginning of John 6, to less than twenty-four hours later left with only the Twelve? What is Jesus telling us? ***“Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*** (Matthew 6:33 NIV) Then you'll be able to appreciate the awesome wonder of this: ***“The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”*** (Luke 19:10 NIV) All that matters in the end is that God gets you home to heaven. Trust God and keep **Scattering the powerful seed**. It's not just lunch. It's **Alone with Jesus**...

### ✠ **Watching God's kingdom grow (vv.30-34)**

If I held up a mustard seed, you could barely see it. But if you came upon one in the Middle East, you couldn't miss it. Shade is hard to find. So when the birds find the mustard tree, they're content to cool off where the sun doesn't beat so hard on their tiny feathers. Jesus' lesson is clear as a goose in a jet engine. A relatively small bird can bring down a mighty jet at the sacrifice of its life. And Jesus with His seemingly insignificant death on the cross brought down death itself and sin and Satan. His death and resurrection **Alone** can shade your soul from blazing guilt and shame. **Alone with Jesus** is all you need.

The lesson is simple; the application defies our human logic. This week a prominent Lutheran pastor in our northern suburbs requested a call from his synod officials to go somewhere else. They held three open forums and the comments apparently were not very encouraging. Complaints about the handling of church finances were high on the list. After over twenty years of working there, he's ready to go somewhere else, and it sounds as if the congregation agrees with him.

Contrast that with God's undeserved love here at New Life. By God's grace after over twenty years your pastor got a Call, but he didn't ask for it. In our open forum, private conversations, and emails, only one negative comment emerged, something that's been in my prayers for several years. Last Sunday's sermon focused on this in Jesus' Revelation letter to the church in Ephesus: ***“You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.”*** (2:4-5 NIV) God's message to this pastor is, “If you do not repent of your pride and laziness, you cannot minister here.” God's message to this congregation is, “If you do not repent of your pride and laziness, you will have no congregation here.” Notice not a word about membership or attendance records, just the call to repent and return to that ***“first love”*** that wants only to work and succeed **Alone with Jesus**.

This is why I asked to serve as your “New Pastor,” **Watching God's kingdom grow Alone with Jesus**. Every opportunity our Lord allows we want to scatter the **powerful seed** of His Word. Let God give the increase as He wills. “Do not despise the little things,” the LORD keeps commanding as He said to the Israelites back from Exile in Babylon. Some wept at the tiny new temple compared to the old one built by Solomon. But the LORD commanded the leaders, ***“Be strong...,”*** and lifted their spirits, ***“for I am with you....My Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.’ This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,’ says the LORD Almighty. ‘The silver is mine and the gold is mine,’ declares the LORD Almighty. ‘The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,’ says the LORD Almighty. ‘And in this place I will grant peace,’ declares the LORD Almighty.”*** (Haggai 2:4-9 NIV)

***“With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.”*** (Mark 4:33f NIV) **Alone with Jesus** we have the peace of God that frees from guilt and fear. Let the rest eat their lunch. Jesus who died to wash our sins away feeds us now with Word and sacrament. The greatest banquet awaits **Alone with Jesus** and all our loved ones in Him. Whether we wake or sleep, God's kingdom comes. **Alone with Jesus** and **with Jesus Alone**. Amen.

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New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church  
180 County Rd F - Shoreview, MN 55126