



Surprised by Love

An exploration of
Mark's Gospel

Oct 8 - Nov 19

**Discussion questions for week 3:
Stories of Confusion and Enlightenment
Mark 4:1-34**

1. As you reflect on Sunday's message, what point, principle, or insight stands out as helpful, insightful, or challenging?
2. Reflect on this quote from the message: "The whole of Jesus' ministry was to establish a community so convinced of their Belovedness to God that they proclaim the Belovedness of others." What stands out to you? Do you feel loved by God? Why or why not?
3. Read the Parable of the Sower from Mark 4:3-9. Who do you think the sower is? Why do you think the sower is spreading seeds so carelessly?
4. Barbara Brown Taylor says: "If this is really the parable of the Sower and not the parable of the different kinds of ground, then it begins to sound quite new. The focus is not on us and our shortfalls but on the generosity of our maker, the prolific sower who does not obsess about the condition of the fields, who is not stingy with the seed but who casts it everywhere." Have you heard a message on this parable before? If so, did it emphasize the sower or the soil? How does it feel to know that God's generosity is not dependent on your responsibility?
5. In the message from Sunday, we saw that proximity matters when it comes to understanding the teachings of Jesus. Read Mark 4:10. What does it look like to be close to Jesus today?
6. Read Mark 4:11. What do you think Jesus means by, "The secret of the Kingdom of God?"

7. In several parables, Jesus compared the kingdom of God to seeds that produce an abundant harvest. Read Mark 4:26-32. What do you think these two parables teach us about the kingdom of God?

Practice for the week: Centered in Jesus

Sometimes, we are tempted to think that we have not accomplished enough, that we are not good enough, or that we are not deserving of anything good. In Mark 4, we are reminded that God sows the seed, and God is responsible for its growth. We just have to center ourselves in Jesus and rest in His presence. Resting in God is not about ceasing work but making space for God to work. This week, spend at least 5-10 minutes every day sitting in silence, quieting your mind, and trying to be present. Each day, at the end of your time of silence, write down how you feel and any thoughts that emerge.