

Take-Home Sheet | Session 4

The Secret of the Kingdom (Mark 3:7-4:34)

A Ransom for Many: A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Mark

What We Found

As opposition hardened, Jesus founded: on the mountain, covenant geography, he appointed Twelve, the number of Israel's tribes (Exodus 24:4), refounding the covenant people around himself, with Simon Peter named first. Their job description has a non-negotiable order: "to be with him, and to be sent out." Communion before mission, always.

We handled the two hardest sayings in Mark with the Church's calm. The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, read with its frame (3:28 promises ALL sins can be forgiven; 3:30 shows the scribes calling the Spirit's work demonic), is final impenitence: the fixed refusal of mercy itself. If you fear you have committed it, take heart: such fear is strong evidence the Spirit is still at work in you, for the hardened do not lose sleep; bring it to Confession, and to a good pastor if it persists. And "your mother and your brothers": Scripture's "brother" covers kinsmen broadly, Lot is Abraham's "brother" though actually his nephew (Genesis 13:8; 14:14), Mark himself shows us a different Mary as mother of "James and Joses" (15:40), and Jesus entrusting his mother to John (John 19:26-27) has always been hard to square with other living sons; the texts converge with the Church's ancient faith. Far from slighting Mary, "whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother" crowns her: among his disciples, no one has answered God's will more perfectly than the woman of the fiat.

Then the parables: one seed, four soils, and the variable is never the seed but the ground it lands on. The seed growing secretly, found only in Mark, gives the farmer's whole job: sow, sleep, trust, harvest, "he knows not how" it grows. And the mustard seed becomes the prophets' great tree with birds nesting in its shade (Ezekiel 17:22-23), the nations sheltering in a kingdom that started absurdly small. We are the birds in those branches.

Voices of the Church

Voices of the Church: St. Jerome (Against Helvidius, On the Perpetual Virginity of Blessed Mary)

Scripture calls men "brothers" by nation, by kindred, and by affection, not only by birth from one mother: Lot, Abraham's nephew, and Laban, Jacob's uncle, each called "brother" in the idiom of Scripture. The "brothers" of Jesus are kinsmen, and the Church's ancient faith in the perpetual virginity of the Mother of God stands untouched by the idiom.

Voices of the Church: St. Augustine (Sermon 71, on the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit)

The blasphemy that "never has forgiveness" is final impenitence: the heart's persevering refusal, unto the end, of the forgiveness the Holy Spirit offers. What cannot be forgiven is the fixed refusal to be forgiven, for it slams the only door by which pardon enters.

Voices of the Church: St. Bede the Venerable (Commentary on Mark, on the seed growing secretly)

The preacher casts the word, but the increase is God's, working unseen in hearts by night and by

day. The kingdom does not advance by our anxiety, and the harvest belongs to the One who alone gives growth.

Live It This Week

- Practice "being with him" before "being sent": fifteen minutes of silence before the Blessed Sacrament, or at home before a crucifix, with no requests, just presence.
- Do a soil examen with Mark 4:1-20 one evening: ask the Holy Spirit to show you your path-places, your rocks, and your thorns. Write down one of each.
- Choose one person you have grown discouraged about and recommit to hidden sowing: pray for them daily this week, tell no one, and expect nothing visible.

Scripture Memory Verse

"Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother." (Mark 3:35, RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Mark 4:35-5:43. Four scenes, four kinds of impossible. Watch what question the disciples ask in the boat.

Catechism References

CCC 499-501, 543-546, 551, 858-860, 1864