



HG Questions

Mark 4:1-35

1. In what way are avoidance of pain and the quest for 'the things of this world' the same?
2. Why do we need faith to embrace both the unique trials that come from following Jesus and the self denial involved in saying no to maximising the pleasures of this present world?
3. Do we have any repentance that we need to make?
4. What have we learnt about true faith?
5. Why did the disciples (and us) need encouraging about the nature of the kingdom? (vv26-32)

EXCURSUS ON PUZZLING PARABLES

Jesus taught in parables not simply to explain hard truths but to actual conceal truths (v10-12). Why?

I think Jesus taught in puzzling parables as a way of bringing judgment on the Jewish nation. This is what Isaiah was sent to do at his time, and Jesus is the climax of that prophetic line of judgment. This same idea is seen when Jesus curses the fig tree and thereby pronounces judgment on Jerusalem. They had resisted God's word for so long that now the form of the message would reflect their own attitude toward its content. They had treated it as though it were gobbledygook, now it will appear in a form mirroring gobbledygook. It might be argued that the surprise is not that God made his long rejected - yet clear - message puzzling *but that he allowed any to understand at all.*

I don't think it was intended to always be the case that the message be delivered in hard to understand ways. The point here being that there is something unique about what Jesus is doing in the history of God's plan of redemption that doesn't continue after the ascension and gift of the Holy Spirit. Paul, for instance, can ask the believers to pray for him in order that he would "speak clearly as I ought to speak" (Colossians 4). Though I do think there is a parallel in the content of the message today. It is a still a single message that brings division and appears as life for some and death for others, foolishness for some and wisdom for others. God has revealed himself in such a way that he is clear to the humble and muddy to the proud.