

Mark 4
“Once Upon a Time” Week 1
Sermon date 9/7/2025

Get To Know You

- 1) Share your name, which service you usually attend & how long you’ve been going to Life Community Church.
- 2) What’s the most unusual job you’ve ever had?
- 3) When was your last vacation and where did you go?

Ice breaker

- 1) Did you have a favorite story that you read (or was read to you) as a child? If so, what was it?

Unpack It

What stood out to you from Sunday’s sermon and why? What was a takeaway or something that left you wondering about?

Looking Back

Mark 4 falls in the early part of Jesus’ ministry, where His popularity is growing, but so is opposition from religious leaders. At this stage, large crowds are following Him, curious about His teaching and miracles. Jesus begins to use parables—earthly stories with heavenly meaning—as His primary teaching method. Parables had deep roots in Jewish tradition; rabbis often used them to make truth memorable. But Jesus’ parables also carried a dual purpose: they revealed truth to those open to receiving it, while veiling it from those who rejected Him. This tension shows up right in this chapter, when Jesus explains why He speaks in parables.

Another important context is the setting. Much of Mark 4 takes place beside the Sea of Galilee, a central location in Jesus’ ministry. The sea was not only a place of livelihood for fishermen but also symbolized chaos and danger in Jewish imagination. The chapter ends with Jesus calming a literal storm on the sea—an act that would have resonated deeply with His Jewish audience, who knew Psalms that described God alone as the One who commands the seas (e.g., Psalm 107:29). In other words, Mark 4 shows both Jesus’ teaching authority and His divine power in action.

Diving In

Read together: Mark 4

Diving Deeper

- 1) Why do you think Jesus chose to teach in parables instead of plain explanations? What does that reveal about His audience?
- 2) In the parable of the sower, what do you notice about the sower's generosity in scattering seed everywhere? What does this teach us about God's Word?
- 3) The parable of the mustard seed highlights small beginnings that grow into something large. Where have you seen God work in small, unexpected ways that grew into something significant?
- 4) Read the following verses again: 10 When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. 11 He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables 12 so that, 'they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!'" How do you interpret what is being said here?
- 5) Jesus links hearing His word with obeying it (Mark 4:24–25). How do we guard against being "hearers only" in today's culture?
- 6) Which soil do you see yourself as, in the parable of the sower right now? Why?
- 7) What small "mustard seed" act of faith might God be inviting you to plant this week?

Closing It Out

- 8) Suggested prayer time together to close out: Pray for hearts that are like "good soil" — open to receive God's Word, eager to let it take root, and ready to bear fruit in everyday life. Ask God to help each person trust Him through the "storms" they may be facing, remembering that Jesus is present and powerful in the middle of them.

Take It Home

If you would like to press in a bit more this week, here is a prayer and reading guide for the week:

Day 1 – Monday

Focus: Mark 4:14 – "The farmer sows the word."

Reflection: God's Word is generously scattered into our lives.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for Your Word. Help me be attentive to it today and not let it be snatched away.

Day 2 – Tuesday

Focus: Mark 4:20 – "Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop."

Reflection: Good soil produces fruit.

Prayer: Lord, prepare my heart like good soil. Let Your Word grow in me and bear fruit that blesses others.

Day 3 – Wednesday

Focus: Mark 4:21 – “Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed?”

Reflection: Light is meant to shine.

Prayer: Jesus, let Your light shine through me today in my words, actions, and attitude.

Day 4 – Thursday

Focus: Mark 4:31–32 – “It is like a mustard seed... yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants.”

Reflection: God uses small beginnings for big impact.

Prayer: Lord, take the small seeds of faith and obedience I offer today and grow them into something greater than I imagine.

Day 5 – Friday

Focus: Mark 4:39 – “He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, ‘Quiet! Be still!’”

Reflection: Jesus has authority over every storm.

Prayer: Jesus, speak Your peace into the storms of my life. Help me trust Your presence when I feel afraid.

Day 6 – Saturday

Focus: Mark 4:41 – “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

Reflection: Jesus’ power reveals His identity as Lord.

Prayer: Lord, remind me again of who You are—powerful, present, and faithful. Grow my awe and trust in You.

Day 7 – Sunday

Focus: Reflect on the whole chapter.

Prayer: Thank You, God, for the ways You’ve spoken to me through Mark 4 this week. Help me carry these truths into worship and into the week ahead.