Mark - Commentaries by James Lampden Harris

Notes from Christian Annotator, Mark 4:31-32

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The parable of the grain of mustard seed appears to me to be set in manifest contrast with the parable of "the seed cast into the ground" (vv. 26-29). The first of the two parables presents to us the result at the time of harvest of that which had been growing for the most part secretly and imperceptibly in the world. It is in fact God's own work, which He is carrying on surely but noiselessly in the world. The good work which He begins in quickening a soul here, unheeded by the world, will be finished in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ, and be known as a work worthy of God, "when mortality shall be swallowed up of life." The children of God are not now known by the world in their lofty dignity as his children, but the day of their "manifestation" draweth nigh, and then shall they "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

One great hindrance now to the recognition of the sons of God by the world is, that the world has before its eyes a present palpable result in wide-spread Christianity, in other words in actual Christendom, "the grain of mustard seed become greater than all herbs." In this the world glories, and thus men have become "lovers of their own selves, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having the form, but denying the power of godliness." Wherever the true doctrine of the cross is received "in the power and demonstration of the Spirit," there the world, though it assume the name of Christ as its outward badge, is known to be the same world which rejected and crucified the Lord of Glory (1 John 5:19).

The first of these parables shows us the work of God in the midst of the world, the second that man has so corrupted the doctrine of Christ (which in its power sets self aside and only exalts Christ) as to make the very name of Christ subserve his own selfishness, and help on his own self-exaltation.

Presbutes The Christian Annotator 4:55 (1857).