(In preparation for gathered worship next week, October 26, 2008)

Mark 4:1-34

The most explosive commodity in our world is not dynamite. It is the word of God.

When you read God's word, or listen to it preached, or study it in a small group, what are your expectations? Merely to increase in biblical knowledge? Or to be changed . . . deeply . . . radically . . . supernaturally . . . exponentially?

The fourth chapter of Mark will surprise you by the sheer enormity of its message. Meditate on each of the thirty-five verses, and let the questions below lead you into the heart of the passage.

1) What is a parable?

2) Why would Jesus want some of his listeners to 'hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven?' (verse 12) Doesn't he want everyone to understand and be forgiven? Explain.

3) With which of the four soils in verses 13-20 do you most identify? Or to put it another way, what sort of an impact has the word of God made on you?

4) Do you see 'fruit' in your life? Is it exponential fruit: 'thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold'? (See verse 20) Give examples.

5) What do the subsequent mini-parables – in verses 21-25, 26-29 and 30-34 – add to the larger parable of the four soils'? What sort of growth do they suggest should be apparent in your life? Is it apparent? Explain