

Mark 4:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade,
then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

Analysis

Jesus describes growth stages: 'For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.' The phrase 'of herself' (αὐτομάτη, *automatē*—automatically, spontaneously) emphasizes soil's inherent productivity when seed is planted. Growth progresses through stages: 'blade' (χόρτον, *tender shoot*), 'ear' (στάχυν, *head of grain*), 'full corn' (πλήρης σῖτος, *mature grain*). This teaches gradual, progressive sanctification—spiritual growth occurs in stages, not instantaneously. Wise ministry recognizes and respects developmental stages, not demanding maturity from new believers. The emphasis on natural, organic growth guards against forced or manufactured spirituality.

Historical Context

Ancient agriculture followed predictable seasons and stages. Farmers understood grain development: germination → blade → head → mature grain → harvest. This cycle required patience—rushing was impossible. Jesus applies agricultural wisdom to spiritual realm: genuine growth takes time. Early church recognized this: new converts received catechesis before baptism; elders required mature faith (1 Timothy 3:6). Church history records tension between patience (allowing growth) and impatience (demanding instant maturity). Revivals sometimes produce immature converts requiring patient discipleship.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What stage of spiritual growth are you in, and how does this affect realistic expectations?
2. How can you practice patience with your own gradual growth and others' developmental stages?
3. What practices cultivate healthy, natural spiritual growth rather than forced or manufactured spirituality?

Interlinear Text

αὐτομάτη	γὰρ	ἡ	γῆ	καρποφορεῖ	πρῶτον	χόρτον	
of herself	For	G3588	the earth	bringeth forth fruit	first	the blade	
G844	G1063		G1093	G2592	G4412	G5528	
εἴτα	στάχυϊ	εἴτα	πλήρη	σῖτον	ἐν	τῷ	στάχυϊ
after that	the ear	after that	the full	corn	in	G3588	the ear
G1534	G4719	G1534	G4134	G4621	G1722		G4719

Additional Cross-References

Hosea 6:3 (Parallel theme): Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

Isaiah 61:11 (Parallel theme): For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

Colossians 1:10 (Parallel theme): That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Ecclesiastes 3:11 (Parallel theme): He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 (Parallel theme): To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

Matthew 13:26 (Parallel theme): But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

Philippians 1:6 (Parallel theme): Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: