

Mark 4 The Parable of the Sower & The Hearing Heart

Mark 4:1 And he began again to teach by the sea side; and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.

Jesus receives unprecedented popularity from the people and strong opposition from the Scribes and Pharisees which resulted in Jesus being charged with being in league with the Devil.

God speaks and we have a responsibility to listen.

God is speaking through the Messiah cf:

Hebrews 1:1-2 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

Is anybody listening?

This is the first recorded teaching in parables and is also found cf: Matt. 13:1-23 & Luke 8:4-15. Mark's report is almost exactly like that of Matthew, word for word, as well as the explanations that follow. Matthew gives the fullest account of this day's teaching, reporting a number of parables not found in Mark or elsewhere. The multitude was so large Jesus entered a small boat to avoid the press of the crowd.

Mark 4:2 And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine,

These parables are only specimens of Jesus' teaching. They are not all that He taught. This like everything that is recorded was written to produce faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Cf:

John 20:30-31 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name

The Psalmist had prophesied that the Messiah would speak in parables when He comes. cf:

Psalm 78:1-2 Give ear, O my people, *to* my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old:

Mark 4:3 Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow:

Matthew defines the sower as Jesus Matt 13:37, the seed as the Word of God Matt 13:19, and the earth is the heart Matt13:19.

Mark 4:4 And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

This type of person is a hard-hearted hearer. They are described as the wayside which was the paths through the fields that have become hard.

Mark 4:5 And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth:

This type of person is a shallow-hearted hearer.

Mark 4:6 But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.

Mark 4:7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

This type of person is a crowded-hearted hearer.

Mark 4:8 And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.

The Christian heart, a true disciple of Christ.

Mark 4:9 And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Mark 4:10 And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.

Mark 4:11 And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all *these* things are done in parables:

Mark 4:12 That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and *their* sins should be forgiven them.

That seeing they may see. Matthew 13:13 gives this saying more fully and clearly cf:

Isaiah 6:8-11 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate,

Mark 4:13 And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?

This parable is so simple and so obvious if you can't get this one you will not be able to understand the difficult parables.

Mark 4:14 The sower soweth the word.

Cf: Matthew 13:37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;

Mark 4:15 And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

The Hard Hearted Hearer – The Intellectual Disciple

(A) Distorted thinking about GOD, ritualism, customs, practices. They just can't put it together and understand. Legalism is an example of this kind of person.

(B) They are marble hearted disciples who have their own ideas about GOD. Baptized with a baptism of holy fervour instead of remission of sins – Refuse to follow the light they have been given – Not being born again they have - No Love-

I John 3:11-12 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

The path of their heart is hard from past foot, hoof, and wheel and the seed cannot take root. With each failure and rejection, hard defense barriers have been erected cf:

Hebrews 4:1-13 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left *us* of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard *it*. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh *day* on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this *place* again, If they shall enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Hebrews 10:38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

(C) Many claim to have been “born and raised up in the Church of Christ” ignoring the fact that you must be born again to enter the Kingdom cf:

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

And then God adds us to the Church if we have come in the way appointed cf:

Act 2:47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

(D) This kind of person has never really come to Jesus and allowed Him to deal with their emotions (feelings) –

John 6:37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out

(E) – or their will (life's daily practices) cf:

Luke 6:46-49 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

Mark 4:16 And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

Mark 4:17 And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

The Shallow Hearted Hearer – The Emotional Disciple

- (A) A heart of bedrock covered over with a thin layer of soil. A joyful beginning but like a tire with a slow leak, it always needs air (more and more emotion) or it goes flat.**
- (B) The seed is planted but the root soon reaches rock. It has no nourishment - intellect cf:**

I Pet 2:2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

and when the hot sun of problems arises they don't have the will to be a doer of the word cf:

James 1:22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves

- (C) We must love GOD with our minds and our lives as well as our feelings.**

Mark 4:18 And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,

Mark 4:19 And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

The Crowded Hearted Hearer – The Carnal Sinful Disciple

(A) GOD is demanding of us absolute loyalty and first place in everything in our lives – the thorns are sin.

(B) This disciple has no will to practice Christianity in his life. Cf:

I John 3:1-3 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

(C) GOD wants to reign supreme in our heart. Cf:

Exodus 20:3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

(D) Can you honestly thank GOD for your pleasures in life while you are doing them? cf:

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

If not, they are sin cf:

I John 5:17 All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

Mark 4:20 And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive *it*, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

The Christian Heart – A True Disciple of Christ

Luke amplifies Mark & Matthews account:

(A) Luke 8:15 But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep *it*, and bring forth fruit with patience.

(B) “Understand” – cf:

I Kings 3:9 Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?

(C) Fruit – Evangelism saving the lost soul is the work of the Church and the most important work we do ... cf:

John 15:1-8 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

And Christian Character is very important fruit cf:

Galatians 5:22-26 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another

Mark 4:21 And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?

Is the lamp put under a bushel? The Jews used lamps instead of candles. These were set on, not a candlestick, but a light stand. Cf: Matt. 5:15.

Mark 4:22 For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.

Mark 4:23 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

Mark 4:24 And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given

Take heed what you hear. Luke 8:18 says, "*How* you hear." Both admonitions are very important. Our ears should be deaf to evil counsel. We should hear attentively, earnestly and devoutly the word of the Lord.

Mark 4:25 For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

Mark 4:26 And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground

This parable is given only by Mark, but its general lesson is enforced by many parallel passages,

Isa. 55:9-11 For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.

James 5:7-8 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

1 Pet. 1:23-25 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But

the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

In the kingdom of grace, as in nature, we are laborers together with God; the results of our work depend on Him, and for the perfection of these results He takes His own time cf:

I Cor. 3:6-9 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, *ye are* God's building.

Hence, (1) it is ours to sow the seed (the truth), his to give it growth; (2) having sown, we are to wait for time and God to perfect it; (3) this he does according to the definite order of development--first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear; (4) not until there has been time for the development, are we to expect to reap. The lesson is one of trust and hope. We should cast seed the word of God, or the Gospel.

Mark 4:27 And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

Should sleep, and rise, etc. While giving the seed sown time to germinate and come forth.

Mark 4:28 For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

First the blade. There is a law of orderly development in natural growth, so also is it in reference to spiritual growth. Compare 1 John 2:12-14. Some growths are quicker than others, but in all there is *growth*. And we have no right to look for the end at the beginning, the ripened Christian experience in the young convert, the full corn in the first appearance of the blade. Observe, too, that we can know that *there is growth* by its results, though we know not *how*, and that each stage of the growth is more apparent than the preceding stage.

Mark 4:29 But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

The time of harvest is when the fruit is ripe; in this instance when the word had produced faith, repentance and obedience. Then those who exhibit the fruit are to be gathered into the church cf:

Acts 2:47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Mark 4:30 And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?

Mark 4:31 *It is* like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth:

Like a grain of mustard seed cf: Matt. 13:31-35 & Luke 13:18, 19.

Mark 4:32 But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

Mark 4:33 And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear *it*.

Mark 4:34 But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

Without a parable, cf: Matt. 13:36-43.

Mark 4:35 And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

On the same day, the day these parables were taught they went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

Mark 4:36 And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.

Mark 4:37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full

There arose a great storm. Cf: Matt. 8:23-27 and Luke 8:22-25. The Sea of Galilee lies 600 feet below the level of the Mediterranean Sea, and has a tropical climate. A short distance north are the high mountains of Lebanon. The heated air about the sea invites the rush of cold waves from the mountains producing bad storms.

Mark 4:38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

Mark 4:39 And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

Mark 4:40 And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

Mark 4:41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?