

Q: How many of you have ever flown on an airplane?

An airline stewardess goes through the emergency procedures

Q: How many tune out their instructions?

But this is a matter of life and death! To those who did listen, what they heard may save their lives.

The words of Jesus are a matter of life and death.

Many will tune them out, others will dismiss them, but those who truly hear will find life

Some Recap: Back in chapter 1 a man asked for a touch from Jesus;

By chapter 3 the crowds aren't waiting for a touch, they're pressing in around Him. Jesus tells His disciples to have a boat ready just in case, so they won't crush Him.

Now in chapter 4 we see Jesus from the boat. His magnitude with the crowds is growing.

Mark 4:1 Again he began to teach by the sea, and a very large crowd gathered around him. So he got into a boat on the sea and sat down, while the whole crowd was by the sea on the shore.

Remember that word 'shore' (or your translation may say 'land')- we'll come back to it

Mark 4:2 He taught them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them,

PARABLE- from two Greek words meaning 'to place' and 'beside'

The point is to place two things next to each other, one familiar, the other a mystery.

The mystery is revealed by contrasting and comparing it to what's familiar

"An earthly story with heavenly meaning"

Mark 4:3-9 "Listen! Consider the sower who went out to sow. ⁴As he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. ⁵Other seed fell on rocky ground where it didn't have much soil, and it grew up quickly, since the soil wasn't deep. ⁶When the sun came up, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it didn't produce fruit. ⁸Still other seed fell on good ground and it grew up, producing fruit that increased thirty, sixty, and a hundred times." ⁹Then he said, "Let anyone who has ears to hear listen."

Did you catch how Jesus sandwiched his parable?

He knew that everyone has ears, but not everyone has ears to hear

Mark 4:10-12 When he was alone, those around him with the Twelve asked him about the parables.

¹¹He answered them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to those outside, everything comes in parables ¹²so that they may indeed look, and yet not perceive; they may indeed listen, and yet not understand; otherwise, they might turn back and be forgiven."

What is Jesus doing? Why would Jesus teach in this way?

Now that large crowds are gathered, why does it seem as if He wants to conceal His message from them?

Remember in verse 1 the word 'shore'? ('crowd was by the sea on the shore')

It's the same Greek word used in v5 (soil), v8 (ground), and later in v20 (ground)

They don't yet realize, but Jesus is teaching about... them

The different soils represent the different people in the crowd

Spoiler: He's also talking about us!

Verse 12 might seem troubling; Jesus quotes from [Isaiah 6:9-10](#)

God tells Isaiah to go and preach to the people even though they won't listen to him.

In fact, by preaching to them they will only reject his message, and God, more and more.

So what's the point He's making?

Parables are a form of God's revelation, intended to both *reveal* and *conceal* His mystery

But why?

Speaking in parables separated the *curious* from the *serious*

A distinction has been unfolding throughout the book & we see it here again:

insiders (v10) and **outsiders** (v11)

Insiders are in, not because they are better, but because they are willing to know.

Outsiders are on the outside not because they *can't* come in, but because they *refuse* to go through the gate, which is Jesus ([John 10:9](#)).

Not everyone was ready to receive the message of the Kingdom of Heaven, the mystery which was Jesus!

Rather than not teach them, because He is merciful and loving, even to those whose hearts aren't ready, He gives them only as much as they have the capacity to receive and retain

Concerning v. 11-12

[William Barclay](#)- *"He said it with the wistful longing of frustrated love, the poignant sorrow of a man who had a tremendous gift to give, which people were too blind to take."*

In other words, Jesus knows that those who are willing to hear, they will.

Those who don't want to accept, they won't hear.

At least not today, but they may ponder on the parable and come to realize its weight tomorrow.

[Dallas Willard](#)-

"You see, the parables are an act of mercy to us because sometimes our hearts are hard. You and I both know that if we directly challenge someone with a hard heart, their heart will get even harder. So, in His love, mercy, and compassion, Jesus told a story....He told parables to help people begin their exploration of his kingdom."

But some were ready to hear that day; and here's a gospel principle:

If you are willing to hear God, He's eager to be heard

And so, to those with ears to hear, Jesus explains the parable

This parable helps explain why the Gospel doesn't have the effect in some people we hope it would.

It reveals that God doesn't change those who don't want to be changed.

It is not a question of what God CAN do.

(He could change all of us without our approval if that's what He wanted)

It is a question about what God WILL do.

At its core, it's a parable about how we respond to God

It's a warning to all hearers

Mark 4:13-14 Then he said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand all of the parables? ¹⁴The sower **sows the word**.

'Word' = Greek 'Logos'; refers to Jesus Himself and His work and teachings (John 1:1)

Mark 4:15 Some are like the word sown on **the path**. When they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word sown in them.

The path = Hardened Hearts

In Jesus' days, these were the majority of the religious leaders- hostile to Jesus and His message.

In our day, we see it also. Some people are brutally hostile towards Christianity

Seattle riot; No other religion is as mocked in the media as ours;

There is a real spiritual battle taking place, and here we see how it plays out.

There is an enemy watching. He doesn't want people to get the message of good news-
he will distort it, he will minimize it, he will ridicule it, he will harden people to it

Mark 4:16-17 And others are like seed sown on **rocky ground**. When they hear the word, immediately they receive it with joy. ¹⁷But they have no root; they are short-lived. When distress or persecution comes because of the word, they immediately fall away.

The Rocky Ground = Shallow Hearts

These people agree the saving message of Jesus is good...

but as soon as it gets tough, it's just not good enough for them. It's a pastime not a lifeline.

When cancer, divorce, unemployment come, it scorches the idea of faith

This type of person, the gospel cannot help, for the gospel is good news and a help to those who fully commit to Christ, not to those who jump ship at the first sign of trouble.

Mark 4:18-19 Others are like seed sown **among thorns**; these are the ones who hear the word, ¹⁹but the worries of this age, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

The Thorns = Crowded Hearts

This is a life that is horded with desires and worries;

a cluttered life so packed that there is no room left for Christ.

They initially hear and receive the gospel, but they are distracted.
Jesus is big enough to get their attention, but not bigger than their worries and desires

They *worry* more than they *trust* Jesus about
politics, economy, their finances, the future, family problems, their plans and dreams

They desire their habits, hobbies, relationships, material goods, etc. more than they desire Jesus

They're deceived by wealth; NOTE: wealth isn't the thorns, but the deceitfulness of wealth-
the illusion of power or security and worth; But *more* is never *enough*

Mark 4:20 And those like seed sown on **good ground** hear the word, welcome it, and produce fruit thirty, sixty, and a hundred times what was sown."

Good Ground = Receptive Hearts

They hear the word and they hold on to it. **They join their will to His word.**
the word is welcomed, it is cherished, it is seen not just as a message but a person, Jesus.

The good news is that **'good ground' has nothing to do with your goodness**, your knowledge, your ability or what you can offer; good ground is good because it allows the seed to go deep and do what the seed naturally does.
It takes root in the soil of humility

Jesus doesn't directly identify what makes good soil, good.
But He does give us some insight of its characteristics by describing what made the other soils bad.

Good soil are people who trust the message of Jesus
immediately so that it cannot be snatched away by satan.
deeply so that it is not withered by distress or persecution.
exclusively so that other concerns or desires do not strangle it.

Four Key Insights:

- **Many do not have ears to hear today. But it doesn't mean they won't hear tomorrow.**

This is why we must be relentlessly praying on behalf of those who aren't yet saved.

Jesus didn't say that the heart never changes.

Which means that if you are one of those who in the past hadn't grasped the message of salvation,
today is a new opportunity to do so

- **God scatters seeds liberally. We should do the same.**

For those paying attention, you may have asked yourself-
what kind of careless farmer is this? Throwing seeds any and everywhere. That's wasteful!

But this reveals something about God's heart- He sows lavishly and indiscriminately.
The condition of the soil does not deter him from offering seed.

He isn't wasting seed, He is waiting for harvest

Isaiah 55:10-11 For just as rain and snow fall from heaven and do not return there without saturating the earth and making it germinate and sprout, and providing seed to sow and food to eat, ¹¹ so my word that comes from my mouth will not return to me empty, but it will accomplish what I please and will prosper in what I send it to do.

We are encouraged to spread the Jesus in every place without prejudice and with abandon, regardless of soil conditions,.

- **The harvest is sure.**

Perhaps Jesus' disciples were feeling somewhat unmotivated.

They had been banished from the synagogue. All the religious elites regarded them with suspicion. It seemed as if their mission was failing. Like so much of their efforts were not achieving the results they wanted. Maybe they felt like they were wasting their time. It is likely that to some degree they were discouraged. Disillusioned. **It is likely some of us are too.**

But Jesus, through this parable, says to them and to us: Be patient, keep sharing Jesus. Keep working, and leave the rest to God. Because the harvest is sure.

- **If different individuals produce different amounts of fruit from the same seed, it's not the seed that is deficient.**

For those of us who are disciples of Jesus, and would identify with the good soil, we need to heed that this parable still also applies to us at all times.

Every day is a new opportunity to receive the Word of God and tend to the soil of our heart.

A new opportunity to abide in humility with Jesus and let Him show us what areas of our lives have become fallow ground.

V20 'hear' is in the present tense; suggesting it needs to continue

We are confronted with the task of examining every aspect of our lives and to determine where the good soil has eroded away

Two Invitations:

- **Receive the Word**

Share the Gospel- Make the invitation

- **Scatter the Word**

Call to action:

Stand up if you commit to sharing the good news with 10 people this week, or give them a gospel tract, or pray with them

(you may very likely need to go out of your way)

Hardened hearts- refuse to receive the Word

Shallow Hearts- receive the Word joyfully but not deeply

Crowded Hearts- receive the Word, but it is choked by worries & desires

Receptive Hearts- they Hear, Welcome & bear fruit

Let the gospel go deep, take root and bear fruit

- Fruit of salvation

- fruit of healing

- fruit of strength

- fruit of conviction

- fruit of hope

BULPEN-

In the beginning of the book Jesus was teaches in the synagogue, the religious hubs. But He is now forced to the outskirts. William Barclay said-

“Jesus was wise enough to know when new methods were necessary and adventurous enough to use them. It would be well if his church was equally wise and equally adventurous.”

Parables all have two parts: the vessel and the treasure within

The same sun that melts ice hardens clay. The same water that softness the potato hardens the egg.

Why does Jesus quote from Isaiah?

The book of Isaiah is about judgment and hope

Judgement against idolatrous Israel to be taken to exile

Hope that God will bring back a remnant

The secret of the kingdom of God is that the Kingdom of God has come in the person and words and works of Jesus. The secret is Jesus Himself

Examples: the path=religious rulers who want to kill Jesus

Rocky ground= the crowds that come and go

Thorns= rich young ruler, Judas

The seed may have ‘failed’ in three different soils, but it also succeeded in three different ways in good soil

We now have the task of the sower, to scatter the seed (His Word)

If not all received it well from Jesus, the same is true for us. Yet the seed must go out

Jesus tells what makes bad ground bad, but He doesn’t specify here what makes good soil good.

Why did some produce thirtyfold, some sixtyfold and still others hundredfold?

We are not told. What is specified is that we must continue to hear and receive the word.

Markan Sandwich v1-9 parable of the sower (the bread);
 v10-12 purpose of parables (the meat);
 v13-20 parable of the sower explained (the bread)

Psalm 115:4-8 Their idols are silver and gold, made by human hands.

⁵They have mouths but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see.

⁶They have ears but cannot hear, noses, but cannot smell.

⁷They have hands but cannot feel, feet, but cannot walk. They cannot make a sound with their throats.

⁸Those who make them are just like them, as are all who trust in them.

The word= logos

Refers to Jesus and his teachings (John 1)

1 Peter 1:23-25 because you have been born again—not of perishable seed but of imperishable—through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴For All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like a flower of the grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, ²⁵but the word of the Lord endures forever. And this word is the gospel that was proclaimed to you.

And we are discouraged from becoming proud when the seed takes root, since it is God who gives the growth.

1 Corinthians 3:5-9 What then is Apollos? What is Paul? They are servants through whom you believed, and each has the role the Lord has given. ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷So, then, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. ⁹For we are God's coworkers. You are God's field, God's building.

We will never know if someone has eyes to see unless we show them, ears to hear unless we tell them

The power of the seed to bring forth fruit in good soil does not belong to the sower- so don't despair, don't become discouraged by the apparent opposition or indifference or confusion to the gospel. Just be faithful to scatter the seed far and wide.

Q: What's the difference between *hearing* and *listening*?

Listening is *wanting* to hear