

He Who Has Ears to Hear, Let Him Hear

Ան որ լսելու ականջ ունի՝ թող լսէ

Mark 4:1-25

Jesus loves speaking with parables. In this chapter we will find a series of parables. Mark writes: **“He was teaching them many things in parables.”** (Mark 4:2 ESV); Mark adds in the end saying: **“with many such parables he spoke the word to them.”** (Mark 4:33 ESV).

Jesus used elements from their daily life, farmer, seed, sowing, light, measurement...

“The parable is not an illustration but is a mode of theological speech used to evoke a response.” Kenneth Bailey

We should be careful not to use a parable as just an interesting story.

Parables in general have different levels:

Level one: The entertaining story

Level two: Ethical examples

Level Three: Revelation of the secrets of the Kingdom of God

Level Four: Some hint of the nature of our Lord

-Story

-Ethics

-Theology

-Christology

1. The Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1-)

The Parable of the Sower has all these elements. Jesus seldom interpreted the parables, but he did this one.

KEY WORD

The key word here is the verb **“hear”** (*akouo*); it appears 13 times.

Jesus uses an affirmative verb: **Listen**

“Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow.” (Mark 4:3 ESV)

This will remind the audience the word ***Shema***, (Deut. 6:4) **Shema oh Israel...**

They recited this daily. Jesus’ words stand as a continuity of Shema.

“Listen my dear people; whoever have an ear listen, God is speaking to you...listen...hear His Word.....listen....”

“Listen PACC...listen my dear brothers and sisters...”

In Greek the verb “to hear” is *akouein*. And the verb “to obey” is *hupakouein*.

They added prefix *hup*, which means hyper.

In biblical terms, obedience is “hyper-hearing”.¹

The parable of the sower is summarized in this command, **listen, hear, give attention, be attentive to God’s Word, which means hearing must follow with obedience to God’s Word.**

Four categories:

some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it (Mark 4:4 ESV) when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. (Mark 4:15 ESV)

Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. (Mark 4:5 ESV) the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away (Mark 4:16,17 ESV)

Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. (Mark 4:7 ESV) those who hear the word, ¹⁹ but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. (Mark 4:18b,19 ESV)

And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.” (Mark 4:8 ESV)

But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.” (Mark 4:20 ESV)

The seed is the same, the soil, the ground is different. Each soil reacts differently. Here are some lessons we can learn:

THE SOWER

Who is the sower?

Jesus does not say who is the sower. **“The sower sows the word.”** (Mark 4:14 ESV)

It is clear that God is the sower. In this context, Jesus too is the Sower. Passing these words on to the disciples, they become sowers. When passing it on to pastors and church members, we become sowers as well.

THE SEED

What is the seed?

His Word. **“The sower sows the word.”** (Mark 4:14 ESV)

THE GROUND

Where does the sower distribute the seed?

The farmer throws the seed all over. It does not pick and choose. (This was the style of farming those days). The point is very important: God plants the seed everywhere.

“Only sowing will lead to a harvest. Just as God sends rain on the just and the unjust, Jesus sows His Word on good and bad soil.”²

Jesus does not pick and choose where to sow the seeds. It is a lesson to me as preacher to learn from Jesus **not to pick and choose**. (I fall in this trap often).

Our task **to be sowing the seed faithfully**, sowing the seed lavishly.

The work is done by God, and not by us.

Don't you love how God works? I have often seen fruit in individuals who I never imagined they would be receptive to the Word of God.

The good news that there is a harvest, and there is fruit. Although some of the seeds did not give result, but in the end, there was a harvest. That should give us courage that **“the word of God will not fail”**

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven

and do not return there but water the earth,

making it bring forth and sprout,

giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,

¹¹ so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;

it shall not return to me empty,

but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,

and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:10-11ESV)

On the other hand, this parable is teaching us **about the soil**.

What kind of soil are we?

The soil cannot change its character, but God can change our heart and prepare us to be receptive soil.

Three examples that Jesus gives present shallow Christianity.

“Some seed is lost immediately and does not even get into the ground.

Some is lost eventually; it gets into the ground but withers at the root.

Some gets down deep enough into the ground to grow but ultimately is choked out by the thorns.”³

Without root, any plant will die. Without having rooted in God’s Word, any distraction can drift us away from God. It can be Satan; it can be money; it can be success; it can be work; it can be also suffering and trials...

-Do you have a receptive soil? We need the Holy Spirit to work in us.

It is not your goodness that makes the soil good and receptive....

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. (John 6:44
ESV)

God has its part; we have our part to open ourselves to God...

Do you see what I am saying? You cannot be receptive soil. God can do that if you allow Him to shape your heart and mind and soul.

So the parable serves as a warning to listeners, that they need to do a soil **test on themselves**.

Louis Armstrong once was asked to define jazz. He responded,

“Man, when you got to ask what it is, you’ll never get to know.”⁴

Taste and see who God is.

2. The Parable of the Lamp (Mark 4:21-23)

This is a funny and obvious story. Who will ever put a burning lamp under a basket or a bed? It will burn the bed and the house. Of course, no one will do such a foolish act. A lamp always will be on a stand to light the dark room. Jesus told parables with the intention of provoking a thought and raising an important point. Jesus used examples from their daily life so that the audience would identify with. The lamp would remind them of important imageries from the Old Testament.

The image reminded of the **seven-branched golden lampstand** that was put in the temple to illuminate the holy place (Exodus 25:31-40).

Remember in the gospel of John we studied how Jesus was giving new meaning to their feasts: **Tabernacles Feast. (Water and Light)**

God is dwelling with His People in the wilderness. It is a celebration...

-People brought **water** and poured on the alter.
-It was also festival of **lights**, thus they built a 70 foot (7 stories) **menorah** in the courtyard in front of the temple entrance. The menorah lighted up the whole Temple district. It is very impressive.

-How about the lamp in the temple that was dying in the dark days of the Judges? Right at that time, God sent them Samuel, the new prophet, a turning point in the history of Israel.

-How about the prophet Zachariah? “What do you see?” I said, “I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it, and seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it. (Zechariah 4:2). Then God explained to Zechariah saying “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts. (Zechariah 4:6)

Lamp, light- a promise that was given to the Israelites is becoming a reality.

“You who walk in the darkness will see a great light!” (Isaiah 9:2 ESV)

“I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, (Isaiah 42:6 ESV)

Jesus is saying the light is here, and it is obvious. Yet not everyone will see the light.

“For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.” (Mark 4:22-23)

Things are hidden for now but will be revealed eventually. The bad news is that not everyone will see it. (If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear...) It seems not every ear can “hear” and “see” the reality of Jesus Christ the Savior and the only Messiah.

3. The Parable of the measure (Mark 4:24-25)

And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. (Mark 4:24-25 ESV)

Jesus brings a new image, that of a **measure**. It is something that farmers will understand, something with which one would measure the harvest. They also knew Isaiah's words about light and harvest:

**“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.
You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest.”** (Isaiah 9:2-3 ESV)

Whoever walks in the light, those who take THE LIGHT seriously, will have joy at the harvest.

We must be careful in reading this parable. Wright adds:

“This isn't quite like saying ‘you'll get out of this what you put in', since of course when everything depends on the grace of God it's never a matter simply of people trying a bit harder and so getting better in their moral investment.”⁵

“Measure refers to the attitude with which the word of Jesus is being received. If the hearer embraces Jesus' message of the kingdom in a rich and profound way, then still more will be added to you—that is, God will take up residence in that heart and give increased understanding and blessing, both in this age and in the age to come.”⁶

In my words: “Watch out you all, listen; I want full attention, hyper-hearing. Walk with me, and go deeper in this spiritual journey with me. If you follow me in a casual way, you will not get it. **But if you seek me diligently,** you will go deeper and deeper in this journey.”

Back to verse 4:24. The words “more, added” are not about just information, rather about a **relationship with God**, an **intimate relationship with God**. God through Christ brought us to new level called “sons and daughters of God”. Therefore, we are new creations and ambassadors of Christ in this dark world.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

“All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5:17-20)

Application:

1. Have a daily intimate relationship with our Father through His Son.

Illustration: There was this lighthouse. A man was responsible to add the oil in the lighthouse so that the ships would safely return to the harbor. One day a woman came to the lighthouse requesting some oil that she would use for cooking. The man had compassion and gave away some of the oil for her cooking. Then another day a man needed oil for his machine, and he borrowed some of the lamp oil for that purpose. Eventually, the oil was wasted and the lighthouse did not have enough oil for its light, and many ships got wrecked because of that.

You see when our oil is used up we cannot have light. We need to be filled daily with the Holy Spirit so that Jesus can radiate HIS LIGHT through us.

In order to be filled, the “soil” should be ready to receive the Seed. God’s Word is not just information. We read these passages today. Maybe you read them many times. May the Word of God become a reality in you, may you digest it, may you go deeper and deeper with Him in your spiritual journey.

2. Let the Light of Jesus shine out from our lives

We are not an end. Our lives are means for the LIGHT of Jesus Christ to shine in this world.

May the Seed of God “die” in you so that your old self is dead and you have a new beginning with our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this Lent season, let us prepare ourselves for the coming of our Lord. Go and live a Christ-like life.

Amen

1. R.C. Sproul, *He Taught Them as One Who Had Authority*, Mark, P 66
2. David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary*, Mark P 156
3. *ibid* p 171
4. *ibid* p 171
5. N.T. Wright, *Mark for Everyone* P 46
6. <https://www.esv.org/Mark+4/> notes of ESV study bible

