

Lesson 4: The One Who Teaches Faith and Says, “Hear”

Jesus' ministry created a stir. The miracles and teaching were new, unprecedented. No wonder crowds gathered around everywhere He went!

They witnessed what Jesus did, but did they truly see? Did they perceive what was happening? They heard what Jesus spoke, but did they get the message? And if they got the message, did they believe it?

And how about those of us who claim to follow Jesus today? Do we truly see, hear, and understand?

Let's consider Jesus' picture of the kingdom of God as described through parables and see if we can grasp the truth He wanted His disciples to know.

OBSERVE

Leader: Read Mark 4:1-9 aloud. Have the group say aloud and...

- Mark each reference to **Jesus**, including pronouns with a **cross**.
- Double underline anything that indicates a **location**. Watch carefully for references to where the seed falls.
- Draw an oval around every mention of **seed(s)**, including pronouns.

MK 4:1 He began to teach again by the sea. And such a very large crowd gathered to Him that He got into a boat in the sea and sat down; and the whole crowd was by the sea on the land.

MK 4:2 And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teaching,

MK 4:3 “Listen *to this!* Behold, the sower went out to sow;

MK 4:4 as he was sowing, some *seed* fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up.

MK 4:5 “Other *seed* fell on the rocky *ground* where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil.

MK 4:6 “And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.

MK 4:7 “Other *seed* fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop.

MK 4:8 “Other *seed*s fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.”

MK 4:9 And He was saying, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

DISCUSS

1. According to the first two verses of Mark 4, where was Jesus, what was He doing, and with whom? Answering these questions will give us the setting of this event.

2. Where did the seed fall—in how many places—and what happened to the seed in each place where it fell? Number the places as you discuss them?

3. What was Jesus' exhortation to those present? What application, if any, do you see here for us as we study this gospel of Mark?

OBSERVE

So what was the parable about? Let's keep reading.

Leader: Read Mark 4:10-20 slowly and have the group do the following:

- Mark each reference to **Jesus** with a cross.
- Draw an arrow under each mention of the **followers** and the **twelve disciples** as a group, including pronouns such as **them**, and **you** when they refer to the disciples.
- Mark **parable(s)** with a big question mark like this: **?**
- Draw an oval around every reference to **word** and **seed**.

MK 4:10 As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, *began* asking Him *about* the parables.

MK 4:11 And He was saying to them, “To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables,

MK 4:12 so that WHILE SEEING, THEY MAY SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE, AND WHILE HEARING, THEY MAY HEAR AND NOT UNDERSTAND, OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT RETURN AND BE FORGIVEN.”

MK 4:13 And He *said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables?

MK 4:14 “The sower sows the word.

MK 4:15 “These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them.

MK 4:16 “In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky *places*, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy;

MK 4:17 and they have no *firm* root in themselves, but are *only* temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away.

MK 4:18 “And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word,

MK 4:19 but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

MK 4:20 “And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.”

1. What did you learn from marking *Jesus* and His *followers*?

2. What do you learn about parables?

INSIGHT

A *parable* is a short story that, although not usually factual, remains true to life and teaches a moral lesson or truth. Every detail of a parable will reinforce the main theme; however, you shouldn't always attempt to ascribe a specific spiritual meaning and application to each point. Jesus frequently used parables in His teaching for two reasons: to reveal the truth to believers and to hide the truth from those who rejected it and/or hardened their hearts against it.

OBSERVE

Leader: Read the same text again. This time have the group do the following:

- Double underline **the places** where the seed, the word is sown.
- Mark references to **hear** with an ear.
- Put a check mark over the word **immediately**.
- Mark **Satan** with a pitchfork.

DISCUSS

1. What do you learn in verse 15 about the first place where the Word was sown? (Put a 1 at verse 15).

2. How might this look? Maybe you've seen it happen; if so, describe it?

3. Read verses 16-17 and put a 2 next to verse 16. What do you learn about the second place where the Word is sown?

4. What is the problem in this second place? Why the persecution, the affliction—what happens as a result?

5. Have you ever seen this scenario played out in real life? Without mentioning names, describe what happened.

6. Read verses 18-19. Next to verse 18 put a 3. Discuss the three things that choke out the Word and what each of these might look like in a person's life today.

7. Does this describe a fruitful or unfruitful life? Explain your answer.

8. What can you learn from verses 18-19 that can apply to your life? Do you find here a warning? A caution? Discuss your answer.

9. Read verse twenty and mark it with a 4. What happens to the Word in this verse? Look at the three verbs. How does the response here compare with the other three soils?

10. And what makes it different from the other soils? Why is it described as it is?

11. In these four examples given by Jesus, what's the variable—the seed or the soil—and what does it tell you?

12. Look at where you marked hear. Which of the soils hear the Word and which bear fruit? What makes the difference in each case?

13. What explanation would you give for the variance in the amount of fruit brought forth in the fourth scenario, and what does that say to you personally?

14. so which of the soils would you say represent a genuine faith and why?

15. Which soil represents you?

OBSERVE

Leader: Read mark 4:21-34 aloud. Have the group...

- Mark the reference to **Jesus** as they've been doing.
- Put a symbol of an ear over the words **hear** and **listen**.
- Mark **word** with a book. Now that you've left the parable of the sower, use an open book to mark references to **the Word of God** and **the words of Jesus**.

MK 4:21 And He was saying to them, "A lamp is not brought to be put under a basket, is it, or under a bed? Is it not *brought* to be put on the lampstand?"

MK 4:22 "For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has *anything* been secret, but that it would come to light.

MK 4:23 "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."

MK 4:24 And He was saying to them, "Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides.

MK 4:25 "For whoever has, to him *more* shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him."

MK 4:26 And He was saying, "The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil;

MK 4:27 and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he himself does not know.

MK 4:28 "The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head.

MK 4:29 "But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

MK 4:30 And He said, "How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it?"

MK 4:31 "*It is* like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil,

MK 4:32 yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR CAN NEST UNDER ITS SHADE."

MK 4:33 With many such parables He was speaking the word to them, so far as they were able to hear it;

MK 4:34 and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.

Leader: Read Mark 4:21-34 again so the group can better absorb what you are reading. This time have the group...

- Draw a box around the phrase **the kingdom of God**.
- Mark the word **parable(s)** with a big question mark like this: ?

DISCUSS

1. What did Jesus tell His listeners in verses 21-25 that can serve as an exhortation or a caution for us?

2. What did you learn about the kingdom of God in verses 26-29?

3. What did you learn from marking kingdom in verses 30-32?

4. What new insights if any did you learn from marking parable(s) in this passage?

OBSERVE

As our study of this chapter comes to a close, the scene is about to change and the disciples are about to come to a new understanding.

Leader: Read Mark 4:35-41 aloud. Have the group do the following:

- Mark each reference to **Jesus** with a cross.
- Mark the word **them** with an arrow, just as you've marked disciples.

- Draw a squiggly line under any reference to **nature**, such as **wind, waves, sea**.

MK 4:35 On that day, when evening came, He *said to them, “Let us go over to the other side.”

MK 4:36 Leaving the crowd, they *took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him.

MK 4:37 And there *arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up.

MK 4:38 Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they *woke Him and *said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?”

MK 4:39 And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Hush, be still.” And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.

MK 4:40 And He said to them, “Why are you afraid? How is it that you have no faith?”

MK 4:41 They became very much afraid and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”

DISCUSS

1. Describe the setting in verses 35-36. What is the situation, who is there, and where are they headed?

What happened next?

2. What was the disciples' attitude towards Jesus in verse 38, and why? Do you notice anything amiss in their thinking? If so what?

3. Now discuss the sequence of events in verses 38-40. You don't want to miss the order of what happens after they question Jesus' care of them.

4. What do you think about the two questions the disciples asked of Jesus? What do the questions reveal and why is the timing important?

5. How would faith have looked in this situation?

6. What realization did the disciples come to and how did it affect them, according to verse 41?

7. What can you learn from this incident that can help you when you are afraid?

8. What does this revelation of Jesus' power over nature suggest about His power over your life circumstances? How can this impact your perspective when trials come?

WRAP IT UP

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” Twice Jesus makes this statement in our text. It’s a signal that something very important is being said, so listen carefully! The message of the parable is made clear; not everyone will receive the Word of God.

Some have no interest in it at all; the Word is sown, Satan snatches it away, and they don’t even know that it has come and gone. Others embrace it with joy and say they believe, but they don’t put down roots into His Word; consequently, when trials and afflictions come, they can’t handle the persecution that is ours if we are His! They fade away.

And then there are those who say they believe, who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ, but don’t have time for God. Rather than become overcomers, they are overcome by the worries of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desire for things over God. The Word is choked right out of their daily lives and they bear no fruit.

How do we truly know we have heard? What is an indicator that we have ears to hear?

There’s fruit in our lives! Jesus said it: the good soil hears God’s Word, accepts it and bears fruit. Some more than others—thus the thirty, the sixty, the hundred fold—but always there is a measure of fruit when God’s Word takes root in our lives.

Mark only used the word *faith* five times in his entire gospel. We find it in verse 40 when Jesus asked His disciples, “Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

The disciples were in the boat with the One who not only created the earth but upholds it simply by the power of His Word (Heb. 1:1-2). If they believed that, they had no reason to fear.

Having faith is having ears to hear. Having faith is having trust in Jesus to be and to do what He says.

So what is happening in your life, beloved of God, as you do this study? Are you accepting...believing...*living* the truth God has written and preserved for you in His Word?

When the storms come, just believe that Jesus does care. Stop trembling, take your eyes off the storm, and fear—trust—Him alone.

And watch for the harvest that will come from the good soil of your heart!