



*‘Now!’ Sermon Series*

Sermon #15

Sunday, July 28th, 2024

*‘Do We Really Get the Gospel?’*

*Mark 4:1-20*

*Last week in ‘NOW’ sermon series:*

- Last week we were in Mark 3:31-35, as I preached a message entitled *‘Face Your Family!’* where I asked the question: *What does Jesus face from His earthly family and His Heavenly family in this text?*
  - **Point 1: *Opposition from Blood Family. (V. 31-32)***
  - **Point 2: *Objection to Basic Family Relations. (V. 33)***
  - **Point 3: *Opportunity to be Blood Bought Family. (V. 34-35)***

- Based on last week’s sermon, how have you been able to realize just how important and special your blood bought family is?

- *While we should love our earthly families that God has given us, we should not allow them to dictate how we serve our Lord with our blood-bought family.*

- How have you faced your family with the reality of scripture this week?

*‘Do We Really Get the Gospel?’*

*Mark 4:1-20*

**Sermon in a Sentence:**

*We will show that we really get the Gospel when we understand our Dire Need to Proclaim, the Distinct Privilege we have in sharing good news, and the Definitive purpose that it plays in the Kingdom of God.*

**Intro:**

- 14 sermons into our series through the book of Mark, and we have now arrived at chapter 4.
  - *Mark 4 is different than the first three chapters that we have studied thus far.*
  - *It is different because there are only two chapters in Mark’s Gospel that are not written in his regular narrative format.*
    - *Two times in Mark, he leaves the narrative of Jesus life and ministry, and*

*spends concentrated time focusing in on the teachings of Jesus.*

- The first time Mark does this is in Mark 4, where Mark includes parables that Jesus shared.
- The second time Mark does this will be in Mark 13, where Mark will share the discourse on the end times.

- **Many scholars refer to what Mark does in chapter 4 as the 'Markan Sandwich'**

- In verses 3-9 Jesus gives the parable. Then in verses 14-20, He will explain the parable. But verses 10-12, is the meat of the sandwich, where Jesus explains the key to understanding the parables is by fellowshipping with Jesus.

- *Matthew 13:34 shows us that parables will be the vehicle by which Jesus uses to teach to large crowds.*

- 'All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable.' Matthew 13:34

- **Everytime I step in a pulpit, my goal is to share and preach the Gospel clearly, competently, and concisely.**

- Dr. Chuck Swindol said his goal in each message was ***'It must be accurate, it must be clear, and it must be practical.'***
- Even when we are faithful to preach the Gospel, there are those in the pews, at home, and in the streets who simply will

not allow themselves to hear the truth of the Gospel.

- ***So, do we really get the Gospel? Have we really heard the Gospel that has been preached to us for years?***

- This morning Jesus is going to tell a parable to portray the four states of the human soul.
- The four soils of the human heart in how they respond to the Gospel.

- ***For those of us who are believers here today, I believe there are 4 things that we need to understand and ask ourselves personally, to see if we really do get the Gospel.***

- Dr. Daniel Aiken said ***'This text is about our ears and how well they hear spiritual truth. It is about those who come to a church gathering, attend a Bible study, or have the Gospel shared with them.'***

- If you and I truly get the Gospel, we will share it constantly and consistently with all kinds of soils.

- ***But, we can only share with other soils if our Soul is of the fruitful soil.***

***\*Read Mark 4:1-20\****

**Question to Ask:**

***How does Jesus illustrate the urgency of the Gospel message by sharing the parable of the sower?***

**Point 1: *The Definition of Parables. (V. 2)***

- Verse 1 tells us that Jesus is doing again, what He loves to do and did so well.
  - ‘Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land.’
  - *Here, the boat He was in was His pulpit, as the sand on the shore was the pews where the crowd listened to him.*
    - *The word ‘Again’ here, shows that Jesus made a habit of teaching and sharing the Gospel.*
      - *If we get the Gospel, we’ll make a habit of it as well.*
- In verse 2, Mark briefly mentions the method that Jesus chose to teach from. *Parables.*
  - ‘And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them:’
  - Parables can be very confusing and hard to interpret, so before we look at the Parable Jesus shared and how it applies to us, I want us to define the parables that Jesus used.
  - *In the Gospels there are 60 different parables of Jesus that are record.*
    - Most are in Matthew and Luke, fewer in Mark, and none in John.

○ Scholar James Edwards defined Parable as *‘something that is placed alongside something else for the purpose of clarification.’*

- To help us understand the parables that were used by Jesus, I want to share **8** aspects that help us better understand parables.
- **#1: Parables bring Clarification into the nature, coming, and growth that comes with the Kingdom of God. Parables give us small snippets to the Kingdom of God, that is and has come near.**
- **#2: Parables are by design, different and compelling.**
- **#3: Parables are used to get a person thinking about a particular subject in a new light.**
- **#4: Parables use daily life circumstances to bring a spiritual truth to light.**
- **#5: Parables have the ability to reveal truth to those who want to receptively listen and they hide truth from others who have no desire to truly understand.**
- **#6: Parables are responsible for 35% of Jesus’ teaching ministry.**
- **#7: Parables usually focus on a single truth, one main point. We as interpreters must be careful to not allegorize them by seeing to far deep into every delta.**
- **#8: Parables in the Gospels bring attention to Jesus and His deity as the Son of God.**
  - Understanding these 8 facts about parables can help us better understand their purpose and why Jesus uses them.

- First, we've seen the Definition of Parables.  
Now we need to look at...

**Point 2: *The Dire Need to Proclaim.* (V. 3-9)**

- *In verses 3-9, we find a parable that gives us the image of a farmer spreading out seeds on his land.*
- “Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. **4** And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. **5** 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. **6** And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. **7** Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. **8** And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.” **9** And he said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”
  - The seeds fall on four different surfaces according to the parable.
    - ***On the Path.* (V. 4)**
    - ***Rocky Ground.* (V. 5-6)**
    - ***In the Thorns.* (V. 7)**
    - ***In the Good Soil.* (V. 8)**
  - Jesus is going to explain what each of these surfaces mean where the seeds ended up in verses 13-20, when we look at the definitive purpose.

- *So, we will look at what each of these surfaces mean and represent in more depth in just a moment.*

- ***The main thing I think we can get from the parables Jesus gives here: is that we are not responsible for the result of the harvest, but we are responsible for spreading the seeds.***
  - We can't make people accept Christ and we cannot force them into Heaven or even into following the ways of God.
    - ***But we are held responsible for the dire need that we have to proclaim the good news.***
  - It can be easy for us in the western world to be puzzled by the fact that thorns and rocky ground our mentioned in a field where a farmer would plant his crop.
  - Scholar James Edwards said ***'This typifies the farming conditions prevalent in the rocky terrain and scrub vegetation of Galilee.'***
    - Farming in this part of the world was no easy task...
      - ***We see the Thorns in Jeremiah...***
        - 'For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: “Break up your fallow ground, and

sow not among thorns.’

Jeremiah 4:3

- ***We see the reality of the scorching sun in James...***
    - ‘For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.’ James 1:11
  - Dr. Daniel Aiken described this parable that Jesus shared in the following way ***‘The kingdom of God, through the preaching of hte Gospel, will break into this world like seed being sown by a farmer. It will fall in various places, receive various responses, but eventually experience a tremendous harvest.’***
    - \*Illustration\* ***Recently I made the decision to buy a bag of grass fertilizer and spread it in my grass in my front yard, because the sun was scorching it and killing my grass.***
      - As I spread it, some ended up in the driveway, some the road, some my flower beds, some my front porch and some on my grass.
- ***Very similar to the farmer, we aren’t in control of where the seeds go, but we must spread them.***
    - This parable is important because if you are a Christian, you must realize your dire need to proclaim what you live and believe.
  - While we dive deeper into each verse and it’s meaning in verses 13-20 when Jesus explains it, I want to share **2** Biblical principles from this parable when it comes to our Dire Need to Proclaim, to spread the seeds...
- ***We are to spread the Gospel.***
    - Just as the farmer sows the seeds for his crop in verses 3 and 4, we are to take the Gospel to others.
      - ***We are to do this so that more will hear of the good news of Jesus.***
      - ‘How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?[a] And how are they to hear without someone preaching?’ Romans 10:14
    - It is not our job to withhold the good news because of what we think the result might be, our job is to spread it no matter what.
      - ***You may be discouraged to share the news of Jesus because of what you***

***anticipate the consequences to be. That is not our job nor concern.***

- ***We must sow the seed of the Gospel so that others may hear and listen.***
- ***We are not Responsible for the Results.***
  - While I do believe we are responsible for how we share and sow the greatest news ever, we are not responsible for what happens with the seeds.
    - ***We will not fully know on this side of Heaven the result of our Gospel oriented conversations.***
  - In verse 8, we are told of the extraordinary harvest that came:
    - ‘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
  - ***The farmer simply spread the seeds, but God always takes care of the results.***
    - We cannot and should not take responsibility for what God does with our Gospel efforts. It’s His power and His Work.
  - The use of the greek verbs in verse 8 show a crescendo of momentum, and the

use of one-hundred fold was very significant due to ***Genesis 26:12***

- ‘And Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. The LORD blessed him,’

- ***A hundred fold was a sure sign of divine blessing.***

■ ***Since we are not responsible for the results of our seeds, we need to trust God, and continue to serve.***

- ***I believe the Apostle Paul explained this concept very well in his first letter to the Church at Corinth.***

■ ‘What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. **6** I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. **7** So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. **8** He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. **9** For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.’ 1 Corinthians 3:5-9

- We have a dire need to proclaim, and to continue to spread the seeds of the Gospel.

**Point 3: *The Distinct Privilege. (V. 10-12)***

- ***Verses 10-12 come in the middle of our Markan sandwich.***

- In between the parable and the explanation, is the conversation Jesus has with His disciples in explaining why He is using parables to teach them.
- ***In these verses, we clearly see the distinct privilege that those who are saved have, to be able to see and understand Heavenly things in the Kingdom of God.***
  - ***If verses 10-12, Jesus seeks to explain this to His disciples.***
- ‘And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. **11** And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, **12** so that “they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.”’
  - ***Some scholars refer to these words by Jesus as some of the hardest to interpret in all of the Bible.***
    - To understand these verses, it causes us to slow down and reflect deeply on what Jesus has said to His disciples.
- I believe we can break this down in three ways to see the distinct privilege that those who are saved by Jesus have.

- ***The Question. (V. 10)***

- ‘And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables.’
- The disciples wait until the crowds are gone, and they are alone with Jesus.
  - ***They want to know why Jesus is using parables in order to teach the people.***
- The fact that the disciples even ask this question, shows that this one parable may not be in chronological order.
  - ***We must remember that in our introduction sermon on Mark, I mentioned that most scholars believe that Mark took certain liberties in how he arranged his information about Jesus.***

- ***A Quandary. (V. 11)***

- The word Quandary is defined as a state of perplexity or uncertainty over what to do in a difficult situation.
- Many view Jesus' words in verse 11, as a quandary.
  - ‘And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables,’
- ***To understand this quandary, we must realize that Jesus is putting people into two groups, insiders and outsiders.***

- I personally believe the insiders are those who have heard the Gospel and have been receptive and followed Him.
- I believe the outsiders are those who have heard the Gospel but continue in rebellion and nothing changes.
- *\*Word Study\**
  - Understanding the word ‘secret’ here, or mystery in your translation, is key.
    - ‘Secret’ in the english is translated from *Musterion* **μυστήριον** in the Greek text, which literally means a mystery or secret, something hidden.
  - *This word occurs only in the Gospels here in Mark 4:11, and in the parallel passages of Matthew 13:11 and Luke 8:10.*
    - *The apostle Paul will use it 21 times in his letters and four times the word is found in Revelation.*
  - *Scholar James Brooks described Paul’s usage of the word ‘Paul used it to mean a truth that was not known in the past, that cannot be known apart from divine revelation, and that has recently been revealed by God.’*
- *To look at our current passage the meaning that Paul uses the word for in his 21 times of using it, can help us better understand the quandary of verse 11.*
  - The ‘secret’ or ‘mystery’ here is that the Kingdom of God had drawn near in and through Jesus Christ.
- *Those who refused to accept the reality that the Kingdom of God had drawn near through Christ Jesus were on the outside.*
  - So, how can they understand the things of God (in this case parables), if they are unwilling to believe in the one who is sharing them?
- *That’s why for those of us who are in Christ Jesus, we have the distinct privilege of being able to understand God through His Word and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.*
  - Do we truly understand this privilege we have as believers?
- There’s the initial question, a quandary, and now Jesus gave a quotation from the OT.
  - *A Quotation. (V. 12)*
    - so that “they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.”
    - Jesus quotes Isaiah 6:9-10 which reads And he said, “Go, and say to this people: “Keep on hearing,<sup>[a]</sup> but do not understand;



keep on seeing,<sup>[b]</sup> but do not perceive.’ Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”

- ***The context of Isaiah 6:9-10 is describing the hard heartedness of Israel.***
- ***Jesus cites it here as a quotation as a form of prophetic warning.***
  - ***Jesus warns of the serious consequences for all people, jews and gentiles, who do not open their hearts and truly hear and believe what Jesus has come to say.***
- Dr. Daniel Aiken said ‘***Just as the sun hardens the clay also melts the wax, so the Word of the Gospel offends the resistant and rebellious it is enthusiastically received by the receptive.***’
  - This does not mean that those on the outside do not have the possibility of believing in Jesus, it just means if they continue to persist in denying Jesus, then they will eventually commit the unpardonable sin that we discussed a few weeks ago.

○ ***The secret of the Kingdom of God is that God’s current plan for growing this Kingdom, is the sharing and sowing of seeds.***

- We have the free will to be able to choose, but in order to have this distinct privilege to be able to understand the things of God and have the Holy Spirit dwelling inside of us, we must accept Christ and the Kingdom.
- This morning we’ve defined parables, we’ve looked at the dire need to proclaim, and the distinct privilege we have as a follower of Christ.
  - ***Lastly, Jesus explains the Definitive Purpose of this parable.***

**Point 4: *The Definitive Purpose. (V. 13-20)***

- After Jesus spoke verses 10-12 to the disciples, he now goes on to tell them what this parable means.
  - ‘And he said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? **14** The sower sows the word. **15** And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. **16** And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. **17** And 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.[a] **18** And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are 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. **20** 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.”

- *Verse 13 begins with a little bit of scolding from Jesus.*
  - *If the disciples are not able to understand this parable, then how will they understand the others?* (Especially since 35% of Jesus teaching ministry was made up of parables)
- It’s like if a child can’t add or subtract, they won’t be able to multiply and divide.
  - Now Jesus explains the four soils that seeds fell into.
- **Soil #1: *Hard Hearts. (V. 14-15)***
  - ‘The sower sows the word. **15** And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them.’
  - ***Of course, the sower is Jesus or anyone who shares the Gospel.***

- ***The seed that we are to share is the Word of God!***

- ***So how can we share the Word if we do not know the Word?***
- This path represents people that are hard hearted towards God and are actively rebellious.
  - ***These people (this soil), are resistant and they are unresponsive.***
    - They dismiss the Word of God without giving it even a thought.
- **Soil #2: *Shallow Hearts. (V. 16-17)***
  - ‘And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. **17** And 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.’
  - ***Shallow hearts are prevalent in our culture and even in our Churches.***
    - This soil immediately receives the Gospel with Joy, but then wither away when persecution and tribulation comes.
    - ***In other words, there is no real fruit, just candy.***
  - ***These are the kinds of people that I personally believe were not saved to begin with.***
    - They just thought it was a good idea, and then realized it would lead to a tougher

journey through life than they anticipated.

- Mark Dever said **'They are quickly green and quickly gone.'**
- **Soil #3: *Distracted Hearts.* (V. 18-19)**
  - 'And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are 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.'
  - This soil does seem to receive the Word better, but gets distracted by the World instead of being Transformed by the Word (Romans 12:2).
    - ***We must not allow the things in this life (which are temporary) to distract us from the eternal things in the next life.***
  - Jesus said this to His disciples in **John 8:31** 'So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,"
    - Those who abide in Jesus, and continue on in Him, are truly His disciples.
  - Dr. Daniel Aiken said this about the distracted group of Soil #3 'They find more pleasure in cash than in Christ, more pleasure in their cravings than in the Creator.'
- **Soil #4: *Fruitful/Saved Hearts.* (V. 20)**
  - '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."

- This soil is a representation of people who hear the Word, accept it, and then bear fruit for Jesus.
  - ***They too will face trials and tribulations, as well as distractions from the world, but they will allow Christ to be strong in them and they will actively pursue the Word.***
- ***There is no such thing as a fruitless Christian, a 'fruitless Christian' is in fact, not a Christian at all.***
  - Jesus even said this in **John 15:5**
    - 'I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.'

### **Conclusion:**

- ***Do we really get the Gospel?***
- ***Which soil are you?***
  - Do we truly understand that we are not responsible for the results of the Gospel, but we are very much responsible for sharing the Gospel.
- ***If you truly understand the Gospel then you will understand...***
  - **Point 2: *The Dire Need to Proclaim.* (V. 3-9)**
  - **Point 3: *The Distinct Privilege.* (V. 10-12)**

- **Point 4: *The Definitive Purpose. (V. 13-20)***
- If you don't truly understand the Gospel, you'll dismiss tonight's message and continue on in your conformity and carnality.
  - ***To understand the Gospel is to feel convicted enough to want to change and become more like God.***
- To be the sower with a dire need to proclaim the Gospel.
- To realize the distinct privilege you have as a child of God.
- And to realize the definitive purpose that almighty God has given you.