

GOOD NEWS FROM THE KING
A Study of the Gospel According to Mark
Mark 4:1-25


Holy Bible, New International Version ©2011

"Consider carefully what you hear." Mark 4:24a

Pray for the Holy Spirit to open your heart to his word.

Read through this week's passage and jot down any thoughts and questions you may have.

Read Mark 4:1-20.

1. Jesus had taught by the lake before, but why this time does he need to teach from a boat? (vv. 1-2)
2. Jesus begins the parable of the sower with a call to "listen" and ends with the words, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (vv. 3, 9). What do you think is necessary for someone to have "ears to hear"?
3. In the parable of the sower (vv. 3-8), who is the sower and what is the seed? (v. 14; Mark 1:14b-15; * Isaiah 55:8-11)
4. What divides those who are listening to Jesus' teaching? (vv. 9-12)
5. Later, Jesus explains the parable to "the Twelve and the others around him" (v. 10). What is the startling disclosure that he makes to his followers? (v. 11a; Colossians 1:26; 1 Corinthians 2:6-7)
6. When describing those who are unable to hear and understand (v. 12), Jesus quotes from Isaiah 6:9-10. What purpose do you think God has for causing this to happen? (1 Corinthians 2:8)

Parable

Christianity.com defines "parable" as
 "a simple story used to illustrate a
 moral or spiritual lesson, as told by
 Jesus in the Gospels."¹

Why does Jesus quote Isaiah (v. 12)?

“Two contexts help to illuminate the significance of the quotation. The first is the context of Isaiah, in which the statement has a judicial function. Isaiah is commanded to keep preaching to Israel despite the fact that it will do no good... The prophet’s message will fall on deaf ears not only because of Israel’s hard-heartedness but now also because God has determined what he is going to do. Israel’s intransigence [stubbornness] is not only the **reason** God will judge, but it is now also the **means** by which his purpose will be achieved. It is the same in the context of Mark. As we have seen, in ch. 3 Israel’s leaders reject the clear evidence of God’s work in Jesus’ ministry and thereby blaspheme the Holy Spirit (3:28-29). The religious “insiders” now become outsiders whose fate is sealed. Yet this by no means thwarts God’s purpose, which will be accomplished not just despite their unbelief but actually through it. Israel’s rejection of Jesus is the means by which salvation will be achieved.”²

7. Is there more at stake here than just understanding a little story? What is at stake? (v. 12b)

8. Describe the four kinds of soil (heart) conditions in verses 14-20.

Soil/Heart	Receptiveness to the Word

9. Verses 15-19 describe many ways Satan attempts to render your heart impenetrable, and your hearing of Jesus’ words ineffective. Pray and consider how Satan may be trying to do this in your life (for example: social media, family discord, financial strain, etc.).

10. What is the evidence that the kingdom of God has taken root in a person’s life—i.e., what is the “crop” (v. 20)? (Galatians 5:22-23; 6:8b-9)

11. This parable is entitled The Parable of the Sower, yet the primary focus is on the response of the seed. However, can you think of a reason why the crop produced by the seed falling on good soil would be so bountiful?

12. How might God help you to have a heart that is open and receptive to his Word, and strengthen you to live for him?

Read Mark 4:21-25.

13. The Greek in verse 21 reads "Does the lamp come in order that it might be placed under the bowl or under the bed?" In the Old Testament, the lamp is often a metaphor for God (2 Samuel 22:29). Who is "the lamp"? (John 12:44-46)

14. Though the kingdom seems to have small and discouraging beginnings, with many seeking to hide the "lamp" or waste the "seed," what is God's sure purpose for the lamp's light and the seeds that are sown? (vv. 20-22; John 1:5, 9)

15. In the Greek, the verb tense in verse 24 suddenly changes from past to present, with the word "hear" meaning a continual, ongoing hearing, as opposed to a careless or inattentive hearing.

a. What does Jesus challenge his hearers to do? (vv.24-25)


b. Why is this important? (Hebrews 2:1; 3:12-15; James 1:22-25)

c. What does God provide to help you do this? (2 Timothy 3:16; Mark 11:24; John 14:26; 16:24; Acts 2:42)

Good Stewardship of the Resources God has Provided

"Those who are open and receptive to the message of the kingdom now will receive greater and greater spiritual insight from further teaching. Those who are closed-minded and unresponsive will become more and more blind to spiritual realities. Even the little spiritual perception they have will be taken away."³

This lesson on Mark's Gospel is adapted from "Life of a Servant" by New Life Glenside Women's Bible Study, 2002-2003.

*  indicates the passage is for further study.

¹ *Christianity.com* "What is a parable in the Bible? meaning and 10 examples" September 2021, <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/bible/parable-bible-meaning-examples.html>

² Walter W. Wessel and Mark L. Strauss, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Revised Edition*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Zondervan, 2010), 756.

³ *Ibid.*, 760.