

Taking the Good News of Jesus Christ to Everyone

Ears to Hear

Text: **Mark 4: 1-25** The Message

¹⁻² He went back to teaching by the sea. A crowd built up to such a great size that he had to get into an offshore boat, using the boat as a pulpit as the people pushed to the water's edge. He taught by using stories, many stories.

³⁻⁸ "Listen. What do you make of this? A farmer planted seed. As he scattered the seed, some of it fell on the road and **birds ate it**. (birds never a good idiom in scripture) Some fell in the gravel; it sprouted quickly but didn't put down roots, so when the sun came up it withered just as quickly. Some fell in the weeds; as it came up, it was strangled among the weeds and nothing came of it. Some fell on good earth and came up with a flourish, producing a harvest exceeding his wildest dreams.

⁹ "Are you listening to this? Really listening?"

John Mark, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit sets the scene ...

- Jesus is teaching by the lakeshore -
- A crowd grows unmanageable ... drawn by the majesty and power
- people press in trying to get closer
- Jesus retreats into a boat, probably ready for that very reason, and anchors a short distance from shore.
- The people come right to the water's edge where he had been standing

Perfect situation for being seen and heard - just off the boat gives him better visibility and sound of his voice is carried in by prevailing breeze into shore acting like an amplifier (North Shore of L I Sound)

Did you notice? Jesus begins and ends this parable with the word ... *Listen* repeating the phrase several times ... **He who has ears to hear**, *The Message*, translates this as ... Are you listening to this – really listening?

But there something else going on here ... and the disciples, as usual, highlight the point for us - They didn't get it either.

In front of crowd they were nodding heads and smiling like "uh huh we got this" ... but in private they sheepishly asked for some commentary notes ... cause as usual they didn't get it either.

Read Mark 4: 10 -12

¹⁰⁻¹² When they were off by themselves, those who were close to him, along with the Twelve, asked about the stories. He told them, “You’ve been given insight into God’s kingdom—you know how it works. But to those who can’t see it yet, everything comes in stories, creating readiness, nudging them toward receptive insight. These are people—

Whose eyes are open but don’t see a thing,
Whose ears are open but don’t understand a word,
Who avoid making an about-face and getting forgiven.” Jesus quoting from Isaiah 6: 9-10

Even using the parable was not enough ... Jesus made the point- just hearing this story is not enough!

☆ For the longest time Egyptian hieroglyphs seemed impossible understand – all this information available written within pyramids and no way to understand it.

The archeological discovery of **Rosetta stone** changed all that. PICTURE

This stone dating back to 196 BC has three languages written on it:

- Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs,
 - Demotic
 - Ancient Greek,
- All three scripts say the same thing ...known language of Greek became the bridge

Jesus parable was like a cultural Rosetta stone, offering a story to illustrate how God works in the human heart.

In *Superman the Movie* 1978 ... Lex Luthor, played by Gene Hackman, makes this statement: “Some people can read the novel *War and Peace* and come away thinking it’s a simple adventure story, others can read the ingredients of a chewing gum wrapper and come away with the secrets of the universe.”

In Jesus’ parable the **Word of God** (seed) is spread, **without reservation**, on four different types of soil with four different results.

Mark 4: 13- 20

¹³ He continued, “Do you see how this story works? **All my stories** work this way.

¹⁴⁻¹⁵ “The farmer plants the Word. Some people are like the seed that falls on the hardened soil of the road. No sooner do they hear the Word than Satan snatches away what has been planted in them.

¹⁶⁻¹⁷ “And some are like the seed that lands in the gravel. When they first hear the Word, they respond with great enthusiasm. But there is such shallow soil of character that when the emotions wear off and some difficulty arrives, there is nothing to show for it.

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ “The seed cast in the weeds represents the ones who hear the kingdom news but are overwhelmed with worries about all the things they have to do and all the things they want to get. The stress strangles what they heard, and nothing comes of it.

²⁰ “But the seed planted in the good earth represents those who hear the Word, embrace it, and produce a harvest beyond their wildest dreams.”

The seed was all good, and cast without reservation on all different types of soil
 “... Whosoever will may come” John 3:16

Farming fields in Palestine were not like ours in America – smaller parcels of land, separated by roads not fences. The seed isn’t planted in neat furrows– it’s tossed in handfuls from a sack the farmer carries.

It would carry over into the road, onto rocky soil, spots where weeds had not been removed and some even carried by the wind.

The different kinds of soil are the different kinds of listeners:

- The Path - hard -impenetrable **Result:** seed stolen away
- Gravel – looks good on surface – **Result:** seed spouts quickly but can’t establish roots and dies
No roots of Faith –no chance
- The weeds – **Result:** Growth strangled by volumes of other stuff ...
- The good soil –Seed grows- **Result:** roots deep bears amazing fruit

Jesus asks again and again ... are you listening, really listening?

✦ The soil that the seed of the Word is planted begins with the heart not the mind! No matter how intelligent a mind a person has it doesn’t matter if the heart is not open and uncluttered.

Are you listening?

Jesus speaks of placing the light on a candle stand so all can see. That’s our calling, to spread the Gospel without reservation to all.

Mark 4: 21 – 25 Giving, Not Getting

²¹⁻²² Jesus went on: “Does anyone bring a lamp home and put it under a washtub or beneath the bed? Don’t you put it up on a table or on the mantel? We’re not keeping secrets, we’re telling them; we’re not hiding things, we’re bringing them out into the open.

²³ “Are you listening to this? Really listening?”

24-25 “Listen carefully to what I am saying—and be wary of the shrewd advice that tells you how to get ahead in the world on your own. Giving, not getting, is the way. Generosity begets generosity. Stinginess impoverishes.”

Sharing our faith is more than just running our mouths

- It’s putting ourselves out there willing to take a chance on other people
- to help someone who needs a friend,
- It could be someone you’ve never met but you’re nudged by God’s Spirit to say or do something.

⇒ **Story:** Two weeks ago Jen and I were at Heather’s house when a young woman from her church delivered dinner for her family. (help due to weakening affects of Chemo treatments)

Her name is Kristen Munoz – one my students many years ago - Heather shared her story with us after she left.

Kristen worked as a hair cutter men and women ... struggling mightily with anxieties and panic attacks trying to cope with life but fighting a losing battle. A young man getting his hair cut realized from her conversation she was in trouble and spoke to her about God.

“Do you think God might be able to help you with what you’re going through?” he asked and she kind of yes-d him ... He came back with a Bible, and a list of place to read.

“She found in the Word what she couldn’t find anywhere else ... Peace with God. She became a believer and ended up marrying that young man, James Munoz, who as a child attended Maranatha Chapel, the church that Jen and I founded and Pastured for eight years.

God had a plan ... Are you listening?

Jesus words ... you don’t hide a light under a washtub or a bed you put it up on a light stand so it shows the way.

His intention for us is to share authentic, living faith. Why are we so hesitant to do it?

FEAR is paralyzing ... “The greatest prison people live in is the fear of what other people think.” Unknown author

Story: Chuck Swindoll

When your heart is open ... Listening - God’s blessing on you impacts everything you touch ...

Sometimes looks like the opposite – see the life of Joseph in Genesis

- In all of the troubles that Joseph endured – falsely accused of rape by Pottifar’s wife – prison and jailer blessed by extension of his life ... God wants to bless others through your life

Jesus words: “Giving, **not** getting is the way. Generosity begets generosity. Stinginess impoverishes.”

Luke 6:38 (NLT)

³⁸ Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.