

## The Book of Mark

**Sermon Series:** Who is this man? [Sermon #15]

**Sermon Title:** Blessed are they who hear.

February 12, 2017

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### **Introduction:**

We have seen so far in the book of Mark in chapters 1, 2, & 3, a few different groups of people and how they respond to Jesus.

Here is our cast.

- Crowds
- Religious leaders
- Jesus' family
- His disciples (both the 12 and others)

All of these have various responses to Jesus and the kingdom of God. Perhaps today we will see that they fall into 4 possible categories. The 4 types of soil in this parable.

Listening is very important. That you hear and pay attention to what Jesus says about the kingdom is crucial. A repeated saying in this section is:

**“He who has ears to hear, let them hear.”**

I think it may help you today as we begin to rearrange the structure of the text a bit. It's not in chronological order. Jesus is in a boat talking to the crowds and then the text fast forwards to

when they are alone and he explains things. Then it goes back to when he was in the boat.

**I will read the verses this way:**

verse 1-9, which is the parable itself.

verses 13-20 I'll twist into the parable and give the explanation.

verses 33-34 & 10-12 we will do last.

**Mark 4:1-9**

**1 And 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. 2 And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them; 3 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 thirty-fold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold. 9 And he said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."**

We have 3 negative responses to the word and 1 positive & fruitful response. The first 3 responses to the word do not lead to salvation. They all 'hear' but only the last one accepts it & bears fruit.

### **I. The seed on the path**

The word falls on this hard ground and is snatched away quickly by the birds or Satan. In Mark he, "takes away the word" like a bird snatches a seed off the path. **2 Corinthians 4:4** says, "The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

Jesus could have been referring to our first group of people, the religious leaders. Their hearts were hard. in **Mark 3:5** Jesus was 'grieved at their hardness of heart' For most of them, the word of God never took any root in their lives because of their unbelief. As we saw last week, they even said Jesus was possessed by the devil and eventually crucified him. In fact, throughout the Old Testament the Jewish nation as whole was referred to as having hard hearts and not listening. **Zechariah 7: 11-12** says, "They refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear. 12 They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets."

### **II. The seed among the rocks**

Next the seed falls on the rocky soil. The rocks are hidden beneath the surface. There's a nice top layer of soil but no depth. The seed falls in but doesn't last. This was typical of the

crowds that followed Jesus. They were excited about Jesus and his kingdom but for the wrong reasons. They wanted a show. They wanted free healthcare. They wanted free meals. Mark Dever says these are the “**Quickly green and quickly gone.**” **John 12:42-43** mentions this text just briefly and it says that “**42 many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.**” They wouldn’t ‘confess it’. They wouldn’t count the cost. This passage and this soil makes me pause and even shudder. Is it me? Is it you? Do I love the glory that comes from man more than I love to bear the reproach of Christ? **That’s the answer to why we don’t ‘confess’ Christ.** We love the praise of man, so we don’t say anything. I wonder how I would do if my faith was really tested? Would I confess Christ in tribulation? Would I confess Christ in persecution? Would I prove to be just rocky soil? Only able to thrive under the right conditions? But what if the sun should start to burn hot! Would I last? Will I endure to the end?

### **III. The seed among the thorns**

And then we come to the third type of soil, which may be just as scary. This seed fell among thorns. They grew up with the plant and it got tangled and choked. These people hear the word but it gets choked! It grows but doesn’t bear fruit. What was it that choked out the word?

LIFE! .....LIFE! (loudly) ....choked it out!

- **The cares of the world-** has the idea of distraction. Cares. Anxieties.
- **The deceitfulness of riches-** a delusion. Pursuing temporary happiness in money and losing eternity.
- **The desires for other things**....passions, desires enter in....a person loves money more than God.

All of these things sneak in and CHOKe out God's word. It never bears fruit. Oh, how I have seen this happen.

\*The frightening thing is that the first 3 soils would say that they are saved. "I know all about Jesus. I grew up in church." "I went to church camp when I was a kid. I went forward one summer." "Yeah, that was a long time ago. I haven't had a relationship with God since I was a kid, but I'm alright." "You know, I know all about Jesus but we are just so busy. Life is just too busy these days. I have bills to pay and I work a lot and the kids have rugby on Sundays." "I became a Christian when I was an exchange student in the USA. Now that I am back in China, it just isn't the same. My parents are against it and my husband isn't a Christian. I work so much.....and we need to save money to buy a house. Maybe I'll get more serious when I am older."

#### **IV. The seed on good soil**

Lastly, we come to the good soil. Normally in Jewish agriculture at that time, if a plant yielded 10 fold it was considered excellent. This person, this soil yields differently.....according to the person. Some 30x. Some 60x. Some 100x. Not everyone's fruit is the same but nonetheless, they bear fruit.

Jesus gives this parable to the crowds without the explanation of what it means. Verses 33 & 34 say, “ **33 With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. 34 He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.**”

He doesn't tell them that the seed is the word. He doesn't tell them that God is the sower. He doesn't tell them the bird means Satan. He doesn't tell them the thorns mean worldly desires.

Only his disciples (the 12 and those with them) get the explanation.

**Why? Why doesn't Jesus just come out with the full details to everyone?**

Well, **verse 33** says, “**as they were able to hear it.**”

They weren't able to hear it. They are on the **outside** of the kingdom because of their unbelief. They can't hear and understand.

Look in **verses 10-12**. “**10 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.”**”

Why this distinction? Insiders and outsiders!

\*We must read chapter 4:11-12 in the context of chapter 3. In chapter 3 the people are blatantly opposed to Jesus and in unbelief. Verse 12 is quoting Isaiah 6 which is a pronounced judgement on the people of Israel's sin. Here it is the same. Because of their unbelief, they will not get any more revelation. They must believe what they have already seen and heard.

**“It does not mean that “those outside” are denied the possibility of belief. It indicates that they are excluded from the opportunity of being further instructed in the secret of the Kingdom so long as unbelief continues.”** William Lane

### **Some things I want to say about this parable/text!**

1. “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” Respond today to the truth that you know about Jesus. Don't wait on more truth! Give your life to Jesus today. Turn from your sinful life and ask Jesus to forgive you. Confess that he really is the Lord. Believe that he has risen from the dead. Give up your life and he'll give you a new one.
2. We don't know which soil people are. We don't know ultimately who will be on the inside or the outside. We can make 'rightful judgments' based on the present fruit we see, but we don't need to label people according to the soils- only pray and share with them. God can turn anyone around and break through the hard soil.

3. Our job is to sow seed. Though **1 Corinthians 3** says that God gives the growth, in the same text it says that **“He who plants and he who waters are one and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God’s fellow workers.”** **GOD’S FELLOW WORKERS.**
  
4. If you have been given the secret of the kingdom of God....If you SEE. If you HEAR. If you are bearing fruit....You should rejoice and be glad because God has been gracious and merciful to you. It is HE who prepares the soil and makes seed grow, as **1 Corinthians 3:7** says. This same passage in **Matthew 13:16** says, **“Blessed are the eyes that see and the ears that hear.”**