

Mark 4:1-25

- Crowds continue to gather. Maybe they come more for miracles and help, but Jesus is now focused on teaching. Many will hear, but only some will not understand.
 - Teaching and proclaiming the kingdom of God is Jesus' priority in his ministry. This has already been affirmed several times in Mark:
 - 1:38 – “*And he said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.”*”
 - 1:22 – “*And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.*”
 - 1:27 – “*And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.”*”
 - 2:2 – “*And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them.*”
 - 2:13 – “*He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them.*”
- Jesus' parables reveals a man's heart and his desire to learn, perceive and understand the Lord. The parables DO NOT automatically teach and communicate. The parables of Jesus:
 - Help continue the process of revelation and lay the foundation for the next level of understanding (this person is taught by the Spirit of God)
 - Confuse, conceal and misdirect the Truth which leads to the undoing and deconstruction of any understanding originally possessed by the individual (this person does not have the Spirit of God, but the spirit of the world)
- This is the second longest section of Jesus teaching in Mark. (Mark 13, the Olivet Discourse concerning eschatology, is longer)
- The parable of the sower is followed by three more parables that help explain and build on this parable:
 - The parable of the lamp
 - The parable of the secretly growing seed
 - The parable of the mustard seed

Mark 4:1 – “**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.**”

1. “Again” – *palin* – “a second time”
 - a. This may be referring to 3:5-6 and 3:7-9 which was the first time when Jesus left and turned away from who rejected him and planned to destroy him:
 - i. In 3:5-6 –
“*he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.*”
 - ii. Then in 3:6-7 –
“*Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed, from*

Galilee and Judea...And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him"

- b. Now, "again" he turns away from those close to him and his family that did not understand him in 3:21, 31-34. They had come to the house in Capernaum -
"And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind."
 - i. 3:31-34 is immediately followed by 4:1, *"Again he began to teach beside the sea..."*
2. Jesus is using the boat
 - a. To keep a distance from the people who were crowding him for miracles and not letting him speak to the people
 - b. Provide him a speaking platform with good acoustics for sound
3. The people were kept there by the sea because of Jesus' presence and Jesus could speak to them and teach them
4. The great crowds were not there to learn and Jesus knew their motives and heart as in John 2:23-25:
"Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man."
5. "very large" referring to the crowds is the Greek superlative *pleistos* which could mean this very large crowd was not just large, but the largest crowd yet.

Mark 4:2-8 – **"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 thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."

1. The parable of the sower is about hearing and responding.
2. Parables will both:
 - a. reveal to those open to and seeking the kingdom of God
 - b. conceal from those with hard hearts and seeking the kingdom of the world
3. Interpreting parables:
 - a. Improper method is to treat parables as if they were allegories. Every part of an allegory is interpreted to have a meaning. Augustine did this with the parable of the good Samaritan which made the wounded man Adam, the robber was Satan, those that passed by without helping were the Law of Moses, the Samaritan was Jesus, the inn represents the church, etc., etc.
 - b. Proper method is to focus on the main point of the parable while allowing some allegorical elements make more than one point.

- i. The parables of Jesus must remain in the context of Jesus' ministry that was focused on proclaiming the kingdom of God. Do not remove the parable from the context and how the people would have heard it. Jesus was not telling us a parable for application to a modern situation in a modern setting. Modern application yes. Modern interpretation, no.
- ii. Any allegorical element should also have direct context application, and not some distant church age reference.
- iii. We must have correct exegesis of the parable before we can make correct application. Twisted exegetical interpretation will provide false application.

Mark 4:9 – And he said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Mark 4:10-12 – “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.”**

Mark 4:13-20 – “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.

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.”

Mark 4:21-25 – “And he said to them, “Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand?

22 For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light.

23 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”

24 And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you.

25 For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.”