



By Matthew Black Text: Mark 4 March 21, 2010
Series: Mark Message: 10 AM Service

Why God's Word Doesn't Take Root in Some Hearts

“...He that hath ears to hear let him hear.” (Mark 4:9)

Introduction: Open your Bible's to Mark 4. This morning we are going to talk about **why God's Word doesn't take root in some hearts.**

We've all been there. In the middle of the night. Praying desperately for a loved one to be saved. Perhaps it's a mother or father getting up in years. Perhaps it's son or a daughter. It could be a best friend who's in trouble. You give them the Word of God, but it just doesn't take root. Why?

Maybe you know of an area of sin in your life that you've struggled with for years. It could be anger or lust or jealousy or pride. It could be worry or fear or frustration. You hear the Word of God but you are not able to apply it to your life. It just doesn't take root!

Why does God's Word fail to take root in our hearts?

Paul said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16). Why do we not see more people transformed by God's Word? Why doesn't God's Word always plant itself in our lives and grow? Isn't it powerful enough? We know it's infinitely powerful. What's the problem?

Let's find out in **Mark 4**. In **Mark 4**, we see Jesus coming out of Peter's home in Capernaum to the seaside. The crowd of people was now so great that He got in a boat and pushed out a bit from the shore. He had a natural amphitheater that is still there today. The hills cascade up, where you can imagine thousands of people there now. The water acts as a natural amplifier of His divine voice.

Verse 1, “And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land”. You've heard of the Sermon on the Mount, well, this is the “Sermon by the Sea”. He gives a parable that tells us that the problem is not with the message or with the messenger. The problem is with the soil!

There's nothing wrong with the message. You're right with God as far as you can tell, and so there's nothing wrong with the messenger. Why aren't people converted?

We're going to find out that sometimes Jesus gave out the Gospel and nothing really happened. Why is that? Because of bad soil!

Look at **Mark 4:1-10**, “The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. 2 And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. 3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; 4 And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: 5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: 6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. 7 And some fell among thorns; and the

thorns sprung up, and choked them: 8 But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. 9 Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

Jesus preached the Word of God everywhere. He said “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear”!. As they say on the CB, "You got your ears on?" Are you listening? “He that hath ears to hear let him hear.” What Jesus is saying is be careful how you hear. We all have a hearing problem. We think we know the answers to our life! We think we can actually guide ourselves. We need to stop listening to ourselves and to the world and to all the wrong things all around us. We need to listen to what Jesus said. We need God’s Word to take root in our hearts. And thankfully, we have a perfect message, and a perfect messenger.

I. **The Perfect Messenger: Jesus, the Master Teacher.**

We read in verse 2 that “Jesus taught them”. Verse 14, “The sower soweth the word.” We read in Matthew 13:37, “He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man”.

Jesus is the perfect messenger. The Bible says Jesus came preaching and notice where he scattered this seed to begin with. Everywhere. I mean, he was just like, like he'd, he had seed to spare. He's throwing the seed in the thorns. He's throwing it on the wayside. He's throwing it on the stony ground. He's throwing it on all types of ground, just scattering seed everywhere.

Jesus taught the multitudes and Jesus was the Master Teacher. They said “never man spake like this man” (John 7:46). And yet, there were many who rejected Him. In fact, by the end of Jesus’ life, all men had rejected Him. Even His closest friend had denied Him three times, and another of His disciples became His greatest enemy and sold Him to the Pharisees to be put to death.

You would imagine that since Jesus was the *perfect Son of God*, preaching the *pure Word of God*, and having the *infinite power of God* because *He is God*, that all the people that heard Him would be saved. That was not the case was it? Neither should you be surprised if all to whom you speak are not saved.

II. **The Perfect Message: the Word of God**

We read in verse 2 that “Jesus taught them”. In verse 14, we read, “The sower soweth the word.” In Luke 8:11 Jesus said, “The seed is the word of God.” Great. If we have a perfect messenger, then we must have a perfect message. Is that right? How many of you would sign up for the class that Jesus was teaching? God in human flesh was lecturing on eternal life and on the very Gospel of the kingdom! But He used a very strange way of teaching. **It’s a perfect messenger with a perfect message.** Look at verse 2 again.

A. The Method of Jesus’ Teaching (Mark 4:2, 10)

Verse 2, “And he taught them many things by parables...”. Now, what is a parable? Someone has said a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

Why did Jesus teach by parables? Look down in verse 10. The disciples ask Jesus about this very thing. “And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.” Matthew 13 states they also asked Him WHY He spoke in parables. And Jesus gave two reasons why he spoke in parables. Number one, to *reveal* truth to the humble. Number two, to *conceal* truth from the proud.

Now what was the method of his teaching? Well he taught by parables. And parables are an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Now anybody can understand the earthly story of a

sower who goes out to sow, but Jesus says there's a truth behind the story, beyond the story.

B. The Mystery of Jesus Teaching (Mark 4:11)

Parables test the spiritual responsiveness of those who hear. They are designed to both reveal and conceal based on the receptiveness of the heart. Parables are a paradox because with one it enlightens and with another it shuts off light.

Parables give opportunity to those who want truth to inquire further and those who don't to become more hardened. Look at the Lord's answer in **verse 11**, "And he said unto them, **Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God**: but unto them that are without, all *these* things are done in parables".

1. **With parables, Jesus was concealing the truth from the Proud**. Verse 11, "Unto you it is given to know the **mystery of the kingdom of God**: but unto them that are without, all *these* things are done in parables". You see, there were certain people Christ did not want to understand because when they were given truth, they rejected it. To those who were rejecting Him, He gave them what they wanted. God purposely hid His truth from them. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble" (**1 Peter 5:5**).

Only to those who had hearts to listen were given the mysteries of the kingdom of God! Christ hid it from everyone else. At first in His ministry you see Him teaching openly, but then you have Him teaching the crowds in parables. The Gospel remains a mystery to the crowds.

What does the Bible mean by "mysteries"? We all love a mystery story, but the mysteries Jesus is talking about is not Agatha Christie or like a mystery novel. No, when the Bible uses the term "mystery" it is referring to spiritual truth that you could only know by divine revelation. It's something that you couldn't just figure out no matter how intelligent you are. It is something that God would have to reveal to you or you would never know it.

Explanation: Remember in **Mark 3**, the Pharisees had accused Him of being possessed with the devil. They were blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. Jesus was withdrawing His grace and favor from them. He was concealing the way of salvation to those who rejected Him.

Application: What does that say to us? **My friend, if you do not act on the truth, you will lose truth**. The writer of Hebrews says, "Today if you will hear my voice, harden not your heart" (**Hebrews 4:7**). Truth received, but not acted on and not welcomed, is taken away. You must either act on it, or it is taken away from you. For those who were hardened to Jesus, the parables hid the truth. But for those who were tender toward Christ, the parables revealed the truth.

2. **With parables, Jesus was revealing the truth to the Humble**. The Bible is a revelation of God to man. Notice the mystery of Christ's teaching in **verse 10**. "it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given."

You see, the Bible can be understood by anyone, but it cannot be esteemed and revered as the Word of God except as God the Holy Spirit reveals them unto you. Paul said, "the

natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

So when the Bible speaks of a mystery it is speaking of something that you can only know by the Holy Spirit through divine illumination of the Word of God. Why do you understand the Bible, but many others don't? Because you've been humbled. “God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5). God's grace is poured out on us when we understand the Gospel through the Word of God. The mystery of salvation is revealed to us. The beauty of Christ, our need for Him. It's all revealed.

You don't see Jesus calling many rich people or many proud, or many in high stations in life. No, you see Him calling lowly fishermen, rejected prostitutes. You see Him calling the thugs and riffraff of the armpit of Israel in Galilee. And **Matthew 13:12**, “whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance”. If you are humbled enough to respond to Christ, then respond, and He will give you more truth about Himself!

Why do you understand the Bible, but many others don't? You lay your intellectual pride in the dust for “God hath hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hath revealed them unto babes” (Matthew 11:25).

Illustration (College Student, Love Letter): I read this week about a college student who was in a class and that professor in that class said is there anybody in this class who believes the Bible? And a young man who was a believer stood up and said, “Yes sir, I believe the Bible.” And with that the professor began in condemning terms to humiliate this young man and to ridicule the Bible and to take it apart a piece at a time and he said I've read the entire Bible through and I want to tell you it is a bundle of confusion. It doesn't make any sense at all to me. And that young college student filled with the Holy Spirit said sir, I mean you no disrespect, but may I tell you sir that the Bible is God's love letter to his children. If you've read it and didn't understand it, it's because you've been reading somebody else's mail.”

Jesus taught in parables in order to reveal, but Jesus also taught in parables in order to conceal. He wanted the humble to hear and He wanted to blind the eyes of the proud.

So why doesn't God's Word take root in our hearts? The problem is not the message or the messenger. It is the receiver.

III. Finally we have imperfect Results: Why? The Poor Soil of our Hearts

Most of the time, I have no idea what's going on in your hearts. Most soil looks the same. One man trying to impress his pastor, he said pastor, give me a good prayer that I might pray when I enter the church. The pastor knew his habits. He said how about this? Now I lay me down to sleep. Now, it's hard sometimes though to be able to tell what is the attitude of the heart. You can't tell.

We have the perfect message, and we have the perfect messenger living in our hearts and guiding us. So what's the problem? We want to be like Jesus and sow the seed everywhere! Jesus said “as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you” (John 20:21). And we're to be seed sowers. Everywhere we're to go we're to scatter the seed. You see, friends, **you cannot tell by casual observation what soil will be productive.**

There are four types of soils that we are going to look at tonight, and **you cannot tell by casual**

observation what soil will be productive. We're going to find out that sometimes Jesus gave out the Gospel and the message did not pierce the hearts of the people. Why is that? When there is a failure in transformation by the Word of God, if the message is clear and the messenger is clean and sincere, then the problem is not in the messenger or the message ***but in the one who receives it.***

Some today will say that there is a famine of the Word of God, and preachers don't preach like they used to. There might be a problem with the messengers. That is true to some extent. But let me mention one other thing. People don't listen like they used to either. It's not enough to receive the Word of God with our physical ears. We must listen to the Word of God with our heart. Jesus said often, and we find it in our text "...He that hath ears to hear let him hear" (**Mark 4:9**).

It's very possible to hear God with your physical ears, but ignore Him with your spiritual ears. Ignoring God is dangerous. Ignoring God is like blowing a red light. There can be serious consequences. Listening to God also has fantastic consequences. I want a life that is filled with abundant spiritual blessing, but I can't get it unless I listen to God. The writer of Hebrews says, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts" (**Hebrews 4:7**).

We all want God to work in our lives. We want His Word planted in the soil of our heart. But sometimes that is simply not possible. Why? Because we have not opened our heart to receive it.

Jesus preached everywhere, but His message did not change their lives, because the Word He was teaching them was like seed falling into poor soil. ***However faithful the sower, however pure the message, the effect and impact of the preaching of the Word depends on the state of the learner's heart.***

Conclusion: Are you growing in grace? Why or why not? I love watching things grow. I love working in the yard! But I have to tell you, I've never planted a garden in the middle of the street. I've never planted a garden before clearing all the weeds. I've never planted a garden on a rock. Why? Because plants can't take root in concrete. Now Jesus wants to show the people their own heart. The problem wasn't His message. The problem was bad soil! God is clear that He works in the soil of a humble heart...

- "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble" (**1 Peter 5:5**).
- You have to lay your intellectual pride in the dust for "God hath hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hath revealed them unto babes" (**Matthew 11:25**).
- **Psalm 34:18**, "The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."

Did you know the Bible is the only book ever written that requires the right heart to benefit from it? You can read a novel or a newspaper with a cold, hard, wicked, indifferent heart and get all the information you need. But the Bible is a closed book to anyone whose heart is not right with God.

Though you read the Bible with your eyes, and hear the Bible with your ears, you receive the Bible with your heart. What is your heart condition? Do you have a ***humble heart?***