

# Mark 4:1-20

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[ 0 : 00 ] and we read the Word of God found in the Gospel according to Mark, Mark chapter 4. This is also found in the book of Matthew, but we'll be reading it from the account of Mark. Mark 4, starting in verse 1 and going down to verse 20.

It says, He began, and it is Jesus, He began to teach them again by the sea. And such a very large crowd gathered to Him that He got into a boat in the sea and sat down. And the whole crowd was by the sea on the land.

And He was teaching them many things in parables and was saying to them in His teaching, Listen to this.

And He was saying, He who has ears to hear, let him hear. As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables. And He was saying to them, To you it has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to those who are outside, get everything in parables.

So that while seeing, they may see and not perceive, and while hearing, they may hear and not understand. Otherwise, they might return and be forgiven. Verse 13. And He said to them, Do you not understand this parable?

[ 1 : 26 ] How will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown. And when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word, which has been sown in them.

In a similar way, these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy, but they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary.

Then when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns. These are the ones who have heard the word.

But the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. And those are the ones on whom the seed was sown on the good soil, and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, 30, 60, and 100 fold. Let's pray together. Lord, we thank you so much for this day. And God, we rejoice in the opportunity we have had to read your word. And Lord, we trust that you would speak to each heart and each mind through your word.

[ 2 : 31 ] Lord, may today be a day of continuing to grow closer and closer to you for your glory and honor. And we give it all to you. We give you all the praise that you are worthy of. And we ask it in Christ's name.

Amen. You may be seated. Mark chapter 4, verses 1 through 20, the parable of Christ, the sower and the seed. Again, this is one that we are very familiar with, but at times, because of our familiarity with things, we do not pay us special attention.

So we'll keep the outline simple and hopefully allow that the Lord would speak to our hearts. First, we see consideration, something which we must consider, or something that would be very becoming of us to stop and consider.

Because it says, He began to teach again by the sea, and such a very large crowd gathered to him that he got into a boat in the sea and sat down. This is the way in which Jesus taught the crowds. And we understand that this was the height of his popularity.

These are moments where multitudes of people are following him. And we see this later on with the feeding of the 5,000, and then again, the feeding of the 4,000, that Jesus, in his popularity, would teach the crowds these spiritual truths.

[ 3 : 34 ] And he was always teaching them in parables. He was giving them something which they would be familiar with to show them something that they needed to know. Their familiarity with the

agricultural style in which they would just walk along the road casting seed in the fields, and it was kind of the scattercast, and they would just throw it out by hand.

And some would fall here, some would fall there, but they were always just casting the seed out and putting it wherever it may lay. This was something that they would have understood. And Jesus is sitting down teaching to them, at least in their mind frame, and trying to show them something they need to see.

When Jesus began to teach them to them, he said, listen to this. The wording there is just literally listen, or pay attention. He was always calling the crowd to pay attention. Friend, we need to consider this, that when Jesus talks, we must what?

We must listen. We know that the Word of God has come to us through the Spirit of God, and is really manifested to us by the Son of God. But when Jesus began to teach, he is always calling people to listen, to pay special attention, to give attention to a particular truth, in which he is about to open them up.

Which shows us that when we read the Word of God, especially when we're listening to the Son of God, we cannot read it as we would read any other book or writing in history. I don't care how well educated or how scholarly an individual is.

[ 4 : 53 ] It doesn't really matter what man has attained to in this life. We must give special attention to those things which Jesus has taught more than we give attention to anything else. One of the greatest tragedies of our day is that men have paid more attention to others than they have to God himself.

That they would be willing to listen to others' reports, or they would be willing to listen to others' opinions, or they would be willing to listen and to be so swayed in their interpretation of things while neglecting the very thing that they should listen to or heed to.

In our own lives, let's not cast judgment and look to others. Let us make sure that the thing that we are listening to more closely, the thing that we are giving the most attention to, is the Word of God and the Son of God.

People at times will ask me things about what's going on in the current trend and what's going on in culture or what's going on in this, and I'll just be quite honest with you, a lot of times I really don't know. And it's not because I don't want to know.

It's because I have chosen, at times, not to be distracted by everything going on around me.

Because these things are the same. What God has said is still true, no matter what anybody else says.

[ 6 : 00 ] Man's greatest need is Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, no matter any condition in which they have. And eternity is just as real now as it has ever been. And this world is not getting better. It's going to get worse and worse until He comes again, right?

These are things I don't have to listen to the newscast to find out. These are things I know from the Word of God. And everything I need to know to let me walk through this life is found in 66 books called the Bible.

And the one thing that I want to know is God's Word. Now, I will at times glean from others' interpretation, but I'm very limited. And I don't mean to be that way. I know Billy Graham used to tell people you need to preach the Bible on one hand and the newspaper on another hand.

And he was very good at that. And he could balance that. I'm just telling you for me, I can't. I can be very easily distracted by whatever is in front of me. So maybe you're better at that than I am, but that's good.

And if you can, then I thank you for that. And you can be very applicable to that. But the one thing, know yourself, right? You need to know who you are. I get kind of tunnel visioned. I'm one of those guys, wives just ask me, is your husband tunnel vision?

[ 7 : 02 ] Most of them are, right? God created us that way. We get focused on one thing and we kind of get distracted and we can't help it. Some of us are gifted a little bit more than that. I know me, so I really confine myself to what I listen to.

Jesus says, give special attention to this. Pay attention. It's always good when scripture tells us to pay attention to what? Pay attention. So this is the consideration.

Are we really listening to what he is teaching us? Are we really listening to what we're seeing here? Are we really listening? Because he says that to listen to this, he said that to you has been given to understand the mystery of the kingdom of God.

But those who are outside get everything in parables. Here's something else we must consider. People tell me all the time, well, I try to read the Bible and I try to, I just can't get it. An understanding of scripture is a gift.

It is a gift of God. I know for my own sake that I started reading the Bible before I was a believer and I would read it and I would go through the motions primarily because Carrie and I got married and at a very young age, we were married and she said, well, I think we need to read the Bible.

[ 8 : 06 ] And I said, okay, I've told you this before. So we started reading through the Bible at night. Before we would go to bed, we would read the Bible together. I was supposed to read a chapter and she was supposed to read a chapter. And evidently I'm very monotonous in my reading and every night I would go first and she would fall asleep.

So I would go and read that just to keep us on course. I'm not blaming it on the fact that we were in the book of Numbers. I'm not blaming it on the fact that we were in the book of Leviticus. We did what everyone else wants to do that I greatly discourage people to do.

We said, we're going to read it Genesis to Revelation. That sounds great until you get to those hard pages. Now, if you're more disciplined in your spiritual walk, great, hallelujah. That's why I read one that kind of pushed me aside here and there.

At that time, I had no appreciation for genealogies like I do now. At that time, I had no appreciation for the Old Testament truths as I do now. So I probably was reading in a very monotonous tone. But even then, I remember we would get to what we'd say the good stuff, right? The Gospels. And while God's Word was not returning void, it really wasn't being opened up to me yet either. I couldn't understand it.

[ 9 : 08 ] Why? Because the understanding of spiritual truths is a gift from God, which tells us to know the Word of God, we must be in the presence of God. And the only way to be in the presence of God is to be in a relationship with Him through His Son.

Jesus says, to you has been given the opportunity to understand, lest while seeing they may not see and by hearing they may not hear. We need to understand this, friend.

We cannot separate the author from the work. So don't ever try to understand what God is saying to you while being separate from Him. This is the consideration that we must pay attention.

Secondly, we see an evaluation here. We see an evaluation as He's given the parable of the soils or the parable of the sower. He mentions four soils. The very thing that we must be careful of is something, and I can't really remember who said it or I would attribute it.

I read it once. It said, let us be careful not to assume we are the good soil, right? Because our natural tendency to evaluate ourselves is always to evaluate ourselves higher probably than we should.

[ 10 : 10 ] This is why God gave us the law. God gave us the law to be a tutor to lead us to Christ. Lest we think more of ourselves than we should, He gave us the law in the Old Testament to show us our desperate need for the Savior because man in his own judgment is really not that bad.

We're really not that bad because we can always find someone who is worse than we are. We can always find someone who is doing greater sin than we do. So man in our own judgment is not that bad.

And so when we come to this, let us not use this parable as an evaluation of others. Let us first use it as an evaluation to ourselves. And when we look at the soils here, we are looking at it by way of evaluation and saying, Lord, is that me?

And we need to understand these. The first soil we see is that soil which is by the path. It is that soil which is hardened ground. It is a heart that has been hardened to the extent that Satan comes in and before the word even has opportunity, he snatches it away.

What amazes me in the parable of these four soils, only one of them is given any proper action is given to Satan himself. And it is only that which is hardened that really has no opportunity.

[ 11 : 20 ] I would dare say that none of us fall into that because that hardened heart has no desire for the word of God. That hardened heart has no desire for the things of God. And Satan really is taking every opportunity away.

Maybe you know individuals like that where you've tried to share with them or you've tried to speak to them and it seems like nothing you say really takes root, never takes hold. It's because Satan has such an emphasis on their life or Satan has such an influence over their lives that anything spiritual that comes there, Satan snatches it away.

We have an enemy. And that enemy is an enemy of our souls. And the one thing that he longs to do is to snatch away any spiritual truth which must come to us. The second one and the third one are the ones that really as people who profess Christ and really sit under Christ we need to use by way of evaluation.

And we have seen these played out before us. I would dare say that each one of us have seen these being lived out and therefore we are using them by way of personal evaluation. The second soil is that rocky ground.

It says in which the seed immediately sprang up but they have no root. Why is discipleship so important? Not only is it important because Jesus said to go and make disciples, right? He didn't say go and make professions or go and make believers.

[12:28] He said go and make disciples. And the reason discipleship is so important where you are discipling someone else and someone else is discipling you or you are learning the truths of Scripture is because that is where our roots are formed.

And we see this here that when the word was cast upon the rocky soil and no roots were formed or the soil that was kind of there with all these other distractions, Jesus said to them that when they hear the word immediately they receive it with joy.

That means they love it. The ministry says this is the best thing I've ever heard. What good news this is. It says yet they have no firm root in themselves. This is why I put such an emphasis on getting in the word of God and even being connected to the church of God is because we are there and we need to have roots.

It is one thing to be excited about the things of God. It is a whole different thing to be building roots in the truth of God and to let your roots tie in with other people's roots because of what's about to take place.

It says since they have no firm root in themselves, they are only temporary. Then when, it doesn't say if, it says when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away.

[13:36] We need to ask ourselves this question. Does the word which I have with joy, is it one that would endure affliction? That's not a word we like to use very often, right? And persecution that comes as a result of the word.

This is not a result of our choices. It's one thing to be afflicted or persecuted because of something we have done. It is a whole other thing. Jesus, you know, tells the people that you're going to suffer persecution and later on we find out that it's the persecution from the word.

What if someone began to afflict you and persecute you simply because of the joy you have over the word of God? Does the faith you possess endure that?

That's the evaluation. That's something we must ask ourselves, right? That's something we must look at our own hearts and say, Lord, I am excited about the things of God, but is it this? Because he said those that have roots can endure, but those with no root will not endure.

The third soul we see is that which is sown among the thorns. And of all of them, I'll just go ahead and say personally, I think this is the scariest of all. The one that is sown among the thorns. And these who have heard the word, they hear it.

[14:44] They may be excited about it. They begin to grow. And we know they grow because they're choked out. And you can't be choked unless you grow, right? But what concerns me is that which chokes it out.

It says, but the worries of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word and it becomes unfruitful. This is mentioned multiple times in scripture, which gives us another reason to pause and pay attention and to make sure none of us fall into this. It says that they have received the word. The word was implanted in them. They began to grow in the word and they got excited about the word. This is probably that which plagues most churches, that which plagues most congregations, which we have seen multiple times in reference to these scriptures.

What we find is people throughout generations have told us, even Billy Graham, we'll go back and quote Billy Graham. Billy Graham said that he thought the greatest mission field that ever existed sat in the church pews every Sunday morning.

And we have heard over and over again from a number of people, prominent pastors, some who have served the local churches and served the churches for 60 plus years, who we quoted as saying that they can say indefinitely, they could say absolutely that about 80 to 85% of the people that they ever pastored were non-believers in all sincerity and truth.

[16:06] That's scary statistics. And the reason we see that is because of this. It is quite possible to accept the word, to be growing in the word, to be maturing in the word. And then all of a sudden it says the worries of this world. That literally means the worries of this age.

Thinking in our day and time now, it kind of makes us stand back. Those things of their age, or those things which were going on in their world, became so prominent. Again, being careful what we're paying attention to, being careful what we're listening to, being careful because the things of this world can cause us to be unfruitful in our walk with Christ and can choke out the excitement we have of Christ.

Friend, I want to tell you, you can leave here today and you can be excited on cloud nine or you can be mad. It doesn't matter either way. But you can be excited on cloud nine about the things of Jesus Christ and you can probably go out to eat somewhere this afternoon.

And while sitting down to eat, someone could bring up a certain topic of what's going on in our age today. And I guarantee you, no matter how excited about the things of Christ you may be when you leave here, they can choke that excitement out if you give them opportunities simply by the things that are going on in this world today.

And we see here that the worries of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. How many people say, well, you know, I've just got to do this and I've got to do that and I've got to do this. And the deceitfulness of riches.

[17:21] I love what the book of Proverbs says that riches grow wings and they fly away. The deceitfulness rich is our deceitful. We'll never have enough.

We'll never have what we consider to be enough. It is the rich. It is this ambitious desire for more than what we have. And it says, and the desire for other things, they enter in and choke the word and it becomes unfruitful.

So here's our evaluation. Lord, I know I'm not the one that Satan has come in and stole away. Lord, I wonder if I'm the one who can endure persecution and affliction. Lord, am I the one who is so worried about the things of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desire for other things than what you have given me?

Is it choking it out? And then the final soil that we see is that good soil. That good soil that is there. And that soil, it says, produces 30, 60, and 100-fold crop, which, by the way, those numbers are all astronomical numbers.

Any farmer, you ask a farmer if he would be satisfied with a 30-fold harvest or a 60-fold harvest or a 10-fold. In the day of Christ, what was expected was a 10-fold harvest, right? Get 10 times back what you planted.

[18:31] To get 30 times was to blow your mind. To get 60 times back was unbelievable. To get 100 times back was just simply miraculous. It was unthinkable. But Jesus said, this good soil which has been prepared, by the way, this soil had to have some labor intensive, right?

It has to be prepared. No soil is just good naturally. Stones had to be removed. The thorns had to be cut back. This is something that had been well prepared. Lord, am I that? Well, how do we evaluate ourselves on that?

Jesus said, the only one that was good was that one which was producing fruit. See, I love the fact that the Word of God gives us a tape measure. It gives us a measurement of what holiness looks like.

If we want to see what holiness looks like, we can read the Ten Commandments. And if we are absolutely obeying all 10 of those commandments, I mean, to the smallest of details, then we are holy. But the measuring rod really is too long because even in just 10 great sayings, Jesus sets a standard that none of us in our own ability can attain to.

And then all of a sudden we say, but Lord, is my faith genuine? And he says, well, if your faith is genuine, you will bear fruit. Jesus says, by this you will know them by their fruit.

[19:39] So we say, Lord, am I truly believing in you? Am I truly trusting in you? And the real question that we have to ask in self-evaluation is, where's the fruit? Am I bearing fruit for you, O Lord?

Where am I at? So we see this evaluation. Here is an evaluation. Third and finally, we have the application because we want to take the truth of God and we want to apply it.

The first application is easy. When we understand it, we will not know the things which he teaches us without his presence. The second application is pretty simple too because Jesus said here in

verse 13, and do you not understand this parable?

How will you understand all the parables? Which shows us this. This is, as what many Bible scholars say, the key parable. This one is the one that unlocks the others. How will we understand the parable of the dragnet or how will we understand the parable of the sheep and the goats? Jesus says, the key to understanding every other parable is to know what he is saying in this parable. He says, you cannot understand any of them until you understand this one. And thankfully for us, he explains it to us, he shows us the meaning of it.

[ 20 : 45 ] And really the application is not all those who profess Christ are truly his. I know that shocks us a little bit, but that's the reality. Not all those who say, Lord, Lord, belong to him.

We know that because the Bible tells us in the book of Matthew that in that day many will come to me and say, Lord, Lord, did we not cast out demons in your name? And Lord, Lord, did we not do many miracles in your name? And Lord, Lord, did we not do a lot of things in your name? And Jesus says, I will say to them, depart from me, you worthless and evil person. I never knew you. Not all those who proclaim, Lord, Lord, are really his.

That is something we need to understand. In our day and age when easy professions and easy, raise your hand here and sign your name there and all this easy believism, Jesus sets a higher standard.

And that's not to be judgmental. It's not to be, it's not to be really, not saying anything other than what scripture says. This parable teaches us that there are a lot of people who hear the word, respond to the word, but really never, ever, ever bear fruit to the word.

[ 21 : 42 ] And the only thing Jesus is looking for is are you fruitful? We see this in other parables in the vine and the branches. Jesus said that if you abide in me, he says, I am the vine and you are the branch.

Whoever abides in me will bear much fruit. And then we see it later on in the tree that was planted in the vineyard that never bore any fruit. And the father said, go cut that tree down.

It doesn't belong here. It's not bearing fruit. And that's not to put a standard on anything other than what God is saying is, is that individual fruitful for the sake of the kingdom of God?

If they are not, they are not genuinely mine. That is an application we see. Another application we see, because if we are true followers of Christ, we are called to be disciples, right?

We are called to be sowers. Here is this. The only thing that we are to be spreading or the only thing, the primary thing, and not to say the only thing, the primary thing that we ought to be concerned about sharing is the word.

[ 22 : 38 ] Now we can do other things. We can do these great humanitarian acts. We can do this great, we can lend a hand. We can feed the hungry. We can clothe the naked. We can give the thirsty a drink of water. Those things we should do.

But one thing we find in Jesus when he is talking about those who stand before him and he says that you clothe the naked, you fed the hungry, you prayed for the prisoner. They said, Lord, when did we do all these things? They weren't even aware of the fact that they were doing those things, right?

Because that wasn't the thing they were doing. The one thing they were doing was sowing the word. And when we sow the word, those things happen naturally, right? They are opportunity. Jesus would always meet a need to proclaim a truth. He would do this. He would, and there was a great miracle or there was a great feeding or there was a great water turning into wine to proclaim a truth.

The primary thing is always the sowing of the word, which we see by way of application. If there is anything that we as believers in Jesus Christ are doing that is not connected with the sowing of the word, then we're not really doing it for Christ.

[ 23 : 38 ] Because the one thing that must be sown is the word, which gives us caution. And this is the final thing. If we're going to lead anyone to Christ, friend, let us be sure that the way we lead them to the Savior is the only way he wants to accept them and that is through the word of God.

We must be careful and if anyone ever comes to me and they want to sit down and talk to me about the things of Christ and accepting Christ and I try to always be consistent in this, we cannot promise people, oh, if you accept Jesus Christ, your life will be better.

I read a paradoxical story about this recently. He said, this gentleman who sat in a congregation and an invitation was given by the pastor and I don't ever want to be this pastor. And in his

invitation, the pastor desperately pleaded for people to respond to Christ and said, if you'll come to Christ, all your worries will be taken away.

If you'll come to Christ, everything will be better. If you come to Christ, everything will be nice and sweet. And he said, and he gave the invitation and after the invitation, he began to talk about all the problems and prayer requests of the members who had already accepted Christ because the reality is this, accepting Jesus Christ does not make life easy.

Right? Accepting Jesus Christ does not mean things will go away. As a matter of fact, the moment you accept Jesus Christ, some things will show up because you have an enemy throwing fiery darts at you.

[ 25 : 01 ] And last I checked, fiery darts probably do not feel good. Thankfully, I've never had a fiery dart thrown at me. Some darts I've had thrown at me, but fiery ones probably hurt a little worse, right?

We need to be careful what we promise. But the one thing that we can share with people that will not fail is you sow the word.

And when you sow the word, then you're raising up disciples who may or may not produce fruit, but that's not for us to determine. Our job is to sow the word of God for the glory of God.

Let us pray. Lord, we thank you so much for this day. We thank you for your faithfulness to us.

Thank you, Lord, for the many blessings you've poured out upon us, Lord, those that maybe we're not even aware of yet.

But Lord, we pray that we would be your people for your glory. Lord, that there would be no time of judgment. But Lord, there may be a time of self-evaluation of where do we stand. Lord, we desire to be fruitful for you, Lord. I think it's my, I think it's an easy estimate to say that every one of us here desire to know you in a better way.

[ 26 : 01 ] So Lord, would you reveal yourself to us? God, show us who we are so that we may know who you are and we give you the praise for it. We ask all in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 29 : 21 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.