

# Mark 4 Commentary

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John Mark

MARK: THE SERVANT JESUS

## THE LIFE OF CHRIST SHOWING COVERAGE BY MARK (SHADED AREA)

**Mark 4:1 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; and the whole crowd was by the sea on the land.**

NET Mark 4:1 Again he began to teach by the lake. Such a large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the lake and sat there while the whole crowd was on the shore by the lake.

GNT Mark 4:1 **Κα** π λιν ρεατο διδ σκειν παρ τν θ λασσαν· κα συν γεται πρ ς α τν χλος πλε στος, στε α τν ε ς πλο ον μβ ντα καθ σθαι ν τ θαλ σσ , κα π ς χλος πρ ς τν θ λασσαν π τ ς γ ς σαν.

NLT Mark 4:1 Once again Jesus began teaching by the lakeshore. A very large crowd soon gathered around him, so he got into a boat. Then he sat in the boat while all the people remained on the shore.

KJV Mark 4:1 **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.

ESV 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.

NIV Mark 4:1 Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge.

ASV Mark 4:1 **And** again he began to teach by the sea side. And there is gathered unto him a very great multitude, so that he entered into a boat, and sat in the sea; and all the multitude were by the sea on the land.

CSB Mark 4:1 Again He began to teach by the sea, and a very large crowd gathered around Him. So He got into a boat on the sea and sat down, while the whole crowd was on the shore facing the sea.

NKJ Mark 4:1 **And** again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea.

NRS Mark 4:1 Again he began to teach beside the sea. Such a very large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the sea and sat there, while the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land.

YLT Mark 4:1 **And** again he began to teach by the sea, and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he, having gone into the boat, sat in the sea, and all the multitude was near the sea, on the land,

NAB Mark 4:1 On another occasion he began to teach by the sea. A very large crowd gathered around him so that he got into a boat on the sea and sat down. And the whole crowd was beside the sea on land.

NJB Mark 4:1 Again he began to teach them by the lakeside, but such a huge crowd gathered round him that he got into a boat on the water and sat there. The whole crowd were at the lakeside on land.

GWN Mark 4:1 Jesus began to teach again by the Sea of Galilee. A very large crowd gathered around him, so he got into a boat and sat in it. The boat was in the water while the entire crowd lined the shore.

BBE Mark 4:1 And again he was teaching by the seaside. And a very great number of people had come to him, so that he got into a boat on the sea and took his seat; and all the people were on the land by the seaside.

- **He began** - Mk 2:13 Mt 13:1,2-9 Lu 8:4-8
- **so that** - Lu 5:1-3
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Mt 13:1-2+ "That day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea. 2 And large crowds gathered to Him, so He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd was standing on the beach.

Luke 8:4+ When a large crowd was coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him, He spoke by way of a parable:

## JESUS BEGINS PARABOLIC TEACHING

To be more accurate, Jesus had already begun teaching in parable form in Mark 3:23ff+ "And He called them to Himself and began speaking to them in **parables**, "How can Satan cast out Satan?"

While many call Mark 4:1-20 the "**Parable of the Sower**," it is probably more accurately titled "**Parable of the Soils**," for there is only one sower with one seed and there are four soils. The **sower** and the **seed** are unchanging variables, whereas the soil is the determining variable of subsequent fruitfulness. The corollary is that the skill of the sower or the efficacy of the seed are not the primary determinants of whether a seed will germinate and bear fruit.

Note that **NAS** (and most modern translations) does not translate the first Greek word (**kai**) which means **and** which connects this passage with the previous teaching in Mark 3:31-35+ where He explained that the one who was truly His brother in the spiritual sense was the one who "**does the will of God**." If we compare Mt 13:1 we find a specific time statement = "**That day** Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea." When one examines the context of Mathew 13, it is clear that Jesus had just "defined" who was His "brother and sister and mother." (Mt 12:50+). So the teaching of the parable of the soils was on this same day and is additional parabolic teaching which had begun in Mark 3:23ff+.

**He began to teach again by the sea - Began to teach** (see [didasko](#) below) in the [present tense](#) emphasizing not the fact of teaching but the process. Wuest writes Jesus' **teaching** "was line upon line, precept upon precept. The teaching was simplicity itself, and possibly oft repeated in order that the people might understand." **Again** is a time phrase (so to speak) and should prompt the question since "again" means once more, when did Mark record His prior teachings? The answer is...

Mark 1:21-22+ They \*went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and **began to teach**. 22 They were amazed at His **teaching**; for He was **teaching** them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Mark 2:13+ And He went out again by the seashore; and all the people were coming to Him, and He was **teaching** them.

Notice the diagram above depicting the **PUBLIC MINISTRY** of Jesus, where the **SHADED AREAS** refer to the sections discussed in the Gospel of Mark. Note that references to Mark are recorded along the lower border of the diagram ("Middle Galilean Ministry" which Jensen says lasts about 10 months), where you see Mark 1:1, 1:14, 3:12. Now that you are oriented what do you see about Jesus **popularity** and **opposition**? Clearly the former is on the decline and the latter is on the incline! This marks a pivotal turning point in the ministry of Jesus. From here on, the opposition will steadily increase until it ends up nailing His hands and feet to an old rugged Cross.

**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** - Jesus could hardly be heard if He stayed in the midst of the surging crowd, so to be heard by all He moves to the boat where he would also be able to sit down, taking the posture typical of a rabbi when they were teaching. In many places along the seashore, the hills would rise around the shore and in effect produce a natural amphitheater. In any event, there is no doubt that despite "standing room only" every one was able to hear Jesus' words. It reminds me of the stories of John Whitefield in the days of the first [Great Awakening in America](#) where it was not uncommon for him to speak to crowds as large as 20,000 (or even greater) without electronic voice amplification! We do not know how large the crowd was but it is reasonable to speculate that it was many thousands.

Note **that** ([hoste](#)) can be translated "so that" and indicates a term of purpose or result. The size of the crowd resulted Jesus moving His "pulpit" in order to accommodate the size of the crowd. They are about to be confronted with parabolic teaching.

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**Daniel Akin** - It is interesting to notice how often the Bible uses some part of the human body to make an important spiritual observation or illustrate an important biblical truth.

1. **Feet** – Romans 10:15, "And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

2. **Hands and Knees** – Hebrews 12:12-13, “Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.”
3. **Tongue** – James 3:6, “And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.”
4. **Eyes** – Matthew 6:22, “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light.”
5. **Hair** – Matthew 10:30, “But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.”
6. **Heart** – Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”
7. **Ears** – Mark 4:9, “And he said, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear.’” [Mark 4:1-20 Sowing the Seed](#)

## Mark 4:2 And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teaching,

NET Mark 4:2 He taught them many things in parables, and in his teaching said to them:

GNT Mark 4:2 καὶ ὁ δάσκειν αὐτοὺς ἐν παραβολαῖς πολλὰ καὶ λέγειν αὐτοῖς ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ αὐτοῦ,

NLT Mark 4:2 He taught them by telling many stories in the form of parables, such as this one:

KJV Mark 4:2 And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine,

ESV Mark 4:2 And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them:

NIV Mark 4:2 He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said:

ASV Mark 4:2 And he taught them many things in parables, and said unto them in his teaching,

CSB Mark 4:2 He taught them many things in parables, and in His teaching He said to them:

NKJ Mark 4:2 Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching:

NRS Mark 4:2 He began to teach them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them:

YLT Mark 4:2 and he taught them many things in similes, and he said to them in his teaching:

NAB Mark 4:2 And he taught them at length in parables, and in the course of his instruction he said to them,

NJB Mark 4:2 He taught them many things in parables, and in the course of his teaching he said to them,

GWN Mark 4:2 He used stories as illustrations to teach them many things. While he was teaching them, he said,

BBE Mark 4:2 And he gave them teaching about a number of things in the form of stories, and said to them in his teaching, Give ear:

- **parables:** Mk 4:11,34 3:23 Ps 49:4 78:2 Mt 13:3,10,34,35
- **in His:** Mk 12:38 Mt 7:28 Joh 7:16,17 18:19
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## TEACHING IN PARABLES

Mark 4:1-34 contains 4 parables and is the longest teaching section in the Gospel of Mark.

**And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teaching** - **Was teaching** is the [imperfect tense](#) picturing this as His ongoing activity. In Mark Jesus first taught in **parables** (see below) in Mark 3:23+ using the **parables** to refute the Pharisees' accusation that He was performing miraculous deeds by the power of Satan. There is a basic difference in His use of **parables** in Mark 3 and all subsequent parabolic teaching, because in Mark 3 the **parables** were spoken in such a way that the hearers could clearly understand the meaning.

**Lenski** has an interesting comment - The way in which Mark records them shows that they were not spoken in rapid succession, but that after each parable Jesus made a pause in order to allow it to be absorbed by the hearers. (ISMG)

Beginning here in Mark 4 we see a shift in the way Jesus addresses the crowds, because now **parables** are given not to reveal but to hide truths from those who not have hearts to hear and receive the truth. As Jesus explained to His disciples "To you has been

given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside (UNBELIEVERS) get **everything** (HOW MUCH?) in parables." (Mk 4:11<sup>+</sup>). From now on, only those men and women who have "ears to hear" will be able to understand the deeper meaning of Jesus' parabolic stories. Some would consider this change of teaching style a form of "judicial hardening," meaning that because the crowds refused to receive and respond to His clear teachings, their hearts gradually had hardened to the truth He spoke. It was not Jesus' desire nor intent (cf the heart of God in 2 Pe 3:9<sup>+</sup>, 1 Ti 2:4), but was more a "commentary" (so to speak) on the hearts of the majority of the Jews who heard "the gracious words which were falling from His lips." (Lk 4:22<sup>+</sup>) It was a matter of their personal choice, but choice always comes "pre-packaged" with consequences which in this case the consequence would be their inability to understand Jesus' **parables**, for the rest of His ministry!

Stated another way, the "[paradoxical aspect](#)" of this **parable** is that Jesus adopts this teaching method in order to prevent some people from understanding His teaching! This begs the question, why even teach if what is **taught** is not **caught**? Good question! Jesus elucidates on the reasoning in His later quote from Isaiah, but in brief, He is teaching the multitudes, but they will not be able to understand because of the hardness of their hearts (Mk 4:12<sup>+</sup>). A **parable** then is not to **HIDE** from **ALL**, but to **REVEAL** to **SOME** (in this case the "some" being His disciples and you if you are His disciple - Mk 4:13<sup>+</sup>)!

**THOUGHT** - If you are not His disciple, than chances are that you read the Word of God and have little understanding of what you are reading. If that is your experience then you need to examine yourself as Paul commands the Corinthians in 2 Cor 13:5<sup>+</sup>, because if you are truly born again, then the Father and the Son have given you the gift of the Spirit of Truth Who now lives in you to enable you to understand spiritual truth (cf Jn 14:17, 15:26, 16:13)

**Parables** (symbols) ([3850](#))([parabole](#) from **para** = beside, near + **ballo** = throw, cast; English "parable") is literally a throwing beside or placing of one thing by the side of another (juxtaposition as of ships in battle in classic Greek). The metaphorical meaning is to place or lay something besides something else for the purpose of comparison. A spiritual or moral truth would often be expressed by laying it alongside, so to speak, a physical example that could be more easily understood. A common, observable object or practice was used to illustrate a subjective truth or principle. In simple terms something which was well known was verbally "laid alongside" something which was not known in order to explain it. In short the known truth explained the unknown truth. A parable is a way to make abstract truth more concrete, interesting and easier to remember and apply. Here in Mark 4, Matthew 13 and Luke 8 we see that the parable takes on a different function, in essence hiding the truth from those who do not have ears (hearts) to hear the truth. To His disciples Jesus disclosed the hidden meaning, because their hearts were open to His truth. But to all others the unexplained parable became in effect an impossible riddle whose meaning could not be guessed. (See below for [Daniel Akin's summary points](#) on parables).

A **parable** is a story that seeks to drive home a point by illustrating it using a familiar situation of common life. A parable is a teaching device in which a principle is concealed and a truth revealed, giving the hearer first sight then insight! It is like a mirror and a window, where we see through to truth about God, but like a mirror it forces us to look at ourselves. Paul made a similar statement writing that "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.." (1 Cor 2:14<sup>+</sup>)

**James Edwards** - Parables cannot be understood apart from the one who tells them. Parables are not simply good advice, they are good news; for the life of Jesus is itself a parable, indeed the greatest parable. (PNTC-Mk)

**Warren Wiersbe** - A parable starts off as a **picture** that is familiar to the listeners. But as you carefully consider the picture, it becomes a **mirror** in which you see yourself, and many people do not like to see themselves. This explains why some of our Lord's listeners became angry when they heard His parables, and even tried to kill Him. But if we see ourselves as needy sinners and ask for help, then the **mirror** becomes a **window** through which we see God and His grace. To understand a parable and benefit from it demands honesty and humility on our part, and many of our Lord's hearers lacked both. (Bible Exposition Commentary)

**Walter W. Wessel** - For centuries parables were [interpreted allegorically](#); i.e., each element of the story was assigned a specific meaning. Thus Augustine found in the parable of the Good Samaritan references to Adam, Jerusalem, the Devil and his angels, the Law and the Prophets, and Christ and the church! Now we are more apt to look for the one main point a parable teaches. This is not to say that all Jesus' parables have only one point to make. Some clearly have more than one, but the principle is a generally valid one. We have also learned (from Dodd and Jeremias) that the teaching found in the parables is more than general religious truth. It is always related in a dynamic way to Jesus' message and mission, i.e., to the life situation of his ministry.

This does not mean, of course, that the meaning of the parables are bound to the historical and theological situation of first-century Palestine. Like all Scripture, the parables contain truth relevant for God's people everywhere—those of the twentieth-century world as well as those of the first-century world. (EBC-Mk)

**William Lane** - With this call Jesus involves his hearers in the situation he describes and leads them to form a judgment upon it. He also warns them that there may be more to the parable than appears upon its surface; there can be a superficial hearing which misses the point. The introduction and conclusion to the parable of the sower set it apart as having special significance. It provides the key to the other parables of growth which follow, as indicated in Mark 4:13, where Jesus makes understanding of this parable essential to the understanding of any other parable. (NICNT-Mk)

**Teaching** (verb)(1321)([didasko](#) from **dáo**= know or teach; English = didactic; see study of related noun [didaskalia](#) and the adjective [didaktikos](#)) means to provide instruction or information in a formal or informal setting. In the 97 NT uses of **didasko** the meaning is virtually always to teach or instruct, although the purpose and content of the teaching must be determined from the context. In Scripture to **teach** means to pass on the truth about the Word of God, the God of the Word and the faith of the saints, with the goal of influencing the understanding and stimulating obedience to the truth taught and resultant Spirit energized transformation and Christ-likeness. The essence of a **disciple** ([mathetes](#), cp Jesus' clear command in Mt 28:18, 19, 20) in fact is that he or she is a learner, and also a "doer" (cp Jas 1:22+). The teacher teaches and the disciple hears and processes what is heard, so that this truth affects his or her innermost being (i.e., impacting not just the "head" but especially the "heart!"). Ultimately the purpose of **didasko** is to shape the will of the one taught, to cause it to be conformed to the will of God (cp Ro 12:2+).

**Teaching** (noun) (1322)([didache](#) from [didasko](#) = to give instruction in a formal or informal setting with the highest possible development of the pupil as the goal) is a noun which describes the activity of teaching (instruction). **Didache** or "the teaching" was that instruction which elucidated the meaning of the facts which were proclaimed. The idea of didache then is to impart knowledge to or instruct someone, for example in how to do something, etc. **Teaching** or **doctrine** is that which communicates to another the knowledge of that which heretofore that person was ignorant or ill informed.

#### Related Resources: Parables

- [Parables, How to Interpret](#)
- [What is a parable?](#)
- [Why did Jesus teach in parables?](#)
- [How many parables are in the Bible?](#)

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**Daniel Akin** comments "**Parables** are the most striking feature of the teaching ministry of Jesus. The popular idea that a parable is "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning" is helpful, but it needs to be expanded. Several observations should be noted before we dive into this first, and perhaps, most important of all the parables.

1. Parables provide insight into the nature, coming, growth and [consummation](#) of the Kingdom of God.
2. Parables are by design intended to be provocative and surprising. They often sneak up on us.
3. Parables are used to simulate thinking and cause the hearer to carefully contemplate what they are hearing.
4. Parables use everyday objects, events and circumstances to illustrate spiritual truth, usually with a new turn or twist.
5. Parables reveal more truth to those with receptive ears and hide truth from those with dull ears. (This is critical to understanding Mk 4:10-12)
6. Parables comprise **35%** of all gospel **teaching**.
7. Parables usually, but not always, focus on a single truth. Therefore, **we should not [allegorize](#) them seeking a meaning for every detail.**
8. Ultimately, parables draw attention to Jesus as God's Messiah and call us to make a personal decision concerning Him. [Mark 4:1-20 Sowing the Seed](#))

## PARABLES OF JESUS

1. The Two Builders (Matthew 7:24–27; Luke 6:46–49)
2. The Sprouting Seed (Mark 4:26–29)

3. The Children of the Marketplace (Matthew 11:16–19; Luke 7:31–32)
4. The Unclean Spirit (Matthew 12:43–45; Luke 11:24–26)
5. Tree and Its Fruit (Matthew 12:33–37; Luke 6:43–45)
6. The Strongman's House (Matthew 12:29–30; Luke 11:21–23)
7. The Sower and the Seed (Matthew 13:3–9; Mark 4:1–9; Luke 8:4–8)
8. The Wheat and the Tares (Matthew 13:24–30)
9. The Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31–32; Mark 4:30–32; Luke 13:18–20)
10. Leaven in the Dough (Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20–21)
11. The Hidden Treasure (Matthew 13:44)
12. The Pearl of Great Price (Matthew 13:45–46)
13. The Dragnet (Matthew 13:47–50)
14. Treasures New and Old (Matthew 13:52)
15. The Moneylender (Luke 7:41–43)
16. The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–42)
17. The Friend in Need (Luke 11:5–8)
18. The Rich Fool (Luke 12:15–21)
19. The Master's Return (Luke 12:35–40)
20. The Unfruitful Fig Tree (Luke 13:6–9)
21. The Great Banquet (Luke 14:15–24)
22. The Lost Sheep (Matthew 18:12–14; Luke 15:3–7)
23. The Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:23–34)
24. The Lost Coin (Luke 15:8–10)
25. The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32)
26. The Dishonest Steward (Luke 16:1–8)
27. The Master and His Servant (Luke 17:7–10)
28. The Widow and the Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1–8)
29. The Laborers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1–16)
30. The Wicked Vine Dressers (Matthew 21:33–46; Mark 12:1–12; Luke 20:9–19)
31. The Two Sons (Matthew 21:28–31)
32. The Wedding Banquet (Matthew 22:1–14)
33. Faithful vs. Wicked Servants (Matthew 24:45–51; Mark 13:32–37; Luke 12:41–48)
34. The Wise and Foolish Virgins (Matthew 25:1–13)
35. The Three Servants and the Talents (Matthew 25:14–30; Luke 19:11–27)
36. The Ten Servants and the Minas (Luke 19:12–27)
37. The Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31–46)
38. [Some consider the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31) to be a parable; others consider it to be a true story that Jesus told.]

### Other Parables in the Bible

1. The Poor Man's Ewe Lamb (2 Samuel 12:1–4)
2. The Poor Wise Man (Ecclesiastes 9:14–18)
3. God's Vineyard (Isaiah 5:1–6)
4. The Plowman (Isaiah 28:23–29)
5. The Potter (Jeremiah 18:1–10)
6. The Boiling Pot (Ezekiel 24:3–5)
7. The Two Harlots (Ezekiel 23:2–21)
8. The Lion's Cubs (Ezekiel 19:2–9)
9. The Eagles and the Vine (Ezekiel 17:1–10)

### Related Resource:

- [Commentary on the Parables](#) - Hampton Keathley IV

NET Mark 4:3 "Listen! A sower went out to sow.

GNT Mark 4:3 κο ετε. δο ξ λθεν σπε ρων σπε ραι.

NLT Mark 4:3 "Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seed.

KJV Mark 4:3 Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow:

ESV Mark 4:3 "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow.

NIV Mark 4:3 "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed.

ASV Mark 4:3 Hearken: Behold, the sower went forth to sow:

CSB Mark 4:3 "Listen! Consider the sower who went out to sow.

NKJ Mark 4:3 "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow.

NRS Mark 4:3 "Listen! A sower went out to sow.

YLT Mark 4:3 'Hearken, lo, the sower went forth to sow;

NAB Mark 4:3 "Hear this! A sower went out to sow.

NJB Mark 4:3 'Listen! Imagine a sower going out to sow.

GWN Mark 4:3 "Listen! A farmer went to plant seed.

BBE Mark 4:3 A man went out to put seed in the earth:

- **Listen** - Mk 4:9,23 7:14,16 De 4:1 Ps 34:11 45:10 Pr 7:24 8:32 Isa 46:3,12 Isaiah 55:1,2 Ac 2:14 Heb 2:1-3 Jas 2:5 Rev 2:7,11,29
- there - Mk 4:14,26-29 Eccl 11:6 Isa 28:23-26 Mt 13:3,24,26 Lu 8:5-8 Joh 4:35-38 1Co 3:6-9
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Parallel Passages:

Mt 13:3+ "and He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow;

Luke 8:5+ ""The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up.

## OPEN YOUR EYES OPEN YOUR HEART

**Listen to this! Behold - Listen** is a command in the [present imperative](#) calling for His hearers to given continued, close attention to what He is about to say!. (See also [note](#) on Mark 4:9) This is one where I love the old KJV rendering "**Hearken!**" An excellent English definition of **hearken** is "to lend the ear; to attend or give heed to what is uttered; to hear with attention, obedience, or compliance." - With the [present tense](#), Jesus is saying for them to keep on listening/heeding/hearkening to what I am saying. In other words this is not to be "in one ear and out the other!" (Read similar command by Jesus half-brother James to "**prove** [present imperative](#)] yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves." James 1:22+). And just to make sure He has their attention Jesus adds **behold** which is also a command in the [aorist imperative](#) calling for the large crowd of pay attention! Do it now! Don't delay!

**Wuest** adds that "The demand was quite natural, for a summons such as this was necessary if He was to obtain the attention of the crowd on shore while He was speaking from a ship. It was a crowd more interested in coming in contact with the Lord Jesus in order to be healed than in salvation for their souls."

It is interesting to note that Jesus the first word of this parable is **listen** and the very last word of the parable is also **listen** (Mk 4:9) and both uses are in the [present imperative](#). Jesus was clearly making the point that it was urgent and important to listen to what He was saying! In fact Jesus' focus on the importance of listen recalls the great "**Shema**" Israel's foundational confession in Deut 6:4 "**Hear**, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!" In the Septuagint the same Greek verb (akouo) is used as here in Mark 4 and is also in the [present imperative](#). The point in the Old Testament cry to "Hear" and Jesus' command in this section is that HEARING is the only way one could understand what God desired from His people, and specifically the only way His hearers could understand His parables. But as the context shows, Jesus was not calling for the Jews to hear "**sound waves**" simply bouncing off the drum of their ears, but was calling for His "sound waves" be received and transcribed, indeed written on the tablet of their



hearts. The hearing He was commanding was in essence a call for [heeding](#) what He was saying, listening with receptivity and a heart desire to respond to His words! (cf James 1:22-24+).

In fact one might even say that **listen** was a **key word** in Mark 4 as it occurs 10x (Mk. 4:3; Mk. 4:9; Mk. 4:12; Mk. 4:15; Mk. 4:16; Mk. 4:18; Mk. 4:20; Mk. 4:23; Mk. 4:24; Mk. 4:33), the most concentrated use of **listen** in Mark's entire gospel.

**Listen** - Mk. 2:1; Mk. 2:17; Mk. 3:8; Mk. 3:21; Mk. 4:3; Mk. 4:9; Mk. 4:12; Mk. 4:15; Mk. 4:16; Mk. 4:18; Mk. 4:20; Mk. 4:23; Mk. 4:24; Mk. 4:33; Mk. 5:27; Mk. 6:2; Mk. 6:11; Mk. 6:14; Mk. 6:16; Mk. 6:20; Mk. 6:29; Mk. 6:55; Mk. 7:14; Mk. 7:16; Mk. 7:25; Mk. 7:37; Mk. 8:18; Mk. 9:7; Mk. 10:41; Mk. 10:47; Mk. 11:14; Mk. 11:18; Mk. 12:28; Mk. 12:29; Mk. 12:37; Mk. 13:7; Mk. 14:11; Mk. 14:58; Mk. 14:64; Mk. 15:35; Mk. 16:11;

Hearing and heeding what Jesus says is important and is reiterated at the end of the parable in Mark 4:9 where Jesus says "He who has ears to hear, **let him hear** (a command)." And again He alludes to hearing in Mk 4:20+ describing those who "**hear the word and accept it.**"

**THOUGHT** - The simple but serious application is "Do you (I) have ears to hear Jesus?"

This is the only place in the Gospels that Jesus uses these two "attention getters" (**listen, behold**) in the same sentence! Clearly He wants the crowd to "Listen up!" What He is going to say is very important. In fact many feel that if you cannot understand this parable, you cannot understand the other parables which follow, for as He says to His disciples "**Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables?**" (Mk 4:13+)

**Behold**(2400)(**idou**) is the second person singular aorist middle imperative of eidon which means to see, perceive, look at. In the NT **idou** is used as a demonstrative particle that draws attention to what follows. **Idou** in the [middle voice](#) means "you yourself look, see, perceive!" The [aorist imperative](#) is a command emphasizing "Do it now! Don't delay!" **Spurgeon** reminds us that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation." I would add, **behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!"

Sowing Seed - [Broadcasting](#) it by Hand  
(Note the man of far right casting a semi-circle of seed - click to enlarge)

[Here is a link](#) to a simple but well done 3 minute animated video of Jesus' Parable of the Sower/Soils, but does not include Jesus' explanation. It would be great to show to the kids before they are discharged to Sunday School as is the pattern in many churches.

**The sower went out to sow** - **The sower** is not identified in this parable, but in context is first Jesus, then His first disciples and finally His future disciples (us!) Now if you are in the Jewish crowd, you would say "so far, so good!" In Israel's agrarian society, Jesus' listeners would immediately relate to a parable about a man sowing seed. Everyone was familiar with the picture of the farmer walking along his plot, sowing seed from his bag of seeds. They understood this much and would also understand His descriptions of the productivity or lack of productivity of the seed in the different soils. The audience understood on the surface, but would not be able to understand the deeper or hidden spiritual truths behind the significance of sowing seed and the response of the different soils.

**James Edwards** has an interesting note that "Farming instructions in the Mishnah decreed that farming should be orderly, methodical, and with special care given not to mix seeds (m. Kil. 2:3ff.). But the sowing in Jesus' parable is far from orderly and methodical; it is profligate, almost wasteful.... So intent is the farmer on a harvest that he sows in every corner of the field "in hopes that good soil might somewhere be found," said Justin Martyr in his retelling of the parable over a century later (Dial. Trypho 125.1-2). Even so, rocks, thorns, and adverse elements render three-quarters of the labor lost. Those are discouraging odds. But the parable, ironically, does not end on a discouraging note. "Growing, increasing, and bringing forth," the good soil yields a breathtaking harvest." (PNTC-Mk)

**Wessler** comments that "Seed was sown in broadcast fashion (SEE PICTURE ABOVE - v. 3). The sower deliberately sowed it on the path (v. 4), in rocky places (v. 5), and among the thorns (v. 7) because sowing preceded plowing. However, if plowing was delayed for any time at all, the consequences Jesus mentioned inevitably resulted." (EBC-Mk)

**Lane** adds that "The sower is not careless when he scatters the seed on the path or among the thorns or on ground which has no depth of soil. He does so intentionally, for the path on which the villagers have trodden over the stubble and the thorns which lie withered among the fallow ground will be plowed up to receive the seed. The seed that fell upon the rocky ground was scattered intentionally also, for the underlying limestone thinly covered with topsoil does not show above the surface until the plowing exposes

it." (NICNT-Mk)

**The sower...to sow** ("the sower" - ho speiron)([4687](#))([speiro](#) from **spao** = draw out, pull) literally means to scatter (seed) and is the antithesis of reaping or gathering. **Speiro** is used here in a figurative sense to describe the sowing of the **seed** of the Word of God, the Gospel (= "**the word of the kingdom**" - Mt 13:19+, cp = "**the word**" - Mk 4:14 15, 16, 18+), "the ideas and precepts that have been implanted like seed in their hearts, ie, received in their hearts (Mk 4:18)." (Thayer). Two uses of **speiro** in Septuagint metaphorically speak of a sowing evil (Hos 8:7) or sowing righteousness, the point being that like a boomerang, they will return a "harvest" of rotten or righteous fruit.

Hos 8:7 For they (CONTEXT = NORTHERN KINGDOM) **sow** the wind and they reap the whirlwind. The standing grain has no heads; It yields no grain. Should it yield, strangers would swallow it up.

Hos 10:12 **Sow** with a view to righteousness, reap in accordance with kindness; Break up your fallow ground, For (EXPLAINS HOW TO "SOW" RIGHTEOUSNESS!) it is time to seek the LORD until He comes to rain righteousness on you. 13 You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped injustice, You have eaten the fruit of lies. Because you have trusted in your way, in your numerous warriors."

Note the phrase "Break up your fallow ground!" Hard hearts are not hopeless but can be plowed up! Did the Lord have to plow up some things in your life to get your attention before you got saved? That was certainly true in my case ([My Testimony of God's Grace](#)) Let's pray this for our friends who have hard hearts. And for our own hearts when they go through calloused times.

#### Mark 4:4 as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up.

NET Mark 4:4 And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it.

GNT Mark 4:4 κα γ νετο ν τ σπε ρειν μ ν πεσεν παρ τ ν δ ν, κα λθεν τ πετειν κα κατ φαγεν α τ .

NLT Mark 4:4 As he scattered it across his field, some of the seed fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate it.

KJV Mark 4:4 And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

ESV Mark 4:4 And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it.

NIV Mark 4:4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.

ASV Mark 4:4 and it came to pass, as he sowed, some seed fell by the way side, and the birds came and devoured it.

CSB Mark 4:4 As he sowed, this occurred: Some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.

NKJ Mark 4:4 "And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it.

NRS Mark 4:4 And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up.

YLT Mark 4:4 and it came to pass, in the sowing, some fell by the way, and the fowls of the heaven did come and devour it;

NAB Mark 4:4 And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up.

NJB Mark 4:4 Now it happened that, as he sowed, some of the seed fell on the edge of the path, and the birds came and ate it up.

GWN Mark 4:4 Some seeds were planted along the road, and birds came and devoured them.

BBE Mark 4:4 And while he was doing it, some was dropped by the wayside, and the birds came and took it for food.

- Mk 4:15 Ge 15:11 Mt 13:4,19 Lu 8:5,12
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## Parallel Passages:

Mt 13:4+ "and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up.

Luke 8:5+ "The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up.

Van Gogh's "The Sower"

**As he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road** - He did not sow **some seed** beside the road on purpose, but some seed simply fell in this place he knew would produce no growth. The seed was all of the same kind. In Van Gogh's picture above, note the road (or path) that went through the unfenced field which was hard packed and was where **some seed fell**.

**And the birds came and ate it up** - The **seed** was on the surface and made an easy meal for the birds.

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## What About Your Heart? By: Eric J. Alexander

### Mark 4 INTRODUCTION:

In this parable that has become, perhaps, too familiar to us, our Lord begins with divine insight to sketch the true character of the hearts into which the good seed of the Word is going to be known. So Jesus paints the picture, first of the hard heart, then of the shallow heart, then of the divided heart, and lastly of the open heart.

### I. THE HARD HEART

"Some seed," says Jesus, "fell by the wayside." But the trouble was that the wayside was so exposed to the traffic of the world and the constant comings and goings of the feet of men, that it became over the weeks and months and years as hard as concrete, and no seed ever penetrated.

### II. THE SHALLOW HEART

"Some fell on stony ground"—or ground where there was a thin covering of earth, beneath which was the rock. There are two words in v. 5 and two in v. 6, which sum up the problem. The two words in v. 5 are "no depth," and the two words in v. 6 are "no root." If it was, in the first case, a stubborn resistance which was the barrier to the Word, in the second picture it is superficial reception which is the barrier to the Word. If in the first place the seed could not get in, in the second place it could not get down.

### III. THE DIVIDED HEART

Here the seed really does get a deep hold, says Jesus; but the trouble is that it is not an undisputed hold. That means that the Word of God is not able to accomplish the purpose that the Holy Spirit means it to accomplish. The seed got in, and it got down, but it could not get room. Everything was set for a fruitful life, was strangled; and that field was ultimately left a wilderness. Are you a barren child of God, with a soul that is a wilderness; have you, through neglect maybe, seen the Word stifled?

### IV. THE OPEN HEART

Some seed "fell on good ground, and brought forth..." And it did so because this good ground is everything that the others are not. Here the seed can get in, and it can get down, and it can get room.

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## LOSING THE WORD -

As he sowed, some [seed] fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it. Mark 4:4

What a strange sight greeted my gaze as I looked out over the bay. There was old "Pete the pelican" bobbing around on the waves, and perched right on top of his head was a sea gull. Looking more closely I discovered that "Pete" had caught a fish, but its tail was sticking out one side of his huge beak. What a dilemma the old pelican was in! He had gotten his fish, but now to eat it he would have to open his mouth, and sitting right there ready to snatch it as soon as he did so was Mr. Sea Gull. He knew he had "Pete" right where he wanted him.

As I saw the wise old sea gull ready to grab the food from the pelican's mouth, I was reminded of Jesus' parable about the sower and the fact that as some seed fell by the wayside, "the fowls of the air came and devoured it." Jesus explained that this was a picture of Satan's tactics in taking the Word from the hearts of those who, although receiving the message of grace, fail to understand and believe it.

How important it is that we not only "receive" the Word, but also that we study it and meditate upon it. Unless we do so, we are the losers. It is possible for the "seed" to be sown in our hearts, and yet not to take root! How many there are who, having been really blessed by a message, come out of a church service, only to be met by friends who begin at once to talk about the weather, the ball game, business, world conditions—anything and everything but the Word of God which they have heard. And the first thing you know, that which had been received is snatched away, and the precious seed fails to bear fruit. The Psalmist declared, "Thy word have I hidden in mine heart . . ." (Ps. 119: 11). Remember, when the Word is sown, receive it gladly, meditate upon it intently, talk about it to others, memorize it, and then allow it to bring forth fruit in your life! ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The seed of the Word falls on many a soil,  
The fertile, the thorny, the hard;  
Lest haply it fruitless in thy heart be sown,  
Blest soul, be thou ever on guard.  
— H.G.B.

**Take heed to the Word; remember,  
a man's spirit needs daily food as well as his body!**  
—Edmund Nelson

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### **Sow What?**

He who sows righteousness will have a sure reward. —Proverbs 11:18

Today's Scripture: Mark 4:1-20

On the clock tower of my alma mater is an Art Deco bas-relief sculpture titled The Sower. The inscription beneath it is from Galatians 6:7, "Whatsoever a man soweth." Michigan State University remains a leader in agricultural research, but despite many improvements in farming techniques and crop production, this fact remains: Seeds of corn will not produce a crop of beans.

Jesus used many farming metaphors to explain the kingdom of God. In the parable of the sower (Mark 4), He compared the Word of God to seeds sown in different types of soil. As the parable indicates, the sower sows indiscriminately, knowing that some seed will fall in places where it will not grow.

Like Jesus, we are to sow good seed in all places at all times. God is responsible for where it lands and how it grows. The important thing is that we sow. God does not want us to reap destruction, so He wants us to sow what is good and right (Prov. 11:18). The apostle Paul elaborated on the metaphor when he warned believers not to sow seeds of corruption. Instead, we are to sow seeds that will reap eternal life (Gal. 6:8).

The answer to the question, "Sow what?" is "Sow what you want to reap." To reap a good harvest in your life, start sowing seeds of goodness. By: Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Sow a thought, reap an act;  
Sow an act, reap a habit;  
Sow a habit, reap a character;  
Sow a character, reap a destiny.  
—Anon.

A buried seed brings fruit;  
a selfless life reaps an eternal harvest.

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### **Corn Palace**

Some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. —Mark 4:4

Today's Scripture: Mark 4:1-20

The walls of the Mitchell Corn Palace exhibit beautiful murals every year. Scenes include birds in flight, Conestoga wagons heading West, Native American teepees, and rural settings. There is one peculiarity about these murals though—they are made out of corn, seeds, and grasses. The outside murals are replaced each year with a new theme, partly because hungry birds eat from them.

Jesus told a parable about birds and seeds: "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it" (Mark 4:3-4). Other seed fell among rocky soil and thorns, making them unfruitful (vv.5-7). But some fell on good ground and yielded an abundant crop (v.8).

Jesus explained that when people by the wayside hear God's Word, "Satan comes immediately and takes away the Word that was sown in their hearts" (v.15). The devil hates the gospel and seeks to prevent people from believing it. Often he subtly encourages hearers to procrastinate on making a decision or to forget what they have heard. To counter this, in our witnessing we should pray that the Lord of the harvest will cause the Word to take root in receptive hearts. By: Dennis Fisher ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, please use Your Word to touch the hearts of those with whom we share it. We know that You are the One who opens the eyes of the spiritually blind. Don't let Satan's schemes win out.

We plant the seed; God gives the harvest.

**Mark 4:5 "Other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil.**

NET Mark 4:5 Other seed fell on rocky ground where it did not have much soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep.

GNT Mark 4:5 κα̅λλο̅ π̅ε̅σ̅ε̅ν̅ π̅τ̅ π̅ε̅τ̅ρ̅ δ̅ε̅ς̅ π̅ου̅ ο̅ κ̅ ε̅ χ̅ε̅ν̅ γ̅ ν̅ π̅ο̅λ̅λ̅ ν̅, κ̅α̅ ε̅ θ̅ ς̅ ξ̅α̅ν̅ τ̅ε̅ι̅λ̅ε̅ν̅ δι̅ τ̅ μ̅ χ̅ε̅ι̅ν̅ β̅ θ̅ ο̅ ς̅ γ̅ ς̅:

NLT Mark 4:5 Other seed fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seed sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow.

KJV Mark 4:5 And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth:

ESV Mark 4:5 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.

NIV Mark 4:5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow.

ASV Mark 4:5 And other fell on the rocky ground, where it had not much earth; and straightway it sprang up, because it had no deepness of earth:

CSB Mark 4:5 Other seed fell on rocky ground where it didn't have much soil, and it sprang up right away, since it didn't have deep soil.

NKJ Mark 4:5 "Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth.

NRS Mark 4:5 Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil.

YLT Mark 4:5 and other fell upon the rocky ground, where it had not much earth, and immediately it sprang forth, because of not having depth of earth,

NAB Mark 4:5 Other seed fell on rocky ground where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep.

NJB Mark 4:5 Some seed fell on rocky ground where it found little soil and at once sprang up, because there was no depth of earth;

GWN Mark 4:5 Other seeds were planted on rocky ground, where there wasn't much soil. The plants sprouted quickly because the soil wasn't deep.

BBE Mark 4:5 And some went on the stones, where it had not much earth; and it came up straight away, because the earth was not deep:

- Mk 4:16,17 Eze 11:19 36:26 Ho 10:12 Am 6:12 Mt 13:5,6,20 Lu 8:6,13
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Schematic of Four Soils, Four Results

## SHALLOW SOIL SUDDEN APPEARANCE

### Parallel Passages:

Mt 13:5+ "Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil.

Luke 8:6+ "Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture.

### Jesus' Interpretation:

Mark 4:16-17 "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; and 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.

**Other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil-** **Other** is also meaning other seed of the same kind. So the seed was not the variable accounting for the amount of fruit produced. The soil was the variable that would determine the productivity of the seed. Rocky ground is not a few rocks scattered with the soil. Imagine a plate or table like expanse of rock which was covered by thin layer of soil, enough soil for the seed to germinate. The footpath in the previous verse obviously had dirt (dust), but was otherwise essentially packed from traffic as hard as rock and provided no bed for seed to germinate. **NET** adds "The rocky ground in Palestine would be a limestone base lying right under the soil."

**And immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil** - The heat of the sun hitting the plate of rock stimulated the seed to quickly germinate and the hot stone would induce the plant to prematurely spring upward. In fact the conditions of shallow soil and rock beneath created a [hotbed-like effect](#), for a modern hotbed includes a bed of earth covered with glass and heated by rotting manure to promote the growth of plants, especially used for forcing or for raising seedlings.

**Immediately** ([2117](#))([euthus](#)) as **adverb** to mean immediately, right away, at once, without delay or hesitation; with no time intervening. The use of **euthus** with the meaning of **immediately** is a key word in the Gospel of Mark

**Mark 4:6 "And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.**

NET Mark 4:6 When the sun came up it was scorched, and because it did not have sufficient root, it withered.

GNT Mark 4:6 κα τε ν τειλεν λιος καυματ σθη κα δι τ μ χειν ζαν ξηρ νθη.

NLT Mark 4:6 But the plant soon wilted under the hot sun, and since it didn't have deep roots, it died.

KJV Mark 4:6 But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.

ESV Mark 4:6 And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away.

NIV Mark 4:6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.

ASV Mark 4:6 and when the sun was risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.

CSB Mark 4:6 When the sun came up, it was scorched, and since it didn't have a root, it withered.

NKJ Mark 4:6 "But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away.

NRS Mark 4:6 And when the sun rose, it was scorched; and since it had no root, it withered away.

YLT Mark 4:6 and the sun having risen, it was scorched, and because of not having root it did wither;

NAB Mark 4:6 And when the sun rose, it was scorched and it withered for lack of roots.

NJB Mark 4:6 and when the sun came up it was scorched and, not having any roots, it withered away.

GWN Mark 4:6 When the sun came up, they were scorched. They didn't have any roots, so they withered.

- **the sun:** Song 1:6 Isa 25:4 Jon 4:8 Jas 1:11 Rev 7:16
- **no root:** Ps 1:3,4 92:13-15 Jer 17:5-8 Eph 3:17 Col 2:7 2Th 2:10 Jude 1:12
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Parallel Passages:

Mt 13:6+ "But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

Luke 8:6+ "Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture.

Shallow Soil & Hot Sun Withers Plant

## SHALLOW SOIL AND SUN SUDDEN DISAPPEARANCE

**And after the sun had risen, it was scorched** - The young plant was scorched by the heat and soon succumbed to the burning heat (and if you have ever been to Israel, you know that the sun can be intense and it is easy for tourists to quickly "wither" and become dangerously dehydrated!)

**Scorched** ([2739](#))(**kaumatizo** from **kauma** = heat from **kaio** = to burn) means actively to harm with heat as in Rev 16:8, 9 and passively to describe withering of plants from sun's extreme heat. Not found in Septuagint. **Usage:** scorch(1), scorched(3). Mt 13:6; Mk 4:6; Rev. 16:8 = "sun, and it was given to it to **scorch** men with fire"; Rev. 16:9 = "Men **were scorched** with fierce heat; (NOTE THE TWO EFFECTS) and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory."

**And because it had no root, it withered away** - **No root** meant no channel to allow the plant to take in **moisture** as explained in Luke's version (Lk 8:6+)

**Withered** (dry) ([3583](#))(**xeraino** from **xeros** = dry) means to become dry, to dry up. Used in each account of this parable - Mt 13:6, Lk 8:6.

### Mark 4:7 "Other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop."

NET Mark 4:7 Other seed fell among the thorns, and they grew up and choked it, and it did not produce grain.

GNT Mark 4:7 κα ἄλλο πρῶτον ἐσείσθη ἐν τοῖς κνθῶσι, καὶ ἐβῆσαν αὐτὰ καὶ συνέπιπτον αὐτῶν, καὶ καρπὸν οὐκ ἔδωκεν.

NLT Mark 4:7 Other seed fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants so they produced no grain.

KJV Mark 4:7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

ESV Mark 4:7 Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain.

NIV Mark 4:7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain.

ASV Mark 4:7 And other fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

CSB Mark 4:7 Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it didn't produce a crop.

NKJ Mark 4:7 "And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop.

NRS Mark 4:7 Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain.

YLT Mark 4:7 and other fell toward the thorns, and the thorns did come up, and choke it, and fruit it gave not;

NAB Mark 4:7 Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it and it produced no grain.

NJB Mark 4:7 Some seed fell into thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it produced no crop.

GWN Mark 4:7 Other seeds were planted among thorn bushes. The thorn bushes grew up and choked them, and they didn't produce anything.

BBE Mark 4:7 And some went among the thorns, and the thorns came up, and it had no room for growth and gave no fruit.

- Mk 4:18,19 Ge 3:17,18 Jer 4:3 Mt 13:7,22 Lu 8:7,14 12:15 21:34 1Ti 6:9,10 1Jn 2:15,16
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Parallel Passages:

Mt 13:7+ Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out.

Mark 4:7+ Other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop.

Luke 8:7+ Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out.

**Other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop-** **Other** is also again emphasizing it is seed of the same kind. The failure to yield a crop was not a seed problem but a soil problem! The thorns infested the ground with their viable roots which would give rise to thorn bushes which would compete with the sprouting seedlings that were beginning to show blades on the surface. The thorns in Israel were not just a few small thistles, but could grow up to 6 feet tall and have a major root system which would literally strangle the roots that might originate from a germinated seed. I have recently had several breakages in plastic pipes in my sprinkler system which were literally caused by tree roots. The verb **choked** means crowded together and/or pressed upon to the point that the thickly growing thistles and weeds would completely **throttle** the plant and overwhelm its root system resulting **no crop** or fruit. And so the second soil is a fruitless plant.

**Thorns** ([173](#))(**akantha** from **ake** = a point, edge) describes a thorn, prickle, thornbush. In Genesis God cursed the land because of Adam's sin declaring "Both **thorns** (Lxx = **akantha**) and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field." **Akantha** is later used to describe the "crown of **thorns**" (Mt 27:29) on the One Who became a curse for us! Jesus wore a "crown of **thorns**" for believers who will one day cast their own crowns to the King of kings!

**Choke** ([4846](#))see note below on [sumpnigo](#)

**Crop** (fruit) ([2590](#))(**karpos**) literally refers to fruit, produce or offspring which is produced by the inherent energy of a living organism. In the 3 synoptic accounts of the parable of the sower/soils, **karpos** is used by Jesus in its literal sense 4 times each time translated as **crop** but- Mt 13:8+, Mk 4:7, 8+ and Lk 8:8+. **Karpos** is what something produces **naturally**. But for believers **karpos** is something God's Spirit does through us **supernaturally**. Each literal use by Jesus pointed to a figurative meaning of spiritual fruit as indicated by His explanation describing people as **unfruitful** ([akarpos](#) in Mk 4:19+, Mt 13:22+) and as those who **bear fruit** ([karpophoreo](#) in Mk 4:20+, Mt 13:23+).

Scripture describes 3 general kinds of **spiritual fruit**: (1) **Spiritual attitudes** that characterize a Spirit-filled, Spirit-led believer - Gal 5:22-23+ (2) **Righteous actions** - Ro 6:22+, Php 4:16, 17+; Heb 13:5+ (3) **New converts** - Ro 16:5+

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**Stedman** - The third condition of heart is represented by the thorns. These are those who hear the Word, but thorns spring up and choke it. This is what we could call the over-involved heart. There are three things Jesus details here which are thorns that choke the life-giving Word:

First, there are cares, i.e., worries concerns. These are people who are concerned all the time over what is going to happen next, worried about the situation they are facing -- fretful, anxious, troubled people who do not know how to rest, how to leave things in God's hands but are constantly trying to work it all out themselves. These people Jesus says, are losing truth. The seed has fallen upon their hearts, but it does not take root because it is choked by the thorns, and they soon lose it.

Second, there are those who delight in riches, who are caught up in the pursuit of wealth, in the Playboy philosophy -- constantly



planning for their own amusement and pleasure. That is all that their life consists of. The life-giving Word, which could make a real man or woman out of them, is hitting them, but it cannot find root and grow up. There is no place left in their hearts.

Then there is what Jesus calls "desire for other things," or what we might call "restlessness." These are people who are always shifting from one thing to another. James Michener wrote a book, *The Drifters*, in which he describes this kind of people, especially young people, who cannot stay in one place long enough to put down roots, but drift from one experience to another. Jesus says they are losing the truth of the delivering Word. They are choked by life. But then there is the receptive heart, the one ready to receive -- open and responsive immediately. ([Seed Thoughts](#))

**Mark 4:8 "Other seeds fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold."**

Wuest - And other (seeds of the same kind) fell on ground that was good, and they kept on yielding fruit, growing up and increasing, and they kept on bearing, (some) up to thirty, and (some) to sixty, and (some) to one hundred.

NET Mark 4:8 But other seed fell on good soil and produced grain, sprouting and growing; some yielded thirty times as much, some sixty, and some a hundred times."

GNT Mark 4:8 κα λλα πεσεν ε ς τ ν γ ν τ ν κα λ ν κα δ δου καρπ ν ναβα νοντα κα α ξαν μενα κα φερεν ν τρι κοντα κα ν ξ κοντα κα ν κατ ν.

NLT Mark 4:8 Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they sprouted, grew, and produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted!"

KJV Mark 4:8 And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.

ESV Mark 4:8 And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."

NIV Mark 4:8 Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times."

ASV Mark 4:8 And others fell into the good ground, and yielded fruit, growing up and increasing; and brought forth, thirtyfold, and sixtyfold, and a hundredfold.

CSB Mark 4:8 Still others fell on good ground and produced a crop that increased 30, 60, and 100 times what was sown."

NKJ Mark 4:8 "But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."

NRS Mark 4:8 Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold."

YLT Mark 4:8 and other fell to the good ground, and was giving fruit, coming up and increasing, and it bare, one thirty-fold, and one sixty, and one an hundred.'

NAB Mark 4:8 And some seed fell on rich soil and produced fruit. It came up and grew and yielded thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold."

NJB Mark 4:8 And some seeds fell into rich soil, grew tall and strong, and produced a good crop; the yield was thirty, sixty, even a hundredfold.'

GWN Mark 4:8 But other seeds were planted on good ground, sprouted, and produced thirty, sixty, or one hundred times as much as was planted."

BBE Mark 4:8 And some, falling on good earth, gave fruit, coming up and increasing, and giving thirty, sixty, and a hundred times as much.

- **fell:** Mk 4:20 Isa 58:1 Jer 23:29 Mt 13:8,23 Lu 8:8,15 Joh 1:12,13 Joh 3:19-21 7:17 15:5 Ac 17:11 Col 1:6 Heb 4:1,2 Jas 1:19-22 1Pe 2:1-3
- **hundred:** Ge 26:12 Php 1:11

- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Parallel Passages:

Mt 13:8+ And others fell on the good soil and \*yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.

Luke 8:8+ Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great." As He said these things, He would call out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear

**Other seeds fell into the good soil** - As the sower would toss out the seed some seed hit the optimal mark, **the good soil**. **Good** ([kalos](#)) means healthy, sound, fit, advantageous (for producing growth).

**And as they grew up and increased** - **Grew up and increased** (only Mark has "grew up and increased") are both in the [present tense](#), picturing a normal steady growth in the plants.

**THOUGHT** - As an aside, this is a good principle to apply to "newly sprouted" believers who too should be steadily growing up and increasing spiritually. aka progressive sanctification. And this is where "mature gardeners" are needed to come alongside and disciple "young plants" in the Truth of Scriptures. Sadly, there is a scarcity of genuine older, mature disciple-making men and women. It seems the church has forgotten the one command in Jesus' Great Commission to "**make disciples**" (Mt 28:19+) and it has become more like the "Great Omission!" Were you truly disciplined when you were born again? Are you disciplining younger believers? (see 2 Ti 2:2+).

A natural question is how did plants grow and increase? Jesus does not explain that here, but He does allude to it in His description of the "plant" that withers and the person who falls away. (Mk 4:6, 17) Why do they "wither" and fall away? He says they have no root. No root means there can be no growth. So the root is the key to growth. No growth means no fruit and no fruit and no fruit means the person is not a genuine believer.

**THOUGHT** - Psalm 1 describes the "root system" of a fruitful believer and the root is intimately linked with the Word of God, for we read

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,  
Nor stand in the path of sinners,  
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!  
But his delight is in the law of the LORD,  
And in His law he meditates day and night.  
He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,  
Which yields its fruit in its season  
And its leaf does not wither;  
And in whatever he does, he prospers.

-- Psalm 1:1-3 (see notes on [Ps 1:1](#); [Ps 1:2](#); [Ps 1:3](#))

**Comment:** Notice first that in order to delight in the Word, one needs to dismiss the wooing of the world - don't walk, stand or sit under its evil influence. If you do, you can hardly expect your heart will delight in the Word, but more probably will run from the Word, for it is like a mirror which shows us what kind of man we are! But if we pursuing holiness, we will desire to pursue the Holy Word and thereby we develop our "root system" and supernaturally produce fruit to the glory of God. The person who delights in God's Word send roots down deep to the river of life.

We see a similar pattern in 1 Pe 2:1+ and 1 Pe 2:2+

Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, **long for** ([aorist imperative](#) - [See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey this command](#)) the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow (see [auxano](#) below) in respect to salvation.

**Comment:** Note Peter's verse 1 parallels Psalm 1:1+. Both deal with encumbering sin! We put off these sins by confession and repentance and thereby our appetite is stimulated so that we long for the pure milk of the Word. An "unholy" appetite never longs for holy food! And as we take in the pure milk, we grow in respect to our salvation (progressive sanctification). I consider the inherent principle found in this passage the most important factor in whether a believer will grow in Christlikeness. The "formula" is simple - No intake, no growth. That happens with real babies and sadly that happens with many believers, who simply "snack" on the Bible, "eating" a few verses here and there, sometimes going days with

no spiritual intake. Little wonder that so many in the Church in America are spiritually "anemic," which in turn weakens one's immune system to be able (by the Spirit) to resist and abstain from the attacks of the [world](#), the [flesh](#) and the [devil](#)!

Jesus prayed in John 17:17, "Father, **sanctify** them in the truth. Thy word is truth."

**Comment:** The "seed" of the Word of God is the means used by the Holy Spirit progressively set apart God's people, transforming them from glory to glory into the image of Christ (memorize 2 Cor 3:18+) and thereby making them more and more fruitful (see also progressive sanctification).

**Grew up** (came up) (305)([anabaino](#) from **ana** = upwards, up, as a pref. denotes up, again, back + **basis** = a foot) means to go up, to ascend, cause to ascend from a lower to a higher place. **Anabaino** is also used in Mt 13:7 but not of the fruitful plants as here, but of "the thorns (that) came up and choked" the plants.

**Increased** (837)([auxano](#)) means to cause to grow or cause to become greater in extent, size, state, or quality. As in 1 Peter 2:2 above and other passages [auxano](#) is used figuratively to describe spiritual growth. For example, in Paul's great prayer (always a good prayer to pray for one another!) we read "For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit ([karpophoreo](#) in the [present tense](#) describes this as a process, in essence an answer to the prayer) in every good work and increasing ([auxano](#) in the [present tense](#) and the "divine passive" depicting God's Spirit causing the believer's continual growth) in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously (giving thanks) (Col 1:9-11+)

**They yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold** - **Yielded** and **produced** are both in the vivid [imperfect tense](#) signifying "kept on yielding...kept on producing." Notice that every plant yields some fruit. Jesus will later explain that "And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold." (Mk 4:20) By way of application every genuine Christian will produce some fruit.

**Hiebert** observes that "the numbers indicate the increase in grain harvested over the amount of grain sown. The yield, arranged by Mark in an order of climax, varied according to the fertility of the soil. The soil of the plain of Gennesaret, on the northwestern shore of the lake, was prodigiously productive. Josephus enthusiastically called it "the ambition of nature" ([Wars 3. 10. 8](#)). While much of the sower's work seemed to be in vain, the picture presented by the parable was not pessimistic, but realistic. The larger part of the field consisted of good soil where the seed sown produced amazing results" (Gospel of Mark-An Expository Commentary)

Some writers like **William Lane** see this yield of a **crop** in eschatological terms - "The climax of the parable strongly emphasizes the glorious character of the harvest, the thirtyfold, sixtyfold and hundredfold yield, the last of which would be an unusually large harvest. Since this is seen against the background of many obstacles, it is clear that the emphasis does not fall on the enormity of the waste, but on the enormity and splendor of the harvest. The harvest is a common figure for the [consummation](#) of the Kingdom of God (cf Joel 3:13+) and in the parable there is a significant reflection on the future, eschatological aspect of the Kingdom: it shall be glorious in character. But in addition to this future aspect there is also significant reflection on the activity prior to harvest, the sowing of the seed and its growth. The action of God must be recognized in these phases as well as in the harvest (**ED:cf** 1 Cor 3:6). The coming of the Kingdom of God is thus presented in comprehensive terms which call attention both to its present and to its future aspects. A common supposition—shared apparently by John the Baptist, Jesus' disciples and the multitude—was that the Kingdom of God meant harvest, judgment, [consummation](#). What Jesus taught through the veiled means of the parable of the sower was the relationship between the coming of the Kingdom in his own person and proclamation, and the delay of the end, the harvest, the [consummation](#)." (NICNT-Mk)

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**Ray Stedman's [Illustration](#) of good soil** - I talked this week with a prominent businessman who was passing through this area. He told me about how he became a Christian. He had been raised with no church background at all, and had four different sets of foster parents before he was eighteen. He had tried various philosophies, seeking some answers to the riddle of life. Among them were transcendental meditation and the Eastern religions. None of this satisfied him.

One day a friend invited him to go to church, and he went -- for the first time in his life. The pastor spoke about Christ. Afterward he met the pastor and said to him, "Sir, if I understand you correctly, Christianity is saying that up here is God; down here is man; and in between is Jesus Christ, and that he is the key for man to reach God. Is that right?" The pastor said, "Yes, that's right. In fact, you've accurately described a verse in Scripture which says: 'For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,'" (1 Timothy. 2:5). This man said, "Well, that makes sense to me."

The pastor said, "I've got a book here I'd like you to take home and read. And next week, if you come back and have read it, we'll sit down and talk about it together." The man said to the pastor, "Well, I appreciate that. But tell me: If it is true that Jesus really is the way to God, then why do I have to wait till next week? Why can't I come to him now? If it really works, it will work now; if it doesn't work, it never will." The pastor said, "You're exactly right." So they bowed their heads, and the man received Christ, became a Christian immediately. He received the Word, has grown in grace ever since, and has become a strong testimony for Christ.

That is the responsive heart which is ready to act. It is true not only at the initial stages of Christianity, but whenever the Word falls on us, that the seed is being sown. And areas of our life are either ready to respond, or, like any of the other kinds of soil, reject the truth. This is the way the kingdom of God, the rule of God, comes into our hearts. The great question, then, is: Examine your heart when the Word is being sown. What is it like? What is it like right now? ([Seed Thoughts](#))

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## Good Soil

Read: Mark 4:1-20

Other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased, and produced. —Mark 4:8

John Chrysostom was one of the most captivating preachers of the early Christian church. However, he recognized that even great orators cannot make everyone listen.

Chrysostom noted, "My preaching is addressed to all . . . , but it is the duty of each one of my listeners to take what is suited for his affliction. I do not know who are sick, who are healthy. Therefore, I discuss subjects of every sort and suited to every illness."

In Mark 4, the parable of the sower and the soils teaches the importance of how we respond to the Word of God. It tells us that the success or failure of a crop isn't necessarily in the skill of the farmer or in the power of the seed, but in the quality of the soil.

Some listeners are like rich soil, and the message takes root in their heart. Other audiences resemble the church parking lot, and the seed simply bounces off them. Still others are like a weed patch that chokes potential growth.

Preaching is not "the fine art of talking in someone else's sleep." We need to "drink in" the teaching of the Word just as the sick need medicine or as crops need rain. That's why Jesus urged, "Take heed what you hear" (v.24). Whether or not you benefit from a sermon is largely up to you. By Haddon W. Robinson ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

As planted seed in fertile soil  
Has life and will take root,  
God's Word, if nurtured in our hearts,  
Will grow and bring forth fruit.  
—Hess

In good soil, the seed takes root and will soon bear fruit.

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## Mark 4:9 And He was saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Wuest - And He was saying, He who has ears to be hearing, let him be hearing.

NET Mark 4:9 And he said, "Whoever has ears to hear had better listen!"

GNT Mark 4:9 κα λέγει, ς χει τα κο ειυ κου τω.

NLT Mark 4:9 Then he said, "Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."

KJV Mark 4:9 And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

ESV Mark 4:9 And he said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

NIV Mark 4:9 Then Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

ASV Mark 4:9 And he said, Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

CSB Mark 4:9 Then He said, "Anyone who has ears to hear should listen!"

NKJ Mark 4:9 And He said to them, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

NRS Mark 4:9 And he said, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!"

YLT Mark 4:9 And he said to them, 'He who is having ears to hear -- let him hear.'

NAB Mark 4:9 He added, "Whoever has ears to hear ought to hear."

NJB Mark 4:9 And he said, 'Anyone who has ears for listening should listen!'

GWN Mark 4:9 He added, "Let the person who has ears listen!"

BBE Mark 4:9 And he said to them, Whoever has ears, let him give ear.

- Mk 4:3,23,24 Mk 7:14,16 Mt 11:15 Mt 13:9 15:10 Lu 8:18 Rev 3:6,13,22
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Parallel Passage:

Matthew 13:9 "He who has ears, let him hear."

## JESUS CALLS FOR "SPIRITUAL EARS"

**And He was saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."** (Mt 13:9+, Lk 8:8+) - Who has ears? Everyone. But Jesus is not speaking solely of physical ears, but of "spiritual ears." This translation almost sounds like a proverb, suggesting it is a good idea to hear. More literally this is a command from Jesus because **let him hear** is in the [present imperative](#). Jesus is not just saying take in the "[sound waves](#)!" He is saying make sure you accurately interpret the "[sound waves](#)" and respond obediently and without hesitation to the "[sound waves](#)!" As Jesus' half-brother **James** would later write "But **prove** ([present imperative](#)) yourselves doers ([poietes](#)) of the word, and not merely hearers ([akroates](#)) who delude ([paralogizomai](#) - [present tense](#)) continually deceiving by false reasoning) themselves.." (James 1:22+). While I realize this command of Jesus was spoken Pre-Pentecost and so the Spirit was not yet indwelling believers as He is now in the Church Age (Ro 8:9±), (in my opinion) the principle still applies that for one to [hearken](#) to Jesus' command calling for supernatural action ("[audition](#)"), he or she can only do so by learning to (1) [jettison](#) self-reliance and (2) rely [wholly](#) on the Holy Spirit to provide the enabling power to "listen up" and obey accordingly! Notice James' parallel passage where he commands us to be "[doers](#)." This charge begs the question "Can we **do** anything supernatural in our own power?" Not really! Jesus amplifies this vitally important principle declaring "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for **apart from Me** (AND TODAY THAT MEANS APART FROM RELYING ON THE ONE HE SENT TO BE OUR "HELPER" OR "ENABLER," THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST!) you can do (GREEK = ABSOLUTELY) nothing (OF ETERNAL VALUE OR SPIRITUAL FRUIT THAT "**REMAINS**" - Jn 15:16)." (Jn 15:5) .

**Lenski** - The parable closes with a call to the hearers to use their ears. The implication is that this simple narrative about the fate of the seed has a hidden meaning, and that if one applies his ears aright he will find that meaning, whereas if one has no ears, i. e., his ears refuse to function aright, he will only be mystified. This call to hear corresponds to the briefer call "**Listen**" (κούετε) occurring in Mk 4:3.

I like the **NET Note** - The translation "**had better listen!**" captures the force of the third person imperative more effectively than the traditional "let him hear," which sounds more like a [permissive](#) than an imperative to the modern English reader. This was Jesus' common expression to listen and heed carefully (cf. Matt 11:15, 13:43; Mark 4:9, 23; Luke 8:8, 14:35).

**Moule** paraphrases it: "Now think that one out for yourself, if you can!"

**Hiebert** - a call found here in all the synoptics, marking the special importance of the parable. It was more than a pleasant story; it set forth truth that required serious consideration. It called for attention as well as discernment. The present imperative pressed upon the hearers their continuing duty to hear and heed what was taught. Jesus placed serious responsibility upon the hearer of the Word of God. Effective communication makes its demands upon the hearer as well as the speaker. (Ibid)

**William Lane** - With the concluding admonition, "If you have ears to hear, then hear," Jesus indicates that there is more to this story than appears on the surface. That is why it is "a parable." (NICNT-Mk)

**Spurgeon** rightly said "There are many, who have ears, who do not hear to any real purpose. There is the physical act of hearing, but they do not hear in the heart and the mind. It is a very different thing to have an impression on the drum of the ear and to have an impression on the tablet of the heart. "He that hath ears to hear, **let him hear.**"

**Mark 4:10 As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables.**

NET Mark 4:10 When he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables.

GNT Mark 4:10 Κα τε γνετο κατ μνας, ρτων ατν ο περ ατν σν το ς δ δεκα τς παραβολ ς.

NLT Mark 4:10 Later, when Jesus was alone with the twelve disciples and with the others who were gathered around, they asked him what the parables meant.

KJV Mark 4:10 And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.

ESV Mark 4:10 And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables.

NIV Mark 4:10 When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables.

ASV Mark 4:10 And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parables.

CSB Mark 4:10 When He was alone with the Twelve, those who were around Him asked Him about the parables.

NKJ Mark 4:10 But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable.

NRS Mark 4:10 When he was alone, those who were around him along with the twelve asked him about the parables.

YLT Mark 4:10 And when he was alone, those about him, with the twelve, did ask him of the simile,

NAB Mark 4:10 And when he was alone, those present along with the Twelve questioned him about the parables.

NJB Mark 4:10 When he was alone, the Twelve, together with the others who formed his company, asked what the parables meant.

GWN Mark 4:10 When he was alone with his followers and the twelve apostles, they asked him about the stories.

BBE Mark 4:10 And when he was by himself, those who were round him with the twelve put questions to him about the purpose of the stories.

- Mk 4:34 Mk 7:17 Pr 13:20 Mt 13:10-17,36 Lu 8:9-15
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Parallel Passages:**

Matthew 13:10+ And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"

Luke 8:9+ His disciples *began* questioning Him as to what this parable meant

**As soon as He was alone** - This detail is found only in Mark's version. NLT says "Later when Jesus was alone." This time phrase indicates a "chronological break in the account of the parables taught during this day" (Hiebert). "**Alone** is [monos](#) (English - monopoly, monogamy, etc) which means without accompaniment, isolated from others, in this case isolated from the crowds. One is amazed that Jesus could even achieve this degree of solitude given the crowds. **Hiebert** says "It was apparently after the termination of the public ministry from the boat." We do know that after Jesus finished telling the parable of the tares "He left the crowds and went into the house." (Mt 13:36+) Did He also go into the house after the parable of the soils? While that is possible, we don't know for certain.

POSB - the response to the parable is twofold. 1. The disciple hears the parable. **He does not just hear the words**, but he hears the message, and he hears with his heart. The disciple is receptive—willing to think and to meditate and to receive the message into his life. The disciple is willing to do exactly what the parable teaches. Thus, God reveals the mysteries of the Kingdom of God to him. 2. The unbeliever hears the parable, but not with spiritual ears. He just hears the words. Note that Jesus called unbelievers "them that are without." An unbeliever is without, standing on the outside; he is an outsider.

The outsider does exactly what Jesus says. "Seeing, they see, yet do not perceive" (v. 12). "Hearing, they hear, yet do not understand" (v. 12).

**His followers, along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables**- **His followers** is more literally "those about Him." Notice the phrase **along with the twelve** indicates that this group of followers consisted of more than just the twelve disciples.

"These followers are here distinguished from the larger crowd of uncommitted hearers as well as the Twelve." (Hiebert) Some writers may be correct in surmising that the disciples were too embarrassed to ask questions in public. **Began asking** is in the [imperfect tense](#) picturing them asking over and over which makes it obvious they did not understand the parable. Notice that **parables** is in the plural which would indicate that Jesus had spoken more than just the parable of the soils.

Notice also that in the two parallel synoptic passages, there are actually two distinct questions, (1) **why** speak in parables (Mt 13:10) and (2) **what** is the meaning of the parable (Lk 8:9). Mark's phrase **began asking** encompasses both the **WHY** and the **WHAT** questions. Jesus answers the **WHY** in Mark 4:11-12 and the **WHAT** in Mark 4:13-20.

**Darrell Bock** quips that "After Jesus tells the story, the disciples ask why he is resorting to parables. They know him well enough to recognize that this is not a lesson in agriculture for a 4H class or a polytechnic school." ([Luke 8:4-9:17 Call to Faith and Christology](#))

**Daniel Akin** - Mk 4:10-12 are something of an interlude between the telling of the parable (vs 3-9) and the explanation of it (Mk 4:14-20). Both the 12 and "those around him" wanted to know more about why He spoke in parables (Mk 4:10). What was the purpose for this particular method of teaching that Jesus so clearly favored? His answer constitutes what some would classify as one of the "**hard sayings**" of Jesus. It clearly requires careful consideration and reflection. Both the terms and the greater context are necessary if we are to understand what Jesus meant by what He says. Jesus addresses the 12 and those who want more of Him and His teachings (Mk 4:11) and says they will be granted access and insight to the secrets of the kingdom of God. In contrast, those on the "**outside**" will get no explanation but only more parables. Then he quotes the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 6:9-10+) to drive home the point and to demonstrate that the Scriptures are being fulfilled in Him! [Read Mk 4:12] What is he saying? What does He mean? **The sun that melts the wax also hardens the clay!** The Word of the Gospel hardens and blinds the resistant and the rebellious while it is enthusiastically received by the receptive. - **Those outside are not denied the possibility of belief, but if they persist in unbelief then they will not receive more.** In fact, Mk 4:25 now becomes clear and makes perfect sense, "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." Love the Word and you will get more. Refuse the Word and even what you have you will lose. ([Mark 4:1-20 Do You Have Ears That Hear?](#))

**Parables** ([3850](#)) see above on [parabole](#)

**Mark 4:11 And He was saying to them, "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables,**

NET Mark 4:11 He said to them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those outside, everything is in parables,

GNT Mark 4:11 κα λεγεν α το ς, μ ν τ μυστριον δ δοται τ ς βασιλε α ς το θεο · κε νοι ς δ το ς ξω ν παραβολα ς τ π ντα γ νεται,

NLT Mark 4:11 He replied, "You are permitted to understand the secret of the Kingdom of God. But I use parables for everything I say to outsiders,

KJV Mark 4:11 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:

ESV Mark 4:11 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,

NIV Mark 4:11 He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables

ASV Mark 4:11 And he said unto them, Unto you is given the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables:

CSB Mark 4:11 He answered them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to those outside, everything comes in parables

NKJ Mark 4:11 And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables,

NRS Mark 4:11 And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables;

YLT Mark 4:11 and he said to them, 'To you it hath been given to know the secret of the reign of God, but to

those who are without, in similes are all the things done;

NAB Mark 4:11 He answered them, "The mystery of the kingdom of God has been granted to you. But to those outside everything comes in parables,

NJB Mark 4:11 He told them, 'To you is granted the secret of the kingdom of God, but to those who are outside everything comes in parables,

GWN Mark 4:11 Jesus replied to them, "The mystery about the kingdom of God has been given directly to you. To those on the outside, it is given in stories:

BBE Mark 4:11 And he said to them, To you is given the secret of the kingdom of God, but to those who are outside, all things are given in the form of stories;

- **To you has been given** - Mt 11:25 13:11,12,16 16:17 Lu 8:10 10:21-24 1Co 4:7 2Co 4:6 Eph 1:9 2:4-10 Tit 3:3-7 Jas 1:16-18 1Jn 5:20
- **but those who are outside** - 1Co 5:12,13 Col 4:5 1Th 4:12 1Ti 3:7
- **get everything in parables** - Mt 13:13
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

**Multiple related passages dealing with "judicial hardening" and the related topic of Jesus speaking in parables** - Dt 29:4+, Isa 6:9,10+ Mt 13:11-15+ Mk 4:11-12+ Lk 8:10+ Jn 9:39-41, Jn 12:38-40 Acts 28:26,27+ Ro 11:7-10+, 2Co 3:14-15+, Eph 4:17-18+, 2Th 2:10-12+.

## DISCIPLES "INITIATED" INTO THE MYSTERY

**And He was saying to them - Was saying** is in the [imperfect tense](#) which can mean Jesus **was saying** it over and over (perhaps they missed it the first time!). **Them** is His true followers including the twelve disciples and others who believed in Jesus..

**To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God- To you** is emphatic which clearly distinguishes these from **those who are outside**. **Has been given** is in the [perfect tense](#) meaning it was given (had been revealed -divine passive) at the time of their "initiation" in the past and has ongoing or present results. Stated another way it was given as a permanent possession. It includes the idea of permanency, so that now the disciples were permanent possessors of **the secret of the Kingdom of God**. Although they had some degree of understanding, they did not have full understanding, but that would come progressively over time. The only 3 uses of **mystery** in the Gospels are all in the context of Jesus' parabolic teaching (Matt. 13:11; Mk. 4:11; Lk. 8:10).

**Hiebert** comments that "In its ultimate development, this mystery is the fully unfolded message of the gospel (cf. Ro 16:25–26+)." He goes on to add that "The essence of the revelation was that the **kingdom** was embodied in the Person, words, and work of Jesus. Their faith qualified the disciples to understand that the lowly Jesus is the very revelation of God to men."

Barton adds that "They understood, though only partially, the "mystery" that God's kingdom had arrived among them in the person of Jesus." (LAC-Mk)

**Lenski on mystery** - This is a "**mystery**" because by their own nature and ability men are wholly unable to discover and to know any part of it. If a man is to be enlightened in regard to this mystery, it must be done by means of a divine gift, which means divine revelation plus the faith which receives that revelation

**Hiebert** - As yet, they understood but little of the full import of the **kingdom of God** as embodied in Christ, but the reality that had been sown in their hearts would produce a glorious harvest in the future. But the fact that they had been given this **mystery** carried with it a sacred responsibility. (Ibid)

**Wuest** explains that "The **mystery** is not in the fact that they are difficult to interpret, but that they are impossible to interpret until their meaning is revealed, for only then do they become plain. The disciples had been **initiated** into these secret things." (Word Studies)

**Barclay** - When the New Testament talks of the **mystery of the Kingdom**, it does not mean that the Kingdom is remote and abstruse and hard to understand; but it does mean that it is quite unintelligible to the man who has not given his heart to Jesus, and that only the man who has taken Jesus as Master and Lord can understand what the **Kingdom of God** means. (Daily Study Bible)

**Mystery** (3466)([musterion](#) - see extensive discussion) from **mustes** = one initiated [e.g. "mystery" religions]



from **mueo** = to close or shut) in the NT is a truth never previously known (or only partially known) which human intellect could never discover, which has now been made known by divine revelation. It describes "the secret counsels of God which are hidden from the ungodly but when revealed to the godly, are understood by them." This Greek word does not carry the connotation it has today as when we talk of a mystery novel. A mystery in the Bible is a truth which man cannot know by his natural powers, but must be supernaturally revealed. In Paul's day **musterion** was a technical term utilized by the "mystery religions" which referred to a secrets concealed by strange customs and ceremonies and confided only to those initiated into the "mystery cult". The mystery-religions had their secrets and signs as modern secret societies have today. Those initiated into these pagan cults, knew these secret signs.

**But** - A striking term of contrast which in essence places a partition between men who in the kingdom of light, the kingdom of Christ and God and the outsiders who are in the kingdom of darkness, the kingdom of Satan. And [Never the Twain Shall Meet!](#)

**Those who are outside** (Luke 8:10 has "to the rest", Mt 13:11 "to them") - **Those who are outside** (tois exo) means outside the inner circle with Jesus. E.g. in Colossians Paul uses this same phrase (tous exo) commanding saints to "**Conduct** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) yourselves with wisdom toward **outsiders** (literally "those outside" - tous exo - in context unbelievers), making the most of the opportunity ([kairos](#) - a slot of time, the "door" of opportunity which may close at any time! See [Redeem the Time!](#))" (Col 4:5+).

**Lenski** - What occurred in the past that caused the present difference between the disciples and **those outside**? All the Scriptures answer: no unwillingness on the part of God to bestow the gift (1 Ti 2:4; 2 Pe. 3:9; Jn 3:16; Ma. 28:19, 20) but only the unwillingness of so many to receive God's grace and gift (Mt. 23:37; Acts 7:51; Hos. 13:9). Persistently declining the grace and gift whenever it came to them, these people are now without it. Thus all the realities of the kingdom are still a mystery to them. They nullified every effort of God and of Christ to bestow the heavenly gift upon them; this nullifying is the work of persistent unbelief. The only thing that it left to Jesus is to speak "in parables" to those outside, who are still unbelieving after all his efforts. The believers will understand these parables because they possess the key to them by knowing the mystery of grace; the rest will not understand them because they lack that key (ISMG)

**Hiebert** writes **those who are outside** that "The use of the parabolic method has instituted a sifting process among Jesus' hearers, producing a separation between disciples and those uncommitted to Him."

**THOUGHT** - As I wrote about **those who are outside**, I became convicted and overwhelmed with the truth of the reality that because of the gracious gift of the new birth, I am on the **inside** (as are all of you dear brothers or sisters in Christ), in the inner circle in an eternal covenant with Christ. Do we really grasp the privilege that God has granted each of us by "initiating us" (baptizing us) into Christ and into the mysteries of His glorious Kingdom? I fear not (speaking for myself) "Now we see in a mirror dimly...now I know in part." (1 Cor 13:12) O, how the breadth and length and height and depth of this great truth should stir in our souls a deep love for Christ, a passion for the Father's purpose of proclamation of the Gospel, and a strong Spirit wrought desire to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against our souls (1Pe 2:11+)!

Let our unceasing prayer be "that the eyes of our heart may be enlightened, so that we will know what is the **hope** of His calling, what are the **riches** of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His **power** toward us who believe....Now to Him Who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power (HIS SPIRIT) that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen". (Eph 1:18, 19+. Eph 3:20, 21+)

**Get everything in parables** - Those who are outside got **everything in parables** meaning they could hear Jesus' stories, but they were not privy to His explanations of the deeper truths behind the stories. In short Christ's parables served to veil the truth or unveil the truth depending on the attitude of the hearer's heart. Those who heard and disbelieved received no further revelation and could not understand the parables. As **Hiebert** puts it Jesus' "parabolic ministry thus served to reveal the inner heart condition of the hearers. Unbelief nullified the divine effort to give them the revelation." (Ibid)

**Parables** ([3850](#)) see above on [parabole](#)

**Robertson** explains that "The parables are thus a condemnation on the wilfully blind and hostile, while a guide and blessing to the enlightened."

#### **Related Resources:**

- Expectation of the Jews Regarding the Kingdom of God

- In depth comments on the Kingdom of God
- See commentary on the Kingdom of God in Luke 17:21
- What is the kingdom of God
- [What is the difference between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven?](#)

**Mark 4:12 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.”**

NET Mark 4:12 so that although they look they may look but not see, and although they hear they may hear but not understand, so they may not repent and be forgiven."

GNT Mark 4:12 να βλέποντες βλέπωσιν καὶ μὴ ὄωσιν, καὶ κούοντες κούωσιν καὶ μὴ συνίσιν, μήποτε πιστρωσιν καὶ φεθῶτορ.

NLT Mark 4:12 so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled: 'When they see what I do, they will learn nothing. When they hear what I say, they will not understand. Otherwise, they will turn to me and be forgiven.' "

KJV Mark 4:12 That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.

ESV Mark 4:12 so that "they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven."

NIV Mark 4:12 so that, " 'they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!' "

ASV Mark 4:12 that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest haply they should turn again, and it should be forgiven them.

CSB Mark 4:12 so that they may look and look, yet not perceive; they may listen and listen, yet not understand; otherwise, they might turn back-- and be forgiven."

NKJ Mark 4:12 "so that`Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them."

NRS Mark 4:12 in order that 'they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand; so that they may not turn again and be forgiven."

YLT Mark 4:12 that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand, lest they may turn, and the sins may be forgiven them.'

NAB Mark 4:12 so that 'they may look and see but not perceive, and hear and listen but not understand, in order that they may not be converted and be forgiven."

NJB Mark 4:12 so that they may look and look, but never perceive; listen and listen, but never understand; to avoid changing their ways and being healed.'

GWN Mark 4:12 'They see clearly but don't perceive. They hear clearly but don't understand. They never return to me and are never forgiven."

BBE Mark 4:12 So that seeing they may see, and it will not be clear to them; and hearing it, they will not get the sense; for fear that they may be turned again to me and have forgiveness.

- **seeing** - De 29:4 Isa 6:9,10 44:18 Jer 5:21 Mt 13:14,15 Lu 8:10 Joh 12:37-41 Ac 28:25-27 Ro 11:8-10
- **might return** - Jer 31:18-20 Eze 18:27-32 Ac 3:19 2Ti 2:25 Heb 6:6
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Parallel Passages:

Matthew 13:14; 15+ "In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE; 15 FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES, OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I

WOULD HEAL THEM.'

Luke 8:10+ And He said, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, so that SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND.

**Multiple related passages dealing with "judicial hardening" and the related topic of Jesus speaking in parables** - Dt 29:4+, Isa 6:9,10+ Mt 13:11-15+ Mk 4:11-12+ Lk 8:10+ Jn 9:39-41, Jn 12:38-40 Acts 28:26,27+ Ro 11:7-10+, 2Co 3:14-15+, Eph 4:17-18+, 2Th 2:10-12+.

#### OT Quote:

Isaiah 6:9; 10+ He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand.' 10 "Render the hearts of this people insensitive, Their ears dull, And their eyes dim, Otherwise they might see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, Understand with their hearts, And return and be healed."

## ISAIAH'S PROPHECY IS FULFILLED

So that ([hina](#)) introduces an important [term of purpose](#), in this case Jesus' explanation of WHY He was now teaching with parables.

The sun that melts the wax also hardens the clay!

**WHILE SEEING, THEY MAY SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE** - This passage speaks of those who see and hear spiritual truth but reject it, refusing to believe it and because of their spiritual blindness, they would be judicially blinded by as their penalty.

**Hiebert** comments "Jesus implied that the parables did serve as a judgment on those who deliberately rejected Him and His revelation. His desire was not to hide the truth from them. In view of their unbelieving attitude, He used parables in an effort to win attention and to stimulate reflection upon the truth contained in the parables. But the scribes' persistent rejection of Him concealed the message from them and turned the parables into an instrument of judgment upon the self-blinded enemies." (Ibid)

**Kent Hughes** - In essence Jesus was enigmatically saying that the condition of one's heart determines its receptivity to truth. The scribes had originally been given straightforward teaching which they rejected and thus they could ultimately lose the truth—it would be taken away from them. Those who receive truth and act upon it receive more. Those who reject truth will ultimately lose the bit they have. The parables were full of truth, but for truth-rejecting people, they were inscrutable. This principle is paralleled in other areas of life. Physically, if we fail to exercise a muscle, we will one day lose its use. It is the same with our intellectual powers. If we fail to use them, there will come a time when we will not be able to summon their full power. God confronts us with his truth, but if we do not positively respond to it, we will lose it. What a solemn reality for those who sit under the teaching of God's Word week after week and do not respond to it. The writer to the Hebrews must have had these matters in mind when he said: "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left" (Hebrews 10:26). If we repeatedly hear God's Word and refuse to respond time and time again, there will come a time when we become so hardened that we not only will not, but cannot respond. If we are believers, we must set ourselves to always respond to God's truth as we read it or hear it from another believer or from the pulpit. An excellent spiritual discipline is to respond to truth by saying, "God, you have spoken to me, and I will do it." We must respond to truth!(Preach the Word-Mark)

**AND WHILE HEARING, THEY MAY HEAR AND NOT UNDERSTAND**- This passage parallels seeing and not perceiving which also would result in divine "deafness" and inability to understand spiritual truth.

**Lenski** - Why parables for those outside? "That looking they might look and not see; and hearing they might hear and not understand." Both statements have the same sense. This double purpose clause expresses the divine intention. When unbelief has advanced far enough, all its seeing and its hearing will not only produce nothing, it is even God's own will that it should be so.....God is compelled to cast such people off, and in his judgment He lets the very Word become to them a savor of death unto death. (ISMG)

**Understand** is the word [suniami](#) which is a picturesque word meaning to put together the pieces as one would a puzzle. Because of their repeated rejection, the Jews will be prevented from putting together the priceless puzzle entitled "THE MESSIAH!"

**OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT RETURN AND BE FORGIVEN** - Matthew 13:15 has "might return and I would heal ([iaomai](#)) them" which is the literal quote from the Septuagint of Isaiah 6:10. The effect however is identical for in spiritual terms when one is forgiven of their sins they are spiritually healed and made whole. The key word in this section is **otherwise** which is the Greek word [mepote](#)

which means "lest" which means "so as to prevent any possibility that" or "with the intention of preventing something." **A T Robertson** offers a sobering comment that "This negative purpose ([mepote](#)) as a judgment is left in the quotation from Isaiah. It is a solemn thought for all who read or hear the word of God."

**THOUGHT** - As depressing as this passage is, praise God it does not sound the death knell for every Jewish person. All we have to do is study the life of one of the greatest Jewish men named Saul, who praise God met the Messiah, was blinded and made to see, and who turned around and was healed and re-named Paul the apostle! Amazing grace indeed! And praise God that many Jews in our day are having a similar "Saul to Paul" experience. If you would like a wonderful blessing, take time to watch and listen to this Jewish doctor (which is close to my heart as I continually pray for the soul of my dearest Jewish doctor friend who was my partner for over 30 years). [Watch and listen](#). (For more encouraging videos [see here](#) and also see the main website [One for Israel](#)).

**MacArthur** explains "Because they chose to ignore God and His word, God judicially locked them up in their unbelief so that they would fear His judgment.

The first fulfillment of Isaiah's warning came in the judgment of the Babylonian Captivity, just as the prophet promised. The second fulfillment, Jesus declared, was about to be accomplished as Israel once again turned her back on the Lord and faced the judgment of centuries of darkness and despair. Jesus' parables were a similar form of judgment on unbelief. Those who would not accept His clear and simple teachings—such as those in the Sermon on the Mount—not only would not be able to understand His deeper teachings but would lose the benefit of the teaching and miraculous witness they had been given." (MNTC-Mt)

**Wuest** - Robertson commenting on these words says: "It is the purpose of condemnation for wilful blindness and rejection such as suits the Pharisees after their blasphemous accusation against Jesus ... Jesus is pronouncing their doom in the language of Isaiah. It sounds like the dirge of the damned." He adds "What is certain is that the use of parables on this occasion was a penalty for judicial blindness on those who will not see...The parables are thus a condemnation on the wilfully blind and hostile, while a guide and blessing to the enlightened." This is on the same principle as God hardening Pharaoh's heart by forcing him to an issue which he did not want to meet (Ro 9:14–18). Light resisted, blinds. Here, these Pharisees, were attempting to show that our Lord was in league with Satan. They did not want the truth. Thus, rejecting the truth, they in a sense blinded themselves. The parables are so adjusted that they blind the one who wickedly rejects the truth, and enlighten the one who desires it.

#### Mark 4:13 And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables?"

NET Mark 4:13 He said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? Then how will you understand any parable?"

GNT Mark 4:13 Καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Ὁ κ οὐ δάτε τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην, καὶ π ῶς π ῶς τ ῶς παραβολ ῶς γιν ῶσθε;

NLT Mark 4:13 Then Jesus said to them, "If you can't understand the meaning of this parable, how will you understand all the other parables?"

KJV Mark 4:13 And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?

ESV Mark 4:13 And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?"

NIV Mark 4:13 Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?"

ASV Mark 4:13 And he saith unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how shall ye know all the parables?

CSB Mark 4:13 Then He said to them: "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any of the parables?"

NKJ Mark 4:13 And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?"

NRS Mark 4:13 And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand all the parables?"

YLT Mark 4:13 And he saith to them, 'Have ye not known this simile? and how shall ye know all the similes?'

NAB Mark 4:13 Jesus said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand any

of the parables?

NJB Mark 4:13 He said to them, 'Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand any of the parables?

GWN Mark 4:13 Jesus asked them, "Don't you understand this story? How, then, will you understand any of the stories I use as illustrations?

BBE Mark 4:13 And he said to them, If you are not clear about this story, how will you be clear about the others?

- Know - Mk 7:17,18 Mt 13:51,52 15:15-17 16:8,9 Lu 24:25 1Co 3:1,2 Heb 5:11-14 Rev 3:19
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE PARABLES

This passage is peculiar to Mark in the 3 related synoptic accounts - Matt 13:18 and Luke 8:11 omit these questions. Akin says in His explanation of the parable, Jesus "starts with a mild chiding in the form of 2 questions."

**And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable?"** Clearly they did not understand this parable (they had asked Him Mk 4:10). **This parable** is Mk 4:3-8.

**How will you understand all the parables?** - This is the first of two rhetorical questions. The clear teaching of these questions is that if they could not understand this parable, then they would not be able to understand any of the parables. The converse is also true -- understanding this parable is the key to understanding the other parables of Jesus.

**James Edwards** - Failure to hear this parable means failure to understand parables in general. What is it about the parable of the sower that makes it the paradigm for all parables? The answer, which becomes apparent in the interpretation of vv. 14–20, is that the parable of the sower combines the two elements that form the core of Mark's story and that are necessary for understanding the gospel, namely, Christology and discipleship. The first telling of the parable in 4:3–9 explains the meaning of Jesus, and the second telling in 4:14–20 explains the meaning of discipleship. (PNTC-Mark\_

**Black** - Jesus now takes up the request of the disciples in v. 10. This is the first indication in Mark of the disciples' failure to understand Jesus. Their question was about parables, and though this present section is about one parable in particular, it is linked to other parables by Jesus' next words: Then how will you understand any of the parables? Mark clearly regards this introductory parable about the sower as the key to the rest; for him, the words of Jesus mean not simply that if the disciples cannot understand one parable they will not be able to understand others, but that this particular parable will enable them to see the meaning of others. (Black's NT Commentary)

**Akin** quips that "If they cannot add and subtract, it is scarcely imaginable that they will be able to multiply and divide. Geometry, Trigonometry and Calculus will be hopeless." ([Mark 4:1-20 Do You Have Ears That Hear?](#))

**MacArthur** - If the disciples could not comprehend such fundamental truths about salvation and the gospel, they would not be able to grasp later truths that built on that foundation. On a practical level, it was critical for Jesus' disciples to understand why His message was being rejected by so many. They, too, would be heralds of the gospel who would experience similar treatment from unbelievers. Yet, their evangelistic efforts would not be in vain. Though not all would listen, some would, and those who responded in faith would bear abundant fruit. (MNTC-Mk)

**John Phillips** writes that "These words were addressed to the disciples, those who were not smitten with the general blindness. They should have been able to understand the parable of the sower. It was the simplest of all of the mystery parables. But they were still learners and failed to grasp many things. The fact, for instance, that the Lord must die by crucifixion and that He must be buried and rise again was quite beyond their grasp in those days. Peter was horrified when the Lord first declared that He was going to the cross, and he objected strenuously (Matt. 16:21-23). He did not conceive a Messiah acting thus, especially not One who could command the very forces of nature! Later, the Lord would open the eyes of their understanding so that they would comprehend all of His teachings (Luke 24:44-45; John 20:9, 22). At this point in their spiritual education, however, the deeper meaning of the parable of the sower escaped them. So the Lord explained it to them." (Exploring Mark)

**Parables** ([3850](#)) see above on [parabole](#)

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NET Mark 4:14 The sower sows the word.

GNT Mark 4:14 σπε ρων τ ν λ γον σπε ρει.

NLT Mark 4:14 The farmer plants seed by taking God's word to others.

KJV Mark 4:14 The sower soweth the word.

ESV Mark 4:14 The sower sows the word.

NIV Mark 4:14 The farmer sows the word.

ASV Mark 4:14 The sower soweth the word.

CSB Mark 4:14 The sower sows the word.

NKJ Mark 4:14 "The sower sows the word.

NRS Mark 4:14 The sower sows the word.

YLT Mark 4:14 He who is sowing doth sow the word;

NAB Mark 4:14 The sower sows the word.

NJB Mark 4:14 What the sower is sowing is the word.

GWN Mark 4:14 "The farmer plants the word.

BBE Mark 4:14 The seed is the word.

- **sower** - Mk 4:3 Isa 32:20 Mt 13:19,37 Lu 8:11
- **the word** - Mk 2:2 Col 1:5,6 1Pe 1:23-25
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## ARE YOU A SOWER OF THE WORD?

**The sower sows the word** - The **sower** is whoever **sows the word**. And this should ideally be everyone who is a follower of Christ. We who are now saved eternally should be motivated and have a passionate desire so sow the word, the seed of the **Gospel of Christ** (Ro 15:19<sup>+</sup>, 2 Cor 2:12, 9:13, 10:14, Php 1:27, 1 Th 3:2). Note that **sows** is in the [present tense](#) signifying **the sower** continually **sows the word**.

Luke's parallel tells us that "the seed is the **word of God**." (Lk 8:11<sup>+</sup>).

**Phillips** adds that "The seed symbolized the Word of God. The sower, in the first instance, was the Son of God. Subsequently, the servants of God became sowers. The gospel is told forth, the Good News is scattered far and wide within the hearing of all kinds of people. We do not manufacture seed; God provides it. It contains the secret of life, and it reproduces after its kind. God makes Himself responsible for the mysterious and complex process whereby a seed germinates in the soil and grows and for the way the Word of God germinates in a human heart. Our responsibility is to sow the seed." (Ibid)

Peter describes the life changing potential of the **the word** writing to the believers scattered as aliens (1 Pe 1:1<sup>+</sup>) explaining "for you have been born again not of **SEED** which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring **WORD OF GOD**. For, "ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, BUT THE **WORD OF THE LORD** ENDURES FOREVER." And this is **THE WORD** which was preached to you. (1 Pe 1:23-25<sup>+</sup>)

Paul describes the inherent, intrinsic power of the **WORD** writing to the Colossians "because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the **WORD OF TRUTH, THE GOSPEL** which has come to you (BY THE SOWER!), just as in all the world also it (THE WORD) is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it (THE WORD) has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it (THE WORD) and understood the grace of God in truth (Col 1:5,6<sup>+</sup>).

**Mark 4:15** "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.

NET Mark 4:15 These are the ones on the path where the word is sown: Whenever they hear, immediately Satan comes and snatches the word that was sown in them.

GNT Mark 4:15 ο τοι δ ε σιν ο παρ τ ν δ ν· που σπε ρεται λ γος κα ταν κο σωσιν, ε θ ς ρχεται Σαταν ς κα α ρει τ ν λ γον τ ν σπαρμ νον ε ς α το ς.

NLT Mark 4:15 The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message, only to have Satan come at once and take it away.

KJV Mark 4:15 And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

ESV Mark 4:15 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.

NIV Mark 4:15 Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them.

ASV Mark 4:15 And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; and when they have heard, straightway cometh Satan, and taketh away the word which hath been sown in them.

CSB Mark 4:15 These are the ones along the path where the word is sown: when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word sown in them.

NKJ Mark 4:15 "And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.

NRS Mark 4:15 These are the ones on the path where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them.

YLT Mark 4:15 and these are they by the way where the word is sown: and whenever they may hear, immediately cometh the Adversary, and he taketh away the word that hath been sown in their hearts.

NAB Mark 4:15 These are the ones on the path where the word is sown. As soon as they hear, Satan comes at once and takes away the word sown in them.

NJB Mark 4:15 Those on the edge of the path where the word is sown are people who have no sooner heard it than Satan at once comes and carries away the word that was sown in them.

GWN Mark 4:15 Some people are like seeds that were planted along the road. Whenever they hear the word, Satan comes at once and takes away the word that was planted in them.

BBE Mark 4:15 And these are they by the wayside, where the word is planted; and when they have given ear, the Evil One comes straight away and takes away the word which has been planted in them.

- these - Mk 4:4 Ge 19:14 Isa 53:1 Mt 22:5 Lu 8:12 14:18,19 Ac 17:18-20,32 18:14-17 25:19,20 26:31,32 Heb 2:1 12:16
- Satan - Job 1:6-12 Zec 3:1 Mt 13:19 Ac 5:3 2Co 2:11 4:3,4 2Th 2:9 1Pe 5:8 Rev 12:9 20:2,3,7,10
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Parallel Passages:

Matthew 13:19+ "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.

Luke 8:12+ "Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved.

### **HARD SOIL A CALLOUS HEART**

**Callous** means made insensitive, having feelings or morals deadened, describing one who is emotionally hardened, insensitive; indifferent; unsympathetic. One might be discouraged by this soil, but remember this is a parable and it does not state that the soil cannot be altered by plowing, etc.

**THOUGHT** - Many (most?) of us were "hard soil" until God got our attention and plowed our heart with

adversity or affliction (as was the case in my late conversion at age 39). God is the ultimate [Husbandman](#) and He knows how to cultivate the conditions of the soil of His elect in order that they receive the Word implanted which is able to save their soul! And not only that but in Jeremiah, God reminds us about the power of His Word asking "**Is not My Word like fire? And like a hammer which breaks the rock?**" (Jer 23:29). So dear sower who has been frustrated by failure of results in a dear friend or loved one whose "soil" seems so hard for so long, for God is able to break the soil of their heart and penetrate it with His Gospel which has His inherent power ([dunamis](#)) (Ro 1:16+). So keep praying for the soil of their soul and keep sowing the Gospel seed as God's Spirit gives you opportunity to do so. My father prayed for me literally for 20 years before God's adversity plowed deep furrows in my heart for His Gospel seed ([My Testimony to God's Grace](#)). And then I prayed 20 years for my youngest son who was ensnared in opioid addiction almost to the point of death and God's Gospel penetrated his hard heart and saved him from addiction and gave him a new life in Christ. As Paul writes in Galatians "**Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.**" (Gal 6:9-10+) So pray and sow, pray and sow, pray and sow!

Sow with a view to righteousness,  
Reap in accordance with kindness;  
Break up your fallow ground,  
For it is time to seek the LORD  
Until He comes to rain righteousness on you.  
Hosea 10:12

**These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown-** Mk 4:4 says "as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up." This "soil" is a soul who is "beside the road" so to speak.

**And when they hear** - They do hear the Word of the Kingdom, but they fail to immediately process what they hear which opens them to the quick, crafty work of the evil one.

**MacArthur** - The Old Testament would call them the hard-hearted and the stiff-necked. They are resolute and rigid in their indifference, disinterest and love of sin. This is the condition of the heart which corresponds to the hardness of that footpath around the field. The heart of this kind of person is a thoroughfare, crossed by the mixed multitude of iniquities that traverse it day after day after day after day. And it's not fenced so it lies exposed to all the evil stampings of everything that comes along. It's never broken up. It's never plowed by conviction. It's never plowed by self-searching, self-examination, contrition, honest assessment of guilt, repentance. The heart is callous. It's callous to the sweet reasonings of grace and it's callous to the fearful terrors of judgment. Nothing wrong with the seed. Nothing wrong with the sower. Something terribly wrong with his hard, impenitent heart. ([Sermon](#))

**Immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them-** Satan wastes no time! Note two "time phrases" in this sentence, **when (when they hear)** and **immediately**, which sum up the strategy of the Adversary who prowls around like a roaring lion (he is not omnipresent, to his underling evil spirits harass human beings) seeking whom he would devour. (1 Pe 5:8+). **Satan** of course is not omnipresent but a finite being) one of his agents, is there every time the gospel is proclaimed. Picture the seed of the Word, the Gospel, sown and with no time intervening, it is gone, lifted up, carried away, taken away from the soil of the heart. Make no mistake **Satan** is efficient like a bird. If you watch the birds, their eye is keen and quick to pounce on a morsel of food, even when extremely small. So too does Satan. The question is how does he do this? See notes below.

**Daniel Akin** explains "They are ultimately bird food! Their hearing is superficial and resistant. They are totally unresponsive. They suffer from "gospel deafness." Like skeptics, they quickly dismiss the Word without giving it careful consideration. They hear the Word, the book closes and the service ends, and so does their ears and heart. These are hardened to the gospel for whatever reason (ex. theodicy). ([Mark 4:1-20 Do You Have Ears That Hear?](#))

**Phillips** comments "We see it happen at every service. The moment the benediction is given, there is a buzz of conversation, and what was said in the sermon is forgotten. By the time we get to the car, the conversation has turned to lunch or the size of Mrs. Baldy's hat or whether to go for a drive. In any case, the seed is gone. The word **wayside** also provides a clue. The **wayside** is a place where people come and go, where there is constant movement. Traffic passes by there all of the time. The ebb and flow of the multitudes, bent on business or pleasure, keeps the ground hard and packed so that the enemy can snatch away the seed. Satan and his companion "powers of the air" have great success in such places." (Ibid)

**Spurgeon** comments that the **evil one** "does not mind their merely **hearing**. What he is afraid of is their **believing**, for he knows that in **believing** lies the secret of their salvation." In fact as **Darrell Bock** notes "When God seeks to speak to humanity, a cosmic battle



breaks out." ([Call to Faith and Christology](#))

**Immediately** (2117)([euthus](#)) as **adverb** to mean immediately, right away, at once, without delay or hesitation; with no time intervening. The use of **euthus** with the meaning of **immediately** is a key word in the Gospel of Mark Matthew 13:19 says the Evil One **snatches what has been sown in his heart** which is the verb [harpazo](#) which means to snatch up or way, taking the Word suddenly, with speed and without warning! Upshot - When one hears the Word of the Gospel, they need to "grab hold" of it quickly, at least giving themselves a chance to ponder its veracity or otherwise it is immediately snatched away!

Luke 8:12+ adds a phrase not in Matthew or Mark **"They will not believe and be saved** - One must personally believe the Gospel in order to be saved. There is no other way (cf Jn 14:6, Acts 4:12). Failure to believe the Gospel will eventually result in eternal damnation. Sadly it is that simple!

**R C H Lenski** - We need not regard the birds as devils (plural), they represent Satan in his different ways of snatching the Word away from men's minds and hearts. At one time he tells a man that the Word which disturbs his conscience is a mere exaggeration, sin is not so deadly, God cannot have wrath, we must not allow our enlightened minds to be moved by such outworn notions; again he tells him that the Word is so uncertain that there is no uncontested fact in it, and no up-to-date man believes such things; then that the preachers themselves do not really believe what they say, that they preach only in order to make an easy living and are really hypocrites as their own actions often show. Numberless are these birds by which Satan operates. This, then, is the first group: hearers of the Word who have, indeed, heard it but promptly lose it again. That this is due to Satan's work Jesus declares to be a fact, and it should serve as a mighty warning to every hearer. (ISMG)

**Rich Cathers** on how **Satan takes away the Word** is he shoots **flaming arrows** (Eph 6:16) reminding them of "the insidious lies the world has told us: (1) "The Bible is just a bunch of made-up stories" (2) "Jesus was not a real person" (ED: Or one I hear a lot - "Jesus never claimed to be God.") (3) "We are all products of evolution, there is no God who created everything" (ED: THANK YOU CHARLES DARWIN!) When a person has swallowed some of these lies, it's easy for them to just blow it off when they hear that God loved them so much that He gave His Son to die for them."

**Adrian Rogers** - There are a lot of people in this service today who have got a hard heart. And the seed will just lie on the surface, and the devil will come and snatch it away. You sit in this service and you figure up a business deal. You sit in this service and you are thinking about a party, what you are going to wear, and what you are going to have for dinner today. And the seed never ever gets in. That's not my fault, folks. And it's not the seed's fault. It is the soil's fault. Some fell on the wayside. And that's the reason the Bible says, "To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." (Hebrews 3:15+) Don't harden your heart, because the devil is there just to snatch that seed away. And his devil's dirty birds are there just to gobble up the seed as it lies on the surface. It never penetrates. It never gets in, because your heart is so hard and so crusted. Are you that way? Be careful how you hear. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." The rich will get richer, and the poor will get poorer. (Be Careful How You Hear)

**Steven Cole** writes that "Satan hardens people's hearts by the traffic of worldly philosophies. People engage in worldly, man-centered thinking so often that their hearts grow callused to the truth of God. For example, many in our culture are so steeped in the [postmodern ideas](#) that spiritual truth is relative and that it doesn't matter what you believe that they automatically reject the exclusive claims of the Gospel because it runs counter to the ideas they have trafficked in for all their lives. It is ironic that these are people who would scoff at the idea of a personal devil, and yet that very devil is the one who **snatches away the seed of the Gospel** from them! (ED: WAS THIS NOT THE STRATEGY PAR EXCELLENCE IN "SCREWTAPE LETTERS" = THERE IS NO DEVIL!) In their hardness of heart, they feel no need for God. We need to pray that God will **break up the hard ground of their hearts with the plow of trials** so that they will be open to receive the truth of the Gospel." ([Luke 8:4-15](#))

**MacArthur** explains how **evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart** - How does he snatch it? Through **false teachers** that come and attack the Gospel. He **snatches** it through the **fear** of man (ED: Pr 29:25 = The fear of man brings a snare [[mogesh](#)]."), an embarrassment about being identified with Jesus Christ or fear of being unsynagogued or cut off from your friends (ED: THIS IS PARTICULARLY AT PLAY IN MUSLIM AND HINDU CULTURES WHERE A BELIEVER MAY LOSE HIS/HER FAMILY!) He snatches it through **pride**. You think you know everything and you are not willing to confess that you don't and be broken before God. He snatches it through **doubt**, through **prejudice**, through **stubbornness**, mostly through the **continual love of sin** which he panders to this wretched world system. It's either crushed under the continual pedestrian activity of wickedness or snatched away by Satan. That's such a sad thing. ([Receptivity to the Gospel](#))

**Ray Stedman** says this person represents "the callous heart. The seed is sown upon the beaten, trodden-down pathway. This represents people whose hearts are busy, who are not open, who have been beaten down so many times they have grown cynical, hardhearted, callous to truth. When the seed hits them, the birds come and gather it up immediately. (Perhaps there are people like that here this morning. You are here not because you wanted to hear the Word but because coming to church is the "right" thing to do. Your hearts are callous and unresponsive, and the Word falls on them as on asphalt.) What does Jesus say about that kind of a

life? He says it is strictly for the birds! The seed will be snatched away by Satan before you even have a chance to hear it. **C S. Lewis, in his *Screwtape Letters***, describes a man who goes into a library to read and meditate. His mind is suddenly opened to deep thoughts of God. Confronted with his own standing before God, he starts thinking in terms of his eternal welfare. **Then, Lewis says, the demons that are assigned to keep him from discovering truth call his attention to the sounds on the street, to the newsboy calling out the latest news, and to the fact that he is hungry, ready for lunch. And that is all it takes. All thoughts of God disappear, and he is involved in the mundane affairs of life.** And, from the point of view of the satanic emissaries, he is delivered from this danger of thinking about God. That is what happens to the callous mind and heart. ([Seed Thoughts](#))

## Satan's Strategies to take away the Word

### John Piper

There are two other kinds of soil where the Word bears no fruit. There is the rocky ground in Mk 4:16 and the thorny ground in Mk 4:18. Jesus doesn't mention Satan in connection with these. But we know from other teachings in the New Testament that Satan is very much at work in these soils to nullify the Word of God and make the hearers fruitless. So there are really three strategies (at least!) by which Satan takes away the Word. Let's look at each briefly.

#### 1. Immediately—with Inattention, Ill-Will, or Ignorance

In Mk 4:15 it says that he does it **immediately**. He does it before there is any sympathetic response at all. "Satan immediately comes and takes away the word which is sown in them." I can think of at least three ways this happens. It happens through people's **inattention, ill-will, or ignorance**.

**Satan works overtime to keep people from giving serious attention to the Word of God** He may keep you up late Saturday night so that you can't stay awake during the sermon or Sunday School. He may put a dozen different distractions around you in the service to take your mind away from the message. He may send thoughts into your mind (**ED**: Eph 6:16b+ Note the antidote/defense is found in the first clause in this same verse!) about tomorrow's meeting with your supervisor. If he can only distract you so that the sounds coming out of the preacher's mouth go in one ear and out the other, he will have successfully taken away the Word of God and made it ineffectual for you (**ED**: cf James 1:25+ = contrast "forgetful hearer but an effectual doer"). Inattention is his game. (**ED**: disregard; heedlessness; neglect; ATTENTION is the cognitive process of selectively concentrating on one aspect of the environment while ignoring other things. Attention has also been referred to as the allocation of processing resources.)

**He also uses ill-will.** (**ED**: a hostile, very unfriendly, disposition, enmity, dislike) He causes feelings of aversion to block the Word. These feelings might be against the preacher or against his language or simply against the truths of the gospel. People may hear and understand exactly what is being said, but despise it. Paul said the gospel is foolishness to those who are perishing (**ED**: 1 Cor 1:18). Satan works to maintain their worldly sense of values so that the value of the death of Christ is as nothing. Satan gives people such a high estimation of themselves that the evangelical message of brokenness before the cross for our sin is disgusting and threatening. So the Word of God gains no foothold. Satan takes it away.

**Satan also uses ignorance.** The work of Satan can be so thorough that his servants can actually lose the capacity to grasp what is being said well enough even to get angry about it. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:3–4, "Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case 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 likeness of God." When the glory of God is described, Satan blinds the eyes of his people so that they wonder what in the world is going on when spiritual people are deeply affected by this glory. Thus Satan takes away the Word of God.

#### 2. Eventually—with Shallow Soil and Persecution

But Satan's battle against the Word is not just directed against that first hearing of the Word. Even after a person has heard the Word and received it with joy, Satan does his best to take it away and bring the person to fruitlessness and ruin. Mark 4:16–17 describe this attack. "And these in like manner are the ones sown upon rocky ground, who, when they hear the word, **immediately** receive it with joy; 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."

The reason I feel confident in saying that this too is the work of Satan, even though Jesus doesn't mention him here, is that persecution is mentioned and this is a key strategy of Satan elsewhere in the New Testament. For example, when Paul heard that the Thessalonian Christians were being persecuted, he chalked it up to the devil and said, "For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent that I might know your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and that our labor would be in vain." (1 Th 3:5+) It's clear that Paul saw persecution as a work of Satan that could destroy the gospel labor he had expended. In other

words, the Word could be taken away.

Just because Satan is not able to keep everyone from responding joyfully to the Word of God, doesn't mean he gives up on those people. He brings many of them to ruin by keeping their soil shallow and battering them with hard times so that they fall for the lie that the Word of God is not worth the trouble it brings. And so Satan takes away the Word of God even after it has gained a little toehold.

### 3. Eventually—with Prosperity

If persecution doesn't look like it will work, Satan will try prosperity. This is his third strategy for taking away the Word and making people fruitless. Verses 18–19 describe this strategy: "And others are the ones sown among thorns; they are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world, and the deceit of riches, and the desire for other things, enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful."

Ephesians 2:2–3<sup>+</sup> teaches that when people follow Satan they are not dragged along against their desires, but are giving in to their ungodly desires. Satan takes away the Word by making us feel that if we hold fast to the Word, we will have to give up something better. He is the great deceiver. And in America he majors not on soil 2 but on soil 3. He doesn't snatch the Word as much by the threat of persecution (ED: AS IN PLACES LIKE INDIA AND MUSLIM NATIONS WHERE A PERSON'S LIFE MAY BE AT STAKE IF THEY RECEIVE THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL!) as by the deceptive promise that things will go better if you don't get fanatical about the Word of God. And so thousands of people who had made a start with the Word of God give in to his lies and have the Word choked out of their lives.

In summary, Satan has three strategies to take away the Word of God.

1. First, he often acts immediately as soon as the Word is heard to make people inattentive, or cause them to feel ill-will, or to simply be so ignorant of spiritual reality they can't grasp what's being said.
2. Second, he comes in after the Word has been received with joy and attacks it with hard times. He convinces some that holding fast to the Word is not worth the trouble.
3. Third, he comes in where the Word has begun to take root and strangles it with the lie that too many good things are being sacrificed. ([Read the rest of Dr Piper's message as he discusses 3 strategies to fight the enemy's 3 strategies](#)).

**Mark 4:16 "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;**

NET Mark 4:16 These are the ones sown on rocky ground: As soon as they hear the word, they receive it with joy.

GNT Mark 4:16 καὶ οὗτοί εἰσι οἱ πρὸς τὰ πετρὰ ἡσπείρουμένοι, οἱ τὰν κοσῶσιν τὴν λέγον ἐθὺς μετὰ χαρῆς λαμβανούσιν αὐτὴν,

NLT Mark 4:16 The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy.

KJV Mark 4:16 And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

ESV Mark 4:16 And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy.

NIV Mark 4:16 Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy.

ASV Mark 4:16 And these in like manner are they that are sown upon the rocky places, who, when they have heard the word, straightway receive it with joy;

CSB Mark 4:16 And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: when they hear the word, immediately they receive it with joy.

NKJ Mark 4:16 "These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness;

NRS Mark 4:16 And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: when they hear the word, they immediately receive it with joy.

YLT Mark 4:16 'And these are they, in like manner, who on the rocky ground are sown: who, whenever they may hear the word, immediately with joy do receive it,

NAB Mark 4:16 And these are the ones sown on rocky ground who, when they hear the word, receive it at once with joy.

NJB Mark 4:16 Similarly, those who are sown on patches of rock are people who, when first they hear the word, welcome it at once with joy.

GWN Mark 4:16 Other people are like seeds that were planted on rocky ground. Whenever they hear the word, they accept it at once with joy.

BBE Mark 4:16 And in the same way, these are they who are planted on the stones, who, when the word has come to their ears, straight away take it with joy;

- on whom - Mk 6:20 10:17-22 Eze 33:31,32 Mt 8:19,20 13:20,21 Lu 8:13 Joh 5:35 Ac 8:13,18-21 24:25,26 26:28
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Parallel Passages:

Matthew 13:20+ "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.

Luke 8:13+ "Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of **temptation** fall away.

## ROCKY SOIL SHALLOW HEART

**In a similar way** - This means the comparison is made in a way that is similar to the first.

**Spurgeon** - THE gospel seed, according to the parable, falls upon all kinds of soil. Some of its precious grains drop upon the hard pathway, some upon the rock, some amongst the thorns, and only a portion, perhaps a smaller proportion than one in four, falls upon good ground, in which it finds a congenial abiding-place. The preacher, therefore, will not meet with unmixed success in all directions. He may look for a full recompense from his work as a whole, but he must not fondly suppose that everywhere the good word will become effectual; for in many it will be a savor of death unto death, and not of life unto life. Even when Jesus preached but few received him, and of Paul's ministry it is recorded that "some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not." It is for the beginner in holy service to go forward with reasonable expectations, lest he should ere long weary of the work and leave it because of his bitter disappointments. Mark, with care, that the sower in the parable is not blamed for having scattered his seed upon soil which proved to be unproductive; not a word of censure is recorded against him on that account; from which it is fair to infer that he did no more and no less than his duty, and that the minister of Christ is to scatter the seed of the Gospel broadcast among all mankind. It is God's work to direct the saving word into the chosen hearts which he has prepared to receive it, but as for us, we are to preach the gospel to every creature, and going out into the streets and lanes of the city, as many as we find we are to bid to the supper. Many are called but few are chosen; it was never intended that the external call should be as narrow as the election; yet there are some ministers whose preaching consists far more of an analysis of soils than of a sowing of seed....It is mine to sow beside all waters, and his to give the increase. The best shot that was ever made with bow and arrow was taken at a venture, and Ahab the king was pierced between the joints of his harness (1 Ki 22:34 "Now a certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel in a joint of the armor"); so also, while drawing my bow to preach the gospel to every creature, my faith feels confident that the Lord will direct the arrow and effect his purposes of grace.(The Seed Upon the Stony Ground)

**These are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places-** These (cf Mk 4:5-6+). This is not soil with a few rocks, for most soil has at least a few rocks. the soil was deceptive. It was shallow because a hidden ledge of rock ran just beneath the thin layer of soil, like **bedrock** (see [picture but with more soil than Jesus' example](#)). It is actually a sort of "hot house" so the seed springs up immediately. The problem is it grows up but does not grow down! In other words there is no root system. The results are two-fold, rapid growth and rapid withering. This soil typifies the shallow heart, one that is superficial, emotional, easily interested and impressed, but with no depth of conviction. They have feeling but lack faith! (cf the rich young ruler - Lk 18:18-21+, second son of Mt 21:30). These may shed tears, but once they are dry, they fall away when tested.

**Phillips** writes that "There was just enough soil to give promise but not enough to give performance. What is depicted for us here is mere profession of faith rather than true possession of Christ. People who exhibit this kind of response to the gospel often have only

an emotional experience of some sort. Sometimes people give only an intellectual assent to the truth. In neither case is there more than a superficial stirring of the soul. The condition described is illustrated in the case of Orpah. Both Ruth and Orpah initially responded to Naomi's testimony. However, as soon as Orpah was confronted with the hard facts involved, she went back on her profession and returned to Moab (read Ru 1:14-15+). Ruth went all of the way. "Two walked the aisle," so to speak, "but there was only one wedding. (read Ru 1:16-17+)" (Ibid)

**Who, when they hear the word** - These people **hear the Word** of God, the Gospel. They are not inattentive or asleep when **the Word** is preached, spoken or taught. They have their antennae up and tuned to the "FM Band" and hear the Gospel broadcast on that band.

**Spurgeon** - "Hearers only" will not enter heaven; there must be a doing of the word as well as a hearing of it. These people were good hearers, capital hearers, for they went further than hearing — they received the word; not in the divine power or supernatural efficacy of it, but they nevertheless received it, that is to say, they never cavilled at it, they assented to it as they heard it, and recognized it as God's truth. Receiving it, it produced an effect upon them. They were, in a measure, impressed by it....In them it excited no questions, doubts, or conflicts. The preacher said, "This the word of God," and they were content to believe him, though they knew not why. While other minds were asking for the authority of the message, and then, having recognized the authority, were battling hard with a thousand difficulties, these persons saved themselves a world of trouble by never thinking at all. It was their father's religion and their mother's religion, therefore they believed it, they swallowed the pill with their eyes shut, caring nothing whether it was God's truth or Satan's lie. Anything like spiritual mastication of the doctrine they did not attempt, but they endorsed wholesale whatever they were taught....These hearers had no hard strugglings to get at the Savior, no sense of sin to hold them back, no horrors of conscience to make them afraid, no alarms lest they should not be the Lord's own people after all, no testings and siftings to see whether they possessed real repentance and acceptable faith. They sprang into religion as a man may leap into a bath, head over heels at once. They said, "Surely this is the right thing, and we will have it;" and after a certain sort they did have it: not with any depth of consideration or weight of judgement, but immediately they received the word. ([The Seed Upon the Stony Ground](#))

**Immediately receive it with joy** - **Receive** ([lambano](#)) it means they take hold of or grasp the Word Luke's version uses the verb [dechomai](#) picturing these hearers of the Gospel actually "putting out the welcome mat" so to speak. They are enthusiastic and show great promise.

**Spurgeon** - The immediate effect of receiving the word was to make them very happy; and there are not a few also suppose that to be made very happy is a sure sign of being converted. Believe me, it is a very dubious sign indeed. No doubt, one grand effect of the reception of the gospel into the heart is to bring joy and peace through believing, but there are many kinds of joy, and many sorts of peace, and there is a joy which is not the fruit of grace, but the growth of nature, and a peace which comes from delusion, and not from the Spirit of God. We must take care we do not conclude that we are safe because we are "so happy." The rich man who went to hell was happy when he fared sumptuously every day; the farmer, who said he would pull down his barns and build greater, was happy when he surveyed his stores. ....These people heard the gospel one day, received it, and felt sure that they were saved; at once they were full of joy and transport, and hastened to make a profession. They did not require time to sit down and see whether they could bear out that profession, or seek grace that they might not run before they were called; but away they went, just as if a spark had been dropped into so much powder. They made a profession, and the next week they were teaching in the Sunday-school. They were so sure they were on the right road, that they were very vexed with other pilgrims who did not travel so rapidly. When they heard of Christians being anxious as to their condition, they said, "What nonsense! What reason was there for it?" If they saw a deep-taught Christian tremblingly examining himself, they said, "Oh, you must not look at all at yourself; never consider what is going on within." They had received a one-sided gospel only, and that quite contented them; but as to anything like the work of the Spirit of God in the soul, and the holy jealousy which is one of the best fruits of vital godliness, these they quite dispensed with. They were going to drag the church behind them, and drive the world before them, and very soon they would distance even the ministry which had been the means, as they said, of their conversion. They grew from hyssops on the wall to cedars of Lebanon in about a week. They were THE men, and wisdom would die with them. Grand work to have to deal with these men, is not it? We shall see by-and-by, and shall have to learn that not every stem that puts forth leaves is a fruit-bearing branch. ([The Seed Upon the Stony Ground](#))

**Spurgeon** notes that these hearers "did not recollect that between this and heaven there are temptations to be combatted and to be overcome, trials to be endured, stern trials, too, through which we can only be brought by divine help. Right arms must be cut off, and right eyes must be plucked out; there are costs to be counted, and reckonings to be made, as to whether the future will repay for the labors of the present. Youthful Hopefuls vow that they will have the brave country of Canaan, but they do not recollect the roughness of the road thither. Like Pliable, they set out for the Celestial City' but they have not reckoned upon the Slough of Despond, and therefore after the first mouthful of mud they are ready to turn back, and let those have the brave country who care for it; as for them, if they can keep whole bones in their body, they will be well content to let the future go as it may. ([The Seed Upon the Stony Ground](#))

Excerpt from Pilgrim's Progress regarding **Pliable**

Now I saw in my dream, that just as they had ended this talk, they drew nigh to a very miry Slough that was in the midst of the plain, and they being heedless, did both fall suddenly into the bog. The name of the Slough was Despond. Here therefore they wallowed for a time, being grievously bedaubed with dirt; and Christian, because of the Burden that was on his back, began to sink in the mire.

Pliable: Then said Pliable, Ah! neighbor Christian, where are you now?

Christian: Truly, said Christian, I do not know.

Pliable: At that Pliable began to be offended, and angrily said to his fellow, Is this the happiness you have told me all this while of? If we have such ill speed at our first setting out, what may we expect between this and our Journey's end? May I get out again with my Life, you shall possess the brave Country alone for me. And with that he gave a desperate strug

See [Commentary Notes on Pliable](#)

**Lenski** comments that "The moment they hear it they are delighted—this is what they have been waiting for, they sing the praises of the Word. The seed on the rock-soil springs up more quickly than that on the good soil, but beyond that fact this soil proves disappointing." (ISMG)

**THOUGHT** - How many times I have been so encouraged by what seems like such a promising response to the Gospel "seed" and later to be disappointed when they fell away! In my immaturity, I thought I had done something wrong, that my presentation of the Gospel was faulty, etc. I wish I had fully understood Jesus' parable of the soils when I was a younger believer, for it would have saved me a great deal of angst. The problem is not with the **sower** nor with the **seed** but with the **soil**, the heart of the person who hears the Gospel. Remember, that the **Gospel** by definition is like a natural seed which has within its husk the power to germinate into a plant which grows and flourishes. Paul "defines" the Gospel as "the **power** (inherent power, "germinating power" - [dunamis](#)) of God for salvation to everyone who believes." (Ro 1:16-[note](#)). So the Gospel has the intrinsic, supernatural **power** but the person's heart lacks true belief. The heart of the problem is the heart (the soil), not the Gospel seed or the Gospel sower! Add to this the sad truth that most of the souls with whom we share the Gospel will not believe the Gospel for as Jesus clearly warned "**Enter** through the **narrow gate**; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction (not loss of existence, but loss of the purpose and reason for existing!), and there are **MANY** who enter through it. 14 "For ([term of explanation](#)) the **gate is small** and the **way is narrow** that leads to life, and there are **FEW** who find it. (Mt 7:13-14+)

**Immediately** ([2117](#)) ([euthus](#)) (Mk 4:5, Mk 4:15, 16, 17, Mk 4:29).

**Joy** ([5479](#))([chara](#)) is a feeling of great pleasure, of inner gladness, or of delight. **Joy** is an emotion evoked by a sense of well-being. It is a deep feeling of happiness and contentment. **Joy** in the NT is virtually always used to signify a feeling of "happiness" that is based on spiritual realities (independent of what "happens"). **Joy** is a depth of assurance and confidence that ignites a cheerful heart. It is a cheerful heart that leads to cheerful behavior.

**MacDonald** - The **rock**-hearers heard the word too, but they did not let the word break them. They remained unrepentant. No encouragement (moisture) was given to the seed, so it withered away and died. (Believer's Bible Commentary)

**Steven Cole** adds that "If you have been a Christian for a while, you have ridden the roller coaster of great joy in seeing someone make a profession of faith in Jesus Christ, followed by awful disappointment as the same person later fell away from the faith. For a while he seemed to be dramatically changed. He got involved in the church. He was zealous for the things of God. But then a difficult trial hit. Perhaps he had a conflict with someone in the church. Or he had a personal health problem or he lost a loved one. His zeal cooled off and gradually he stopped coming to church. Every effort to restore him failed. Today he is back in the world. Others don't fall away altogether, but their early enthusiasm wanes. They settle into a routine that includes going to church as long as there isn't something "better" to do for the weekend. But God is not central in their lives. They are more focused on their things and on having a good time in life. They profess to be Christians, but they have no burden for the lost and no desire to serve God. They are living basically for self and for pleasure. But they are not living in light of eternity. How do you explain such people? Some would say that they have lost their salvation, but that clearly contradicts the many clear passages that teach that those whom God saves, He keeps for eternity. Others say that these folks are saved, but they are "carnal." They can go through life living in this carnal or worldly state and they will still go to heaven, but they won't have many rewards waiting for them. But this popular but false teaching contradicts Heb 12, which says that if a person is truly God's child, then God will discipline him. If a person lacks such

discipline, he is not a true child of God at all....The parable serves both as an **encouragement to His followers** and a **warning to His hearers**. The encouragement to His followers is that when we see people respond superficially to the gospel and later fall away, we should not be discouraged in that even Jesus had the same response. The problem was certainly not in His preaching, but in the audience's hearing. The warning to those who hear the parable, of course, is to take it to heart so that we avoid a superficial faith. ([Superficial and Genuine Believers](#))

**Mark 4:17 and 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.**

NET Mark 4:17 But they have no root in themselves and do not endure. Then, when trouble or persecution comes because of the word, immediately they fall away.

GNT Mark 4:17 κα ο κ χουσιν ζαν ν αυτο ς λλ πρ σκαιρο ε σιν, ε τα γενομ νης θλ ψεως διωγμο δι τ ν λ γον ε θ ς σκανδαλ ζονται.

NLT Mark 4:17 But since they don't have deep roots, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word.

KJV Mark 4:17 And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

ESV Mark 4:17 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.

NIV Mark 4:17 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.

ASV Mark 4:17 and they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway they stumble.

CSB Mark 4:17 But they have no root in themselves; they are short-lived. When pressure or persecution comes because of the word, they immediately stumble.

NKJ Mark 4:17 "and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble.

NRS Mark 4:17 But they have no root, and endure only for a while; then, when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.

YLT Mark 4:17 and have not root in themselves, but are temporary; afterward tribulation or persecution having come because of the word, immediately they are stumbled.

NAB Mark 4:17 But they have no root; they last only for a time. Then when tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.

NJB Mark 4:17 But they have no root deep down and do not last; should some trial come, or some persecution on account of the word, at once they fall away.

GWN Mark 4:17 But they don't develop any roots. They last for a short time. When suffering or persecution comes along because of the word, they immediately fall from faith.

BBE Mark 4:17 And they have no root in themselves, but go on for a time; then, when trouble comes or pain, because of the word, they quickly become full of doubts.

- have - Mk 4:5,6 Job 19:28 27:8-10 Mt 12:31 Lu 12:10 Joh 8:31 15:2-7 2Ti 1:15 2:17,18 4:10 1Jn 2:19
- when - Mt 11:6 13:21 24:9,10 1Co 10:12,13 Ga 6:12 1Th 3:3-5 2Ti 4:16 Heb 10:29 Rev 2:10,13
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Parallel Passages:

Matthew 13:21+ " yet he has no *firm* root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.

Luke 8:13+ "Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have

no *firm* root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away.

## NO ROOT

**And they have no *firm* root in themselves** - All 3 synoptic accounts in NAS have "no *firm* root," but literally the Greek says absolutely no root.

**Phillips** comments that "High pressure evangelism often produces this kind of shallow "conversion." Professions of faith are unsubstantial and worthless. People who respond to the gospel on this level have awakened souls, but they are not regenerated in spirit." (Ibid)

**Spurgeon on no root** - And then there was a third defect: the secret part of their religion was a failure. The seed on the stony ground did not fail in the sprouting, nor in the blade which appeared above; but it had no root. If you were to trace scale professors home, you would find **no secret prayer**. Let that word go through this congregation, if there are any of you living in the neglect of secret prayer. **No secret prayer, no secret reading of the Word of God, no chewing of it to get the essence and the juice out of it, no vital contact with Christ in private, no communion of the soul in secret with the living God!** This is a deadly sign! They were at the public meeting; they were fussy enough upon committees; they could be first and foremost if there were any singing to be done, or if there were any preaching required; but oh, the secret prayer, the secret living with God, the soul-searching, the trying of the [reins](#) to see whether they were right or wrong — they had given this all up. Taking it for granted that they must be right because they have a sort of faith, they look upon every question as to their safety as so much unbelief, and the work of Satan, and so they wrap themselves up in their delusions. **They think they must be the people of God because they profess themselves to be such, but they have never looked for the fruit which must be borne by every branch of the true vine.** ([The Seed Upon the Stony Ground](#))

**But are only temporary** - Only temporary is the key to interpretation for it means they had their experience for a season, but as the heat of summer goes into fall which then into the cold winter, so too their experience eventually becomes "cold." The "chill winds" of **affliction** and **persecution** speed up the process!

Luke adds that the rocky soil hearts "**believe ([pisteuo](#)) for a while, and in time of temptation fall away.**" The key in this Luke passage is **for a while**. No true believer believes just **for a while**. To be sure, the faith of most believers (yours truly included) will wax and wane over time. There are times in my Christian walk where I honestly have asked "Am I even saved?" Perhaps you can identify with those doubting times. But our faith never drops to zero. It never completely fails, even though it may feel like it has failed during those "down times." So what is the upshot of this phrase **believe for a while**? What Jesus is describing a quality of belief which falls short of saving belief. These are **not** those who truly believed and then lose their salvation. That is not what Jesus is saying. He is saying the **root** (their faith) never went deep enough into the soil of their heart to bring about genuine regeneration. In fact more literally Jesus said they did not even have a root! It is impossible for a plant to live if it has no root system! And the same applies to a "plant" who says he or she is a believer but has no saving faith! Stated another way, Jesus is indicating that there is a faith which one can demonstrate that falls short of faith that truly saves.

John gives an example in 1 John 2:19<sup>+</sup> writing that "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us (IF THEY HAD BEEN GENUINE DISCIPLES), they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. (THEIR GOING OUT PROVED THAT THEY WERE NOT GENUINE JUST AS JESUS DESCRIBES HERE IN Luke 8:13+).

**ESV Study Bible on they believe for a while** - A few interpreters (**Ed**: E.g., Dr Thomas Constable) think this is saving faith because these people "**believe**," and though they "**fall away**" (from fellowship?), this is not an ultimate rejection of Christ. **But it is more likely that this is temporary, merely intellectual "faith"** (cf. James 2:17) **that is not saving faith**, for these plants **[1] have no root** (see Mark 4:17), **[2] they bear no fruit**, and **[3] they do not persevere but last only for a while** (on perseverance, see John 6:40; Ro 8:29; 8:30; 2 Ti 2:11-13; Jude 1:21). (**Ed**: Notice the ESV note lists 3 very specific markers **[1-3]** strongly supporting this soil is not an example of a true believer. If there were no markers of true belief, anyone could say they believe and live the rest of their life like the devil, fully convinced when they died, they would wake up in heaven. This type of "gospel" disparages the cost paid by Jesus' precious blood to procure a salvation that was powerful enough and efficacious enough to take a man out of darkness and transfer them to the Kingdom of light [Col 1:13-14, Acts 26:18]. To think that such a person would or could go back permanently into the kingdom of darkness and still be a citizen of the kingdom of light is totally illogical!)

**NIV Study Bible** - They believe for a while. This kind of belief is superficial and does not save. It is similar to what James calls "dead" (Jas 2:17,26) or "useless" faith (Jas 2:20)

**Temporary** (passing)([4340](#))([proskairos](#) from **pros** = for, toward + **kairos** = an opportune time) means literally for a season and just like a season comes and goes, so **proskairos** conveys that sense (passing). The idea is



that something lasts for only for a short or limited time (= temporary, transient). **Proskairos** is essentially the diametric opposite of eternal or everlasting. Mt 13:21 and Mk 4:17 describe the stony heart hearers as only temporary. The other two (of the 4) NT uses describe "things which are seen are **temporal**, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Cor 4:18+). The writer of Hebrews describes Moses "choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin." (Heb 11:25+). Notice the effect of ill-treatment on the faith of Moses? He endure or persevered, which is always a mark of genuine, saving faith.

**None will get to heaven without being tried on the road.**

**There is not a fragment of gold in all God's temple but what has passed through the fire.**

**Untried faith is no faith, untried grace is no grace.**

- C H Spurgeon

**Then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word**- Notice the word is not "if" but "**when**" because affliction will come! Jesus explains that these individual were suffering affliction and persecution because they had begun to believe **the Word** of God. Sometimes this suffering is verbal and other times (especially in countries closed to the Gospel) it is physical. The effect of either was to drive this person away from the Gospel.

**Affliction** (2347)(**thlipsis** from **thlibo** = to crush, press together, squash, hem in, compress, squeeze in turn derived from **thláo** = to break) originally expressed sheer, physical pressure on a man. **Thlipsis** is a strong term which does not refer to minor inconveniences, but to real hardships. Medically **thlipsis** was used of the pulse (pressure). It is a pressing together olives in a press in order to extract the oil and of squeezing grapes to extract the juice. It conveys the idea of being squeezed or placed under pressure or crushed beneath a weight. When, according to the ancient law of England, those who willfully refused to plead guilty, had heavy weights placed on their breasts, and were pressed and crushed to death, this was literally **thlipsis**. **Thlipsis** thus refers not to mild discomfort but to great difficulty. Figuratively**thlipsis** pictures one being "crushed" by intense pressure, difficult circumstances, suffering or trouble pressing upon them from without.

**Persecution** (1375)(**diogmos** from **dioko** = to chase, to pursue) literally refers to a chase or pursuit and figuratively means to put to flight or to pursue with repeated acts of enmity. To persecute is to harass in a manner designed to injure, vex, grieve, or afflict.

## QUICKLY GREEN QUICKLY GONE!

**Immediately they fall away** - Here today and gone tomorrow! These stony heart hearers are "**scandalized**" by the **Word**. In English word **scandalized** means struck with disgust or revulsion. They turn away quickly from the Word. It is notable that fall away is in the **present tense** indicating this was their continual state. These are not believers who fell away for a while, but those who continued to fall away.

**Daniel Akin** - Eager listeners, who make a quick profession of faith, pray a prayer, lift a hand, say a quick yes without considering all that it means. • Great start but no finish. Lightly come/lightly go. Superficial.

**Immediately** (2117) (**euthus**) (Mk 4:5, Mk 4:15, 16, 17, Mk 4:29).

**Fall away** (stumbles; takes offense) (4624)(**skandalizo** from **skandalon**= a trap = put a snare ; Eng = scandalize) means to put a snare or stumbling block in the way, and so causing to stumble or to take offense. They are in a sense "**scandalized**" by the Word, where the English word scandalized means struck with disgust or revulsion.

**Adrian Rogers** says of this soil "what you have is a false profession. And it is all emotionalism. Oh, there are these people. You can give an invitation and get people to get emotional and to give their heart to Jesus, but they don't really mean business with God. There is no root. It is all emotion. Now I'm not against emotion. Praise God for emotion. But, friend, you're not saved by emotion. Sometimes people think that in order to be saved you have to shout or cry. You may do both, but you don't have to do either. The Bible doesn't mention feelings. You're not saved by feelings. As a matter of fact, as far as I can find, the word feeling is only used twice in the entire New Testament. Over and over again, the Bible speaks of faith, trust, and commitment—of a life that is rooted in Jesus Christ. Now let me tell you something, friend, about these emotional, candy-legged soldiers. They say, "Yes, I'm going for Christ." They'll join anything if you give them a badge and a button. But listen. As soon as persecution and affliction comes, they fall away. There are some people who would give up membership in this church before they would give up getting a new car. There are some people, if it gets tough and if it gets tight, they will fall away. They won't lose their salvation. They never had it. They are about a half-inch deep. Listen. Salvation is the deepest work of God. Your emotions are the shallowest part of your life. God doesn't do His

deepest work in the shallowest part. I'm not against emotions, but you've got to be more than just a half-inch deep. Do you mean business with God? (Be Careful How You Hear).

**Ray Stedman** says these "are the impulsive hearts. The seed falls upon them and they immediately respond with joy. The seed takes root and grows up quickly. The trouble is, they respond like this to everything -- food fads, new books, political leaders, whatever popular movement happens to be abroad at the time. As a result, their lives are so shallow that the seed of the life-giving Word cannot take deep root and change them. Consequently, the life which apparently is there withers away and dies. Jesus says that this kind of life is shallow; it cannot stand the heat. When persecution and tribulation come, immediately it is withered. They turn away and lose interest, and cannot abide." ([Seed Thoughts](#))

**Steven Cole on the seed in rocky soil**- This represents the person who impulsively welcomes the gospel without counting the cost. Perhaps he heard that following Jesus would magically solve all his problems and that Jesus offers an abundant life, so he emotionally responds. At first, he seems to be zealous for the Lord. He seems to make rapid progress in the faith. But then, trials hit. Because his Christian experience was based more on emotion than on truth, he has no deep roots into the Word. He falls away. It's not that he lost his salvation; it's that he never truly was saved in the first place. When we share the gospel, we need to be careful not to paint too rosy a picture. Yes, God freely forgives all a person's sins the moment he trusts in Christ. Yes, God's Word is sufficient for all the problems we face in this life. But, no, God usually does not solve our problems instantly or easily. The Christian life is a fight of faith, and while we are assured of final victory, the battle can get pretty tough in the meanwhile. We don't do people a favor to gloss over the reality of what it means to follow Jesus. ([Luke 8:4-15 Superficial and Genuine Believers](#))

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The discerning reader needs to be aware of a teaching among some evangelicals that says only the first soil represents lost souls and the other three represent saved souls, a teaching with which I strongly disagree, but present so that you are not caught off guard. I have been shocked at how many people have gotten upset when I taught that the first 3 soils are lost souls. Here is a short critique from **Middletown Bible Church** regarding the interpretation that only one soil is lost which is what is taught by **Zane Hodges** (former professor at Dallas Theological Seminary) and **Joseph Dillow**. They teach that...

The **carnal, barren believer** is represented by the **rocky** ground and the **thorny** ground. The rocky ground represents a saved person who believes at first but then **falls away from the faith**. The thorny ground represents a saved but carnal person who is given over to the things of the world and thus is **fruitless**.

According to this understanding of the parable the only ground which represents the heart of an unsaved person is the hard ground by the way side (Luke 8:12). The other three categories, according to Hodges and Dillow, all refer to saved people. Hodges explains his position on this parable in the book [The Hungry Inherit](#) and Dillow explains this parable in [The Reign of the Servant Kings](#) on pages 396-400.

This interpretation contradicts our Lord's clear teaching in Matthew 7:16-20 where we are told that **"every good tree brings forth good fruit."** Since there is no good fruit connected with the rocky soil and the thorny soil, how can there be a good tree? The root is corrupt!

It is correct to understand all of the saved as represented by the "good ground." Matthew 13:23 teaches two important principles: 1) All those who are truly saved are fruitful at least to some extent (see Matt. 3:8-10; 7:16-20); 2) Some believers are much more fruitful than others. There is a big difference between 30 baskets of apples and 100 baskets of apples! ([The Parable of the Sower](#))

(In a separate note) [The Hungry Inherit](#) is the title of one of Zane Hodges' earlier books. In this book Hodges sets forth the position that in Jesus' parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:3-9), all of the soils except the first soil represent saved individuals. **This view is quite consistent with Hodge's teaching that a person can have eternal life but not evidence it in any way.** (ED: READ THAT LAST SENTENCE AGAIN!) Hodges thus teaches that a saved person can be totally worldly (thorny ground) and a saved person may believe only for a time, have no root, and then fall away (stony ground). In either case, there is no fruit. It is interesting to contrast Hodges' position with that of the Free Will Baptists. The Free Will Baptist position is that a true believer may depart from the faith and be lost forever. Hodges position is that a true believer may depart from the faith and be saved forever. **The teaching of the Word of God is that a true believer's faith will not fail because of the intercessory ministry of Christ** (Luke 22:31-32+; John 17) **and the keeping power of God** (1 Pet. 1:5+). God's Word teaches that a true believer may have a very serious lapse of faith (as Peter did) but not a total departure from the Lord, because "we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:39+). (ED: **ILLUSTRATION**) **Every believer is on the ship of faith, as it were. We may fall down on the deck and we may fall very hard, but we will never fall overboard.** Our faith will never fail in a final way because we have the blessed intercessory ministry of our Saviour on our behalf, as did Peter (Luke 22:31-32+). The Lord prays for us, as He did for Peter, that our faith

will not fail! ([The Hungry Inherit](#)) (Addendum - Hodges and Dillow teach that a "Spiritual Believer" will be the "Heir of the Kingdom" (this person's salvation is accompanied by works) and the "Carnal Believer" is a saved person who DOES NOT inherit the Kingdom (this person is said to be saved but his life is devoid of good works. In contrast James 2:17, 26+ says "This 'faith' is called a 'dead faith.'" see [The Hungry Inherit](#))

The upshot is **Be a Berean** (Acts 17:11+) and be very discerning when reading (any) commentary (including the one you are reading). Always check the comments of the commentary with the Scripture under prayerful tutelage by your Teacher, the Holy Spirit!

#### Related Resources:

- [What is a carnal Christian?](#)  
**EXCERPT** - The key thing to understand is that while a Christian can be, for a time, carnal, a true Christian will not remain carnal for a lifetime. Some have abused the idea of a "carnal Christian" by saying that it is possible for people to come to faith in Christ and then proceed to live the rest of their lives in a completely carnal manner, with no evidence of being born again or a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17+). **Such a concept is completely unbiblical.** James 2+ makes it abundantly clear that genuine faith will always result in good works. Ephesians 2:8-10+ declares that while we are saved by grace alone through faith alone, that salvation will result in works. Can a Christian, in a time of failure and/or rebellion, appear to be carnal? Yes. Will a true Christian remain carnal? No.
- [What is easy believism?](#)
- [What is free grace? What is Free Grace Theology?](#)
- [How 'Free Grace' Theology Diminishes the Gospel](#)
- [What is cheap grace?](#)
- [How can believers be in the world, but not of the world?](#)
- [Are Christians sinners, saints, or both?](#)
- [Do we sin daily? Is it possible to go an entire day without sinning?](#)
- [Can a Christian lose salvation?](#)
- [Does Hebrews 6:4-6 mean we can lose our salvation?](#)
- [Does Matthew 7:21-23 mean that believers can lose salvation?](#)
- [Does Hebrews 10:26 mean that a believer can lose salvation?](#)
- 

**Mark 4:18 "And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word,**

NET Mark 4:18 Others are the ones sown among thorns: They are those who hear the word,

GNT Mark 4:18 καὶ ἄλλοι ἐσὶν ὅ ἐστὶς κνηθὰς σπειρῶμενοι· οὗτο ἐσὶν ὁ τὴν λόγον κοσάντες,

NLT Mark 4:18 The seed that fell among the thorns represents others who hear God's word,

KJV Mark 4:18 And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,

ESV Mark 4:18 And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word,

NIV Mark 4:18 Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word;

ASV Mark 4:18 And others are they that are sown among the thorns; these are they that have heard the word,

CSB Mark 4:18 Others are sown among thorns; these are the ones who hear the word,

NKJ Mark 4:18 "Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word,

NRS Mark 4:18 And others are those sown among the thorns: these are the ones who hear the word,

YLT Mark 4:18 'And these are they who toward the thorns are sown: these are they who are hearing the word,

NAB Mark 4:18 Those sown among thorns are another sort. They are the people who hear the word,

NJB Mark 4:18 Then there are others who are sown in thorns. These have heard the word,

GWN Mark 4:18 Other people are like seeds planted among thornbushes. They hear the word,

BBE Mark 4:18 And others are those planted among the thorns; these are they who have given ear to the

word,

- Mk 4:7 Jer 4:3 Mt 13:22 Lu 8:14
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Parallel Passages:

Matthew 13:22+ “ yet he has no *firm* root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.

Luke 8:14+ “Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no *firm* root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away.

## THORNY SOIL CROWDED HEART

The crowded heart might also be described as the divided heart or the distracted heart. In the first soil, the seed of the Word could not get in. In the second soil, the seed of the Word could not get down. Now we come to the third soil, not a hard heart, not a shallow heart, but a divided heart, where thorns were lurking and ready to pounce! So in this soil the seed of the Word gets in and gets down but there is no reception, no root and no room. There is a "rival crop."

#### Related Resources:

- [Give Me An Undivided Heart](#)
- [Integrity - A Whole Heart](#)

As **Adrian Rogers** says "this pictures the man who is trying to hold onto God with one hand and the world with the other hand. This is the person that is trying to grow the crop among the weeds. And there's the deceitfulness of riches and all of these things. Now there is nothing wrong to have riches. There is nothing wrong to be concerned about the things of this world—in a right way. But anything that you love more, fear more, and serve more than God is an idol in your life. We've already talked about that. And you can't hold onto God with one hand and this world with the other. You just can't do it. You cannot do it. (ED: READ Mt 6:24<sub>+</sub>) You've got to repent. And if you try to grow that crop among weeds, then the weeds are going to win. Now that doesn't mean that you have to live a perfect life in order to be saved, because none of us do. But it does mean: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3+) There is a divided heart, and "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." (James 1:8+)

**THOUGHT** - How do you remove the weeds? Did you see Dr Rogers' call to obey Lk 13:3? That's tantamount to "pulling up the weeds," getting rid of the weeds in your heart! Many today say you don't need to "pull the weeds" in order to be saved. They are "dead" wrong! Jesus says otherwise ""The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel." (Mk 1:15+).

**And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns- And others** refers to other souls and the particular type of soil that characterizes their hearts. The seed is the **Word of God** (Lk 8:11), the Gospel, which "is the **power** ([dunamis](#)) of God for salvation to everyone who believes." (Ro 1:16<sub>+</sub>). So even in this passage in Romans, the key variable is the response of the hearer (the soil).

**Daniel Akin** - Theirs is a partial commitment which is no commitment because they are listening to too many voices and have their eyes on too many things. This life is more important to them than the life to come. Stuff is more important to them than the Savior. There is no real surrender to Christ as Lord. They find pleasure in wealth more than in Jesus. They find pleasure in desires more than in Jesus. John 8:31 judges them, "So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples," This soil is easily distracted. ([Mark 4:1-20 Do You Have Ears That Hear?](#))

**Phillips** adds that "This time the soil was deep enough and fertile enough, but it was also full of thorns. Thorns are the very emblems of the curse (Gen. 3:17-18). They need no cultivation, they like the soil, they are plants of hardy growth, and they choke out the good seed. The Adamic nature produces an abundant, perennial crop of weeds, things that prevent the gospel from bearing fruit, even though it germinates in the heart and shows initial promise." (Ibid)

**Expositors** says that "it fixes attention on the third type of hearers as calling for special notice. They are such as, lacking the thoughtlessness of the first and the shallowness of the second class, and having some depth and earnestness, might be expected to be fruitful; a less common type and much more interesting."

**Thorns** ([173](#))(**akantha** from **ake** = a point, edge) describes a thorn, prickle. In classical Greek **akantha** stands

for the thornbush and then for all thorns, including any prickling or stinging needle associated with plants, animals, or fish. In a figurative sense it could refer to a “stinging” question. John writes “And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him.” In the famous use in Genesis God curses the land because of Adam's sin declaring “Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field.” How interesting that the same word associated with the curse in Genesis 3 is associated with the One Who became a curse for us, wearing a crown of thorns! Jesus wore a “crown of **thorns**” for believers who will one day cast their own crowns to the King of kings!

**Akantha** - 14x in 11v - Matt. 7:16; Matt. 13:7; Matt. 13:22; Matt. 27:29; Mk. 4:7; Mk. 4:18; Lk. 6:44; Lk. 8:7; Lk. 8:14; Jn. 19:2; Heb. 6:8.

**Gilbrant** - The Septuagint employs akantha with both the literal and figurative senses. In Genesis 3:18 the literal and figurative senses are combined: As a result of the curse, the ground will produce thorns and thistles. In other instances the term depicts the difficulties and affliction caused by unfaithfulness (Hosea 9:6) or it may connote enemies of the righteous. Surprisingly God chose to reveal himself to Moses in a thornbush, and He was called “he who lived in the thornbush” (Exodus 3:2-4, NIV translates simply “bush”; the Septuagint does not read akantha here). ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Uses in Septuagint (Lxx)** - Ge. 3:18; Exod. 22:6; Jdg. 8:7; Jdg. 8:16; 2 Sam. 23:6; Ps. 32:4; Ps. 58:9; Ps. 118:12; Prov. 15:19; Prov. 26:9; Eccl. 7:6; Cant. 2:2; Isa. 5:2; Isa. 5:4; Isa. 5:6; Isa. 7:23; Isa. 7:24; Isa. 7:25; Isa. 32:13; Isa. 33:12; Jer. 4:3; Jer. 12:13; Ezek. 28:24; Hos. 9:6; Hos. 10:8;

**These are the ones who have heard the word**- Again the Word is clearly heard and there is nothing said about how effective or charismatic the speaker of the Word was. The major variable is the soil of the the heart of the hearer.

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Excerpt from **My All in All** - Robert J Morgan - Mark 4:18-19 Today's New York Post has an article titled "Stress Mess in U.S." about a study by the American Psychological Association finding that 48 percent of Americans can't sleep at night because of stress. Seventy-five percent of Americans worry constantly about two things—money and work. Half of us are also stressed about paying our rent or mortgage. According to the report, stress and worry are taking a toll, leading us to fight with family members, drink, smoke, and gulp junk food like starving fools. It's leading to obesity, hypertension, heart disease, and cancer. In His parable of the sower, Jesus warned that too much stress can also damage us spiritually. When we're overwhelmed by all our tasks and desires, the stress strangles the Word in our hearts and hinders the crop. The biblical antidote is a simpler lifestyle, a deeper trust, and a daily walk with Christ. As the psalmist said, "As pressure and stress bear down on me, I find joy in Your commands" (Ps. 119:143 NLT). For starters, here's an old prayer that may help:

Drop Thy still dews of quietness,  
Till all our strivings cease;  
Take from our souls the strain and stress,  
And let our ordered lives confess  
The beauty of Thy peace.  
—John Greenleaf Whittier, 1872

**Mark 4:19 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.**

NET Mark 4:19 but worldly cares, the seductiveness of wealth, and the desire for other things come in and choke the word, and it produces nothing.

GNT Mark 4:19 κα α μ ριμναι το α νος κα π τη το πλο του κα α περ τ λοιπ πιθυμ αι ε σπορευ μεναι συμπν γουσι τ ν λ γον κα καρπος γ νεται.

NLT Mark 4:19 but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life, the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things, so no fruit is produced.

KJV Mark 4:19 And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

ESV Mark 4:19 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.

NIV Mark 4:19 but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.

ASV Mark 4:19 and the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

CSB Mark 4:19 but the worries of this age, the seduction of wealth, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

NKJ Mark 4:19 "and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

NRS Mark 4:19 but the cares of the world, and the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things come in and choke the word, and it yields nothing.

YLT Mark 4:19 and the anxieties of this age, and the deceitfulness of the riches, and the desires concerning the other things, entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

NAB Mark 4:19 but worldly anxiety, the lure of riches, and the craving for other things intrude and choke the word, and it bears no fruit.

NJB Mark 4:19 but the worries of the world, the lure of riches and all the other passions come in to choke the word, and so it produces nothing.

GWN Mark 4:19 but the worries of life, the deceitful pleasures of riches, and the desires for other things take over. They choke the word so that it can't produce anything.

BBE Mark 4:19 And the cares of this life, and the deceits of wealth, and the desire for other things coming in, put a stop to the growth of the word, and it gives no fruit.

- **the worries of the world** - Lu 10:41 12:17-21,29,30 14:18-20 21:34 Php 4:6 2Ti 4:10
- **the worries of the world** - Pr 23:5 Ec 4:8 5:10-16 1Ti 6:9,10,17
- **the desires for other things** - 1Pe 4:2,3 1Jn 2:15-17
- **Unfruitful**- Isa 5:2,4 Mt 3:10 Joh 15:2 Heb 6:7,8 2Pe 1:8 Jude 1:12
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Parallel Passages:

Matthew 13:22+ " yet he has no *firm* root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.

Luke 8:14+ "Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no *firm* root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away.

### THREE "WEEDS" THAT NEED TO BE PULLED!

**But the worries of the world** - **Worries** by their very nature (and the Greek word) divide one in different directions. The **worries of the world** draw this person's heart away from the Word of the Gospel. Jesus gave a clear warning in Mt 6:24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." **World** in this context refers "the course of life as it is lived currently on this earth by those who do not know God. Our Lord is referring to the worries of the people of this age who live apart from God." (Wuest)

**Phillips on worries of the world** - A thousand cares exist to occupy the mind of the poor. Worry is a daily ingredient of their lives. The Devil uses worry to focus our attention on this world. The gospel, which focuses attention on the next world, is often crowded out, despite its "exceeding great and precious promises," (2 Pe 1:4+) by preoccupation with the pressures of life. (Ibid)

**Worries** (anxieties) (3308)([merimna](#) from **merizo** = to divide or draw different directions - which is exactly what **anxiety** does to most of us!) refers to a **care** (the sole way it is translated in the KJV) or concern and so to care for someone or something. It is often used in a negative sense and thus is translated as **worry**. From the origin, one can see that **merimna** describes the state of "being pulled apart." Thus when circumstances are difficult, it is easy to let oneself be dominated by anxiety and worry.

Some cross references on **worries** - Mt 6:25, Mt 6:31, Lk 12:29, Lk 21:34, Php 4:6, 1 Pe 5:7, Ps 39:6, Ps

The Etymology of **worry** is fascinating (especially the idea of "to strangle!") and very relevant to the effect worry exerts on the Word - Middle English *wirien* (c. 1300), "to slay, kill or injure by biting and shaking the throat" (as a dog or wolf does), from Old English *wyrgan* "**to strangle**," from Proto-Germanic *\*wurgjan* (source also of Middle Dutch *worghen*, Dutch *worgen*, Old High German *wurgen*, German *würgen* "to strangle," The "strangle" sense was obsolete in English after c. 1600; the figurative meaning "to annoy, bother, vex" is by c. 1400. Meaning "to cause mental distress or trouble" is attested from 1822; intransitive sense of "to feel anxiety or mental trouble" is attested by 1860. Related: Worried; worrier; worrying.

**World** (age)(165) (**aion**) generally means an extended period of time and has various meanings depending on the context. In the present context **aion** refers to the "present evil age" (Gal 1:4+), to "the whole **world** (which) lies in the power of the evil one (SATAN)" (1Jn 5:19+), who is "the god of this **world** (aion)" (2Cor 4:4+).

Gilbrant paraphrases Trench's description of the moral/ethical meaning of **aion** "All of this—the fleeting mass of thoughts, the opinions, maxims, speculations, hope, impulses, aims, aspirations, which always circulate in the world—is included in the meaning of the term. It might be impossible to grasp it or define it accurately, but it is something which **forms a very real and effective power. It is the moral or amoral atmosphere which we inhale each moment of our life in order to inevitably exhale it again.** All this is included in **aiōn** ([See Synonyms of the New Testament](#)). If one looks at the texts of the New Testament where **aiōn** occurs in this way, one will meet the characteristic features of the world or age represented by **aiōn**. Note that this depicts a **world** which is driven forward by the prince of the powers of the air (Ephesians 2:2+), the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4+); and spiritual forces are called the powers of this dark world (Ephesians 6:12+; cf. 1 Corinthians 2:6,8; and see 2 Peter 2:17+; Jude 1:13+). The present age cherishes its wise men (1 Corinthians 1:20) and its seducing wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:6). Many are blinded by this wisdom so they choose it rather than "the foolishness of preaching" (1 Corinthians 1:21). The anxieties accompanying this age, coupled with the seductive power of riches, can strangle a spiritual life (Matthew 13:22+; Mark 4:19+; 1 Timothy 6:17). The people of God can be seduced by this false splendor so they are attracted by the present world (2 Timothy 4:10+). But those belonging to the Lord must not be conformed to this world (Romans 12:2+). To stand in opposition to the world will always cost something because those who want to live godly will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12+). Believers have been delivered from this present age, with its enticements and offsetting afflictions, through Christ's giving of himself in death (Galatians 1:4+).

**And the deceitfulness of riches** - The seduction which comes from the temptress named "Wealth!" What does **wealth** do? It deceives. Mark this down as an axiomatic truth. Be careful when you begin to seek to possess wealth (aka idolatry!), for it won't be long before wealth possesses you! And it is a harsh "**taskmaster**." And remember that when a person is deceived, by definition they do not even know they are deceived! Watch out for wealth! Solomon was right that "When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For **wealth** certainly makes itself wings, like an eagle that flies toward the heavens." (Pr 23:5, cf Pr 27:24, Pr 11:28, James 5:1-2+, Eccl 5:13, the antidote = Mt 6:19+) **Choke** is in the [present](#) tense indicating the choking effect of **worry** and **wealth** is continual.

**Phillips** - Wealth, like worry, focuses attention on this world. This time the weed that chokes the Word is not poverty but plenty. Wealthy people tend to be independent and self-sufficient. Money insulates them from most of the harsh realities of life, so they do not feel the need for the gospel. They can take care of themselves. The gospel, with its call for sacrifice and hearty generosity, does not appeal to them-as the story of the rich young ruler makes plain (10:17-24).

**John Broadus** - The **deceitfulness of riches** is a stronger expression than simply deceitful riches; it presents deceitfulness not merely as a quality of riches, but as here the prominent thought; comp. 'the uncertainty of riches' (1 Ti 6:17), 'newness of life' (Ro 6:14); also Heb. 3:13; 2 Th 2:10. **Riches** deceive men in many ways: as to the means of acquiring them, making things look honest that are not so; as to the reasons why we desire them, and the objects for which we intend to use them, etc. Some *professed* Christians imagine that they are so absorbed in the pursuit of gain, and so reluctant to give much at present, simply from a desire to be able to do great things hereafter; when the true reason is that they love wealth. And we must remember that riches often as grievously deceive and distract those who vainly seek, as those who obtain them. "They that desire to be rich" (1 Tim. 6:9+), may get the evil consequences without getting the wealth. Luke 8:14+ adds a third point, "**and pleasures of this life**."

**Deceitfulness** (539)([apate](#) from [apatao](#) = cheat, delude, deceive, beguile) describes that which gives a false impression, whether by appearance, statement or influence. It is spoken of anything which is **seducing** (a leading astray by persuasion or false promises), in this case wealth. **Apate** describes that which causes someone to have misleading or erroneous views concerning the truth.

**Riches** (wealth) (4149)([ploutos](#) from **pletho** = to fill) properly denotes abundance, plenitude, and literally is used to refer to material wealth or prosperity (abundance of earthly, temporal goods) which is the meaning in the parable of the seed and the soils (Mt 13:22, Mk 4:19, Lk 8:14 = Material riches are deceitful and choke out reception of the Word of God. Be careful all you wealthy readers! Contrast spiritual riches - Ep 3:8) Indeed, think of the people who know whose whole lives glow with the glory of God for they are rich in spiritual possessions, albeit often poor in material possessions!

Some cross references on **riches** - Mk 4:19, 1 Ti 6:9, Jas 5:2, Mt 19:23, 1 T 6:7, Dt 8:13-14, Job 20:28, Ps 49:10, Pr 23:5, Eccl 2:18, Jer 17:11

**And the desires for other things**- "Covet! Covet! Covet!" (Ro 7:8<sup>+</sup>, cf Eph 2:3<sup>+</sup>) screams our greedy flesh ever desiring instant gratification! **Desires** like wealth are deceitful Paul describing them as something that believers must lay aside lest they be corrupted by "the lusts of deceit." (Eph 4:22<sup>+</sup>)

**Phillips** - Most people have a lengthy "want" list. As soon as they acquire this, they want that. Solomon said that the horse leech had two daughters. These daughters represented insatiable appetite and unappeasable lust. They had one constant and continuous cry: "Give! Give!" The Lord calls this "the lusts for other things," all sorts of things, from lewd things to legitimate things. All three hindrances to the development of the Word in a human heart are aspects of worldliness, of whatever focuses our attention on this world rather than on the world to come. (Exploring Acts)

**Desires** (1939)([epithumia](#) from **epi** = at, toward {the preposition "epi-" in the compound is directive conveying the picture of "having one's passion toward"} + **thumos** = passion. The root verb **epithumeo** = set heart upon) is a neutral term denoting the presence of strong desires or impulses, longings or passionate craving (whether it is good or evil is determined by the [context](#)) directed toward an object.

**Concern for spiritual things is crowded out by material things.**

**Enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful**- Enter in is in the [present tense](#) picturing these worldly "visitors" as continually knocking at the door of this person's heart until they finally fling open the door and all manner of worldly wise visitors come in leaving no room for the Word of God and resulting in fruitlessness.

**A fruitless Christian is an [oxymoron](#)!**

-- [Daniel Akin](#)

**Choke** (4846)([sumpnigo](#) from **sun** = with + **pnigo** = to choke, strangle, "seizing by the throat") means to crowd together and thus to choke or suffocate (Mt 13:22, Mk 4:7, 19, Lk 8:14). BDAG has "to check the growth or well-being of someth. by pressure." Figuratively it means to crowd around, to press upon, almost to crush ("crowds were pressing against Him" = Lk 8:42, 12:1). The [present](#) tense indicates the choking effect was continual. **Friberg** on **sumpnigo** - literally, of weeds too thickly surrounding plants choke, cause to die; metaphorically, of things causing a message to be ineffective in a life crowd out, i.e. overwhelm, take over (Mk 4:19); exaggerated for effect, of a thronging crowd suffocate, almost crush, crowd in around (Lk 8:42) (Analytical Lexicon) **Sumpnigo** - 5x in 5v - Mt. 13:22; Mk. 4:7; Mk. 4:19; Lk. 8:14; Lk. 8:42. Not found in the Septuagint.

**Unfruitful** (175)([akarpos](#) from **a** = without + **karpos** = fruit, produce) means barren, without fruit or unprofitable. **Akarpos** pictures a tree without fruit under the most favorable of circumstances. **Akarpos** -7x in 7v - Mt 13:22; Mk 4:19; 1Cor 14:14; Ep 5:11<sup>+</sup> = "the unfruitful deeds of darkness" ; Titus 3:14; 2 Pet 1:8<sup>+</sup> = "if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."; Jude 1:12

John 15:4-6 sums up this soil by focusing on fruit or lack of fruit...

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear **fruit** of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you (BEAR FRUIT) unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much **fruit**, for apart from Me you can do nothing. 6 "If anyone does not abide in Me (AND YOU CAN TELL BY NO FRUIT!), he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned."

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**Mark 4:19 Cares;... Riches;... Lusts. Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily**

There is enough nutriment in the land for the thorns alone or for the wheat alone, but not for both; and so there is a brief struggle, for mastery, in which the sturdy weed prevails against the slender wheat, and chokes it. Nourishment which should go to its support is



drained away from it; and though it does not actually expire, it leads a struggling existence, and becomes unfruitful. What are these weeds?

**For the poor man — Cares.** — The Greek word for care is Division. Cares divide our heart, and distract it in many different directions. What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed? How shall we meet our rent and other expenses? It is almost impossible to settle to our prayer, or Bible study, or Christian work, or to the culture of the soul-life, while questions like these intrude. What shall the poor man do to prevent the word becoming unfruitful? He must take his cares to his Father, and by one act deposit them in his safe keeping. And thereafter, as a care tries to break in on the peace of his heart, he must treat it as a positive temptation, handing it over to God.

**For the prosperous man — riches.** — They will distract as much as anxiety does. How much they amount to! Oh, the endless figurings in the brain—how to keep, or invest, or increase. The case for him is to look on all he has as a stewardship for God, deducting only a moderate percentage for himself.

**For us all — lusts.** — Strong and inordinate desires for what may be right in itself, but which we follow with extravagant zest. What is right in itself may become wrong if we put it in God's place, and allow it to monopolize us unduly. Oh, Great Husbandman, root up the thorns by thy Holy Spirit!

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### Prepared Soil

The farmer may be shoveling snow or enjoying the warmth of a winter fire right now, but he's thinking ahead to spring planting. Already he's anticipating those days when he turns over the soil. He'll pull out rocks that have risen with the frost, spread the right fertilizers, and get the earth ready for the seed. He knows that the harder he prepares in the spring, the better his harvest will be.

Jesus used that kind of word picture in the parable of the sower. The seed is the Word of God, and the soil is our hearts. The "noble and good heart" (Lk. 8:15) receives the Word, retains it, and produces fruit. **How about our hearts?** Are they prepared to receive the seed of God's Word? Or are there hindrances that keep it from growing and bearing fruit? Jesus identified three kinds of thorns that spring up and choke out the seed—"the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things" (Mk. 4:19).

If you've grown cold toward God's Word, if it's not firmly established in your life and producing fruit, it may be that you're too concerned about this world with its riches and distractions. Tear out those thorns! How much fruit you'll harvest depends on how well you prepare the soil. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

It may not be some heinous deed  
That chills our heart and chokes the seed;  
It's often just a trifling toy  
That grabs our eye and steals our joy.  
—Gustafson

To bear good fruit, clear out the weeds of sin.

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### Weed Control

The cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things . . . choke the Word. —Mark 4:19

Today's Scripture: Mark 4:13-20

The Parrotfeather is an attractive aquatic plant that looks like a forest of small fir trees growing on top of the water. In the springtime it produces a blanket of small, white flowers. But it's a noxious weed. It forms a dense mat of vegetation that covers the surface of lakes and ponds, crowding out native plants and destroying fish and wildlife habitat.

Recently I was hiking by a small lake in Washington State that was choked with Parrotfeather plants. It occurred to me that, like that weed, "the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful," as Jesus taught in Mark 4:13-20.

Jesus was talking about how unbelievers receive the gospel, but His words can apply to us as well. Sometimes when we read God's Word, our minds are taken up with troubles, worries, and fears. The pressure of things to be done today and concerns about tomorrow's decisions are "weeds" that can choke the Word and make it unprofitable.

To control the weeds, we must ask God to quiet our hearts so we can pay attention to Him (Psalm 46:10). When we turn our worries

over to God, we'll be free to enjoy His presence and hear what He has to say. By: David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The weeds will take over and choke out good fruit;  
But you can control them—just follow this plan:  
Make sure that the seed of God's Word has deep root,  
And pull out the weeds just as soon as you can.  
—Hess

To uproot the weeds of anxious care, get down on your knees.

**Mark 4:20 “And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.”**

NET Mark 4:20 But these are the ones sown on good soil: They hear the word and receive it and bear fruit, one thirty times as much, one sixty, and one a hundred."

GNT Mark 4:20 κα κε νο ε σιν ο π τ ν γ υ τ ν κα λ ν σ πα ρ ν τ ε ς, ο τ ι ν ε ς κ ο ο υ σ ι ν τ ν λ γ ο ν κ α π α ρ α ὀ χ ο ν τ α ι κ α κ α ρ π ο φ ο ρ ο σ ι ν ν τ ρ ι κ ο ν τ α κ α ν ξ κ ο ν τ α κ α ν κ α τ ν.

NLT Mark 4:20 And the seed that fell on good soil represents those who hear and accept God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!"

KJV Mark 4:20 And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

ESV Mark 4:20 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."

NIV Mark 4:20 Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop--thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown."

ASV Mark 4:20 And those are they that were sown upon the good ground; such as hear the word, and accept it, and bear fruit, thirtyfold, and sixtyfold, and a hundredfold.

CSB Mark 4:20 But the ones sown on good ground are those who hear the word, welcome it, and produce a crop: 30, 60, and 100 times what was sown."

NKJ Mark 4:20 "But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."

NRS Mark 4:20 And these are the ones sown on the good soil: they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold."

YLT Mark 4:20 'And these are they who on the good ground have been sown: who do hear the word, and receive, and do bear fruit, one thirty-fold, and one sixty, and one an hundred.'

NAB Mark 4:20 But those sown on rich soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit thirty and sixty and a hundredfold."

NJB Mark 4:20 And there are those who have been sown in rich soil; they hear the word and accept it and yield a harvest, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.'

GWN Mark 4:20 Others are like seeds planted on good ground. They hear the word, accept it, and produce crops--thirty, sixty, or one hundred times as much as was planted."

BBE Mark 4:20 And these are they who were planted on the good earth; such as give ear to the word, and take it into their hearts, and give fruit, thirty and sixty and a hundred times as much.

- **which** - Mk 4:8 Mt 13:23 Lu 8:15 Joh 15:4,5 Ro 7:4 Ga 5:22,23 Php 1:11 Col 1:10 1Th 4:1 2Pe 1:8
- **a hundred** - Ge 26:12
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Parallel Passages:**

Matthew 13:23+ "And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."

Luke 8:15+ "But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.

## GOOD SOIL BEARS A BOUNTIFUL HARVEST

**And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil-** Adrian Rogers reviews the soils "In the first place, there was no reception of the seed. In the second place, there was no root for the seed. In the third place, there was no room for the seed. But in the fourth place, there was no resistance to the seed. This is the good soil." (Ibid)

**Good (soil)** (2570)([kalos](#)) describes that which is inherently excellent or intrinsically good, providing some special or superior benefit. In the parallel passage in Luke 8:15, the **soil** is synonymous with the **heart** and Jesus says both are [kalos](#).

**And they hear the word and accept it -** **Accept** is [paradechomai](#) in the [present tense](#) indicating they continually **accept** the Word deliberately, willingly, favorably, readily. **Accept** is in the reflexive [middle voice](#) indicating they take the **Word** to themselves [personalizing](#) the Word of the Gospel. In essence this person "[Puts out the welcome mat](#)" for the Gospel. **Matthew** adds "this is the man who hears the word and **understands** it." (Mt 13:23+). The word **understands** is [suniem](#) in the [present tense](#) (continually understands) and literally means to bring together. Jesus uses it figuratively meaning this man is able to "[piece together](#)" the puzzle of the Gospel (such as [1] you are a sinner, [2] you need a Savior, [3] you must repent and receive/believe Jesus. See [Romans Road to Salvation](#)). **Luke** adds that they "have heard the word in an honest and good heart and hold it fast." **Hold fast** is [katecho](#) in the [present tense](#) and [active voice](#) (volitional choice, decision of our will) signifying that holding fast to the truth of the Gospel is to be the continual choice of one's will! Notice also that one's continually holding fast to the Word of the Gospel is evidence that God's Spirit is continually holding onto us. This "dual dynamic" emphasizes the mysterious juxtaposition of divine sovereignty and human responsibility, God's part, our part! We continually choose to **hold fast** to the Gospel because the Spirit continually enables us to make the choice to **hold fast** (see Php 2:13NLT+). Combining the three synoptic accounts, we learn that the **good soil** hears the good **word** of the Gospel, gladly **accepts** it and fully **understands** it.

**Accept** (3858)([paradechomai](#) from **para** = from, beside, near + [dechomai](#) = accept deliberately and readily) means literally to receive or accept near or beside and then to accept deliberately, willingly, favorably and readily. In the present context it means to come to believe the Word, the Gospel, to be true and to respond accordingly.

**And bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold -** Luke adds that these "**bear fruit with perseverance.**" Thus **perseverance** is the condition in which we are enabled by the Holy Spirit to **bear fruit**, this fruit bearing serving to prove that we are genuine saints! Stated another way, a *saint* without fruit *ain't*! That is to say, a person who professes to be a saint, but never bears fruit "ain't a saint," bad grammar, but accurate theology!

**THOUGHT** - Those figures represent yields of 3,000, 6,000, and 10,000 percent! Usually the yields were less than eightfold, and a crop that produced tenfold would have been extraordinary. But here God speaks of supernatural fruit not natural fruit. This should get us excited, for this fruit is not necessarily harvested on this earth, but it will be harvested in Heaven and it will remain or endure eternally (cf Jn 15:16)! Mark it down beloved, when we sow the Gospel, it goes forth empowered by the Spirit of God and the results are supernatural, even "far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power (THE SPIRIT) that (WHO) works within us." (Eph 3:20+). What is the upshot? Sow the Gospel seed today while it is still called today, "night is coming when no one can work." (Jn 9:4) [Redeem the Time](#) for eternity, for the glory of the Lord!

**Bear fruit** (2592)([karpophoreo](#) from [karpos](#) = fruit, produce + [phero](#) = bear, bring) literally means to bring forth fruit, to be fertile, productive. It is used figuratively to refer to bringing forth deeds or works (fruit). Also in synoptic accounts of parable of the soils - Mt 13:23, Lk 8:15. Used in the a parable found only in Mark - Mk 4:28.

**MacArthur** - Though believers are not saved by doing **good works** (Eph. 2:8-9+), those who are truly saved will give evidence of their new life in Christ through the fruit of obedience (Eph. 2:10+; cf. Matt. 7:16-20+; 2 Cor. 5:17+).

**John the Baptist** called for fruit bearing to validate the authenticity of one's repentance...

"Therefore **bear fruit** ([aorist imperative](#) only possible as one depends on [the Holy Spirit](#) - which in fact is evidence that one has the Spirit indwelling!) in keeping with repentance." (Mt 3:8+)

Abundant fruit bearing is God's will for every believer for **Jesus** declared

"My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. (Jn 15:8)

**David Thompson** - Some produced a yield of 30 times, some 60 times and some 100 times. Naturally, 100 times yield would be the ideal. But all these numbers are good. Now Palestinian interpreters say that a typical yield in Palestine would be fivefold or tenfold at most, so the numbers described here are remarkable. Herodotus, the Greek historian who lived about 450 B.C., claimed that some of the soil was so rich in Palestine that it had a 700 fold return. He was probably exaggerating a bit, but Jesus uses the top number of 100 times return. ([Sermon](#))

**Alan Carr** asks "So, what kind of fruit does good soil produce?"

- Good works – Col. 1:10<sup>±</sup>, cf Col 1:6<sup>±</sup>
- Holiness and righteousness – Ro 6:22<sup>±</sup>; Phil. 1:11<sup>±</sup>
- Genuine spirituality – Gal. 5:22-23+
- A burden for souls – Ro 1:13<sup>±</sup>
- Praise and thanksgiving – Heb. 13:15<sup>±</sup>
- Sharing material goods – Ro 15:27-28<sup>±</sup> ([Mark 4:1-20 The Parable Of The Soils](#))

**Bear fruit with perseverance** also implies that bearing genuine spiritual fruit will take **perseverance**. This is especially true when one considers the pressures that Jesus had just described as affected the integrity of the soils/hearts, so not only does bearing fruit take time, it also necessitates (Holy Spirit enabled) steadfast endurance to resist the distracting, destructive pressures Jesus described!

**Bear fruit** ([karpophoreo](#)) is in the [present tense](#) and thus Jesus is teaching that true believers will bring forth fruit ("[good works](#)") continually ([present tense](#)) in all manner of activity undertaken for the glory of the Father (cf Mt 5:16<sup>±</sup>, Jn 15:8), in the Name of the Son and in the energizing/enabling power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, upon Whom the believer is entirely dependent. Indeed, [good works](#) could be aptly termed "**God works**" and those are the only works that will endure throughout eternity! The corollary is that when people abandon their profession of faith in Christ, it is evidence that their profession was never real, that they had not exercised saving faith. The proof of authenticity of one's salvation is **perseverance** and fruit bearing. But don't be confused because **perseverance** does NOT save a person, but only serves to show that a person is truly saved.

**W H Griffith-Thomas** - Let us therefore heed not only--

- What we hear -- Gospel message, inspirational challenge, etc., but also...
- How we hear -- simply, sincerely, sympathetically, surrendering lip and life, personality and possessions.
- The Word of God just be received and retained in order that it may reveal. Are we doing this?

**Puritan Thomas Watson on Effectual Hearing** - If you would hear the Word aright, be not only attentive, but retentive. Lay the Word up in your memories and hearts. "The seed on the good ground are they who, having heard the Word, keep it." The Greek word for "keep" signifies "to hold the Word fast, that it do not run from us." If the seed be not kept in the ground, but is presently washed away, it is sown to little purpose: so, if the Word preached be not kept in your memories and hearts, it is preached in vain. Many people have memories like leaky vessels — the Word goes out as fast as it comes in: how, then, can it profit? If a treasure be put into a chest and the chest not locked, it may easily be taken out: a bad memory is like a chest without a lock, the devil can easily take out all the treasure. Labour to keep in memory the truths you hear: the things we esteem we are not so apt to forget.

**John MacArthur** sums it up this way - All believers are called to be witnesses to the gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. Matt. 28:18-20). They are not to tamper with the seed, nor can they cultivate the soil. Rather, they are to faithfully cast the gospel message. As they do, they can expect the responses they receive to fall into one of these categories. Some will reject outright, due to hard-heartedness. Others will demonstrate a superficial interest, only to fall away when hardship comes. Still others will profess a love for Christ while simultaneously nurturing a deadly affection for the world. Finally, there will be some who genuinely receive the gospel. They will humbly turn from their sins and wholeheartedly embrace the Lord Jesus as their Savior and King. The genuineness of their profession will be demonstrated by the abundant fruit of their transformed lives, as they walk in obedience and faith. On the one hand, knowing that many will reject the gospel enables believers to approach evangelism with proper expectations. On the other hand, knowing that some will truly believe ought to serve as a great encouragement. In evangelism, Christians are privileged to

participate in an enterprise that cannot fail. Those whom God is sovereignly drawing to Himself will be saved. If He has prepared the soil of their hearts, the seed will invariably take root and bear abundant fruit....What a comfort it is to know that soil preparation is God's work. He supplies both the seed of His Word and the power of His Spirit. He readies the soil, working in the hearts of those whom He is drawing to Himself. The task of the evangelist is simply this: to disseminate the seed through the faithful proclamation of the gospel. Having fulfilled that responsibility, believers can rest in the sovereignty of God, knowing that His Word will bear fruit in the hearts and lives of those whom He has called. (MNTC-Mk)

**Daniel Akin** Conclusion:

1) **Christianity is a religion of the Word and therefore of the ear.** Do you have ears that hear? Do you have ears that work correctly? Do you tune the words of Scripture and the gospel in or do you tune them out?

2) **Hearing God's Word is dangerous.** What you do with it is critical to your soul. My challenge: Be greedy for the Word. Go after it, grab hold of it, and do not let it go. Like a starving beggar who has found bread, seize it with all your might and cherish it for the life sustaining food that it is! "He who has ears to hear, let him hear".

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Charlotte Elliot went to Cecil Milan, a preacher, and said, "Mr. Milan, how can I be saved?" Mr. Milan said to her, "You must simply receive Jesus Christ." But she said, "But I'm such a sinner. Can I receive Him just as I am?" He said, "That's the only way you can receive Him: just as you are." And she said, "If He will receive me just as I am, then I come to Him." And Charlotte Elliot was saved. Later on, she wrote these words: "Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me, and that you bid me come to thee, O Lord I come."

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**ILLUSTRATION OF DIFFERENT SOILS** - The popular preacher, Chuck Swindoll, tells of ministering at a family conference. There was a young couple there with several small children, and it was obvious that they had some serious problems in their marriage. But as the week progressed, Chuck watched this couple change as they sat under the teaching of God's Word. The husband seemed to hang on every word. The wife had her Bible open and followed carefully from passage to passage. On the last day, they both came up to Chuck and said, "We want you to know that this week has been a 180 degree turn around experience for us. When we came, we were ready to separate. We're going back now stronger than we have ever been in our marriage." That's tremendous! But the sad thing, Chuck said, is that at the same conference with the same speakers, the same truths, and the same surroundings, another man was turned off. He wasn't open to God's Word. He attended the first few sessions, but his guilt became so great and his conviction so deep that he went home. His family left hurting, perhaps even more so than when they came. What was the difference between those two men at the same conference? The difference was the condition of the soil of their hearts.

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### What Kind Of Soil Are You?

Those who [hear] the Word with a noble and good heart keep it and bear fruit. — Luke 8:15

Today's Scripture: Luke 8:4-15

A new resident at the drug rehabilitation center where I worked was given the task of planting runner-bean seeds. With no experience growing vegetables, Jim quickly became bored waiting for the seeds to sprout.

After weeks of seeing nothing happen, Jim finally noticed signs of life coming up. Before long, he had to put poles in the ground for the beans to climb. One day Jim ran excitedly into the kitchen with some freshly picked beans for dinner. "Wow! All this from tiny seeds!" he exclaimed. "I've sure learned a lot!"

As I talked with Jim, it became clear that he learned more than how plants grow. He gained a new insight: If we willingly listen to God in His Word and do what's right for the right reasons and for the right length of time, our lives will be fruitful.

In Luke 8, Jesus used a parable to teach that the seed of the Word of God will produce a harvest in good soil. But the seed is productive only if the soil is receptive.

People with receptive hearts hear God's Word, obey it, and bear fruit. Others, however, have resistant hearts that fall prey to the devil, do not allow the seed to take root, or are overgrown with the cares and temptations of life.

God's Word is good seed. Is your heart good soil? —JEY ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, I would be soil in which You can plant  
Your Word with its promise of fruit;  
I want to be open to You every day,

So what You have planted takes root.

—Hess

To be spiritually fruitful, plant God's Word in your heart.

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### **Son Followers**

The seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop. Luke 8:15

Today's Scripture & Insight: Luke 8:11–15

Sunflowers sprout in a carefree manner all over the world. Pollinated by bees, the plants spring up on the sides of highways, under bird feeders, and across fields, meadows, and prairies. To produce a harvest, however, sunflowers need good soil. Well-drained, slightly acidic, nutrient-rich soil “with organic matter or composted,” says the Farmer's Almanac, finally produces tasty sunflower seeds, pure oil, and also a livelihood for hard-working sunflower growers.

We also need “good soil” for spiritual growth (Luke 8:15). As Jesus taught in His parable of the farmer scattering seed, God's Word can sprout even in rocky or thorny soil (see vv. 6–7). It only thrives, however, in the soil of “honest, good-hearted people who hear God's word, cling to it, and patiently produce a huge harvest” (v. 15 nlt).

Young sunflowers are just as patient in their growth. Following the sun's movement throughout the day, they turn sunward daily in a process called heliotropism. Mature sunflowers are just as deliberate. They turn eastward permanently, warming the face of the flower and increasing visits from pollinator bees. This in turn produces a greater harvest.

As with those who care for sunflowers, we can provide a rich medium for God's Word to grow by clinging to is Word and following after His Son—developing honesty and a good heart for God's Word to mature us. It's a daily process. May we follow the Son and grow. By: Patricia Raybon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

What's the condition of your spiritual soil? Rocky, thorny, or rich in spiritual “nutrients”? Why? When you follow the Son daily, how does this practice impact your honesty and heart?

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### **Gardening Tips**

These are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the Word, accept it, and bear fruit. —Mark 4:20

Today's Scripture: Mark 4:1-9

I picked up a gardening book the other day and got some good advice: Take care of the soil, and don't worry about the plants. If the soil is good, the seed will take root and grow.”

In the parable of the sower in Mark 4, Jesus spoke of the importance of “good ground” (or good soil). He defined good soil as referring to those who “hear” God's Word, “accept it,” and “bear fruit” (v.20). If we keep our heart soft and receptive, God's Word will take root, grow, and produce fruit.

In gardening, life is in the seed. Under the right conditions, it will grow until it reaches maturity and produces fruit. Similarly, if the seed of the Word is planted in the good soil of a receptive heart, it will grow until the character of Jesus is seen.

For the Christian, the power of the spiritual life comes from the indwelling Holy Spirit. As we open our heart to the Word with an eagerness to obey it, the Spirit causes us to grow and bear fruit (Galatians 5:22-23).

We can't make ourselves grow, any more than we can force growth from the seeds in our gardens. But we can tend the soil, keeping our hearts soft, receptive, and obedient to God's Word. Then we will yield the fruit of righteousness.

What kind of soil are you? By: David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, I would be soil in which You can plant

Your Word with its promise of fruit;

I want to be open to You every day,

So what You have planted takes root.

—Hess

A heart open to God is soil in which the seed of His Word can flourish.

**Mark 4:21 And He was saying to them, "A lamp is not brought to be put under a basket, is it, or under a bed? Is it not brought to be put on the lampstand?"**

Wuest And He was saying to them. The lamp does not come, does it, in order to be placed under the peck measure or under the reclining couch? Does it not come in order to be placed upon the lampstand?

NET Mark 4:21 He also said to them, "A lamp isn't brought to be put under a basket or under a bed, is it? Isn't it to be placed on a lampstand?"

GNT Mark 4:21 Κα λέγειν α το ς, Μ τι ρχεται λ χνος να π τ ν μ διο ν τεθ π τ ν κλ νη ν; ο χ να π τ ν λυχ ν αν τεθ ;

NLT Mark 4:21 Then Jesus asked them, "Would anyone light a lamp and then put it under a basket or under a bed? Of course not! A lamp is placed on a stand, where its light will shine.

KJV Mark 4:21 And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?

ESV Mark 4:21 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?"

NIV Mark 4:21 He said to them, "Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don't you put it on its stand?"

ASV Mark 4:21 And he said unto them, Is the lamp brought to be put under the bushel, or under the bed, and not to be put on the stand?

CSB Mark 4:21 He also said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket or under a bed? Isn't it to be put on a lampstand?"

NKJ Mark 4:21 Also He said to them, "Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand?"

NRS Mark 4:21 He said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under the bushel basket, or under the bed, and not on the lampstand?"

YLT Mark 4:21 And he said to them, 'Does the lamp come that under the measure it may be put, or under the couch -- not that it may be put on the lamp-stand?'

NAB Mark 4:21 He said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be placed under a bushel basket or under a bed, and not to be placed on a lampstand?"

NJB Mark 4:21 He also said to them, 'Is a lamp brought in to be put under a tub or under the bed? Surely to be put on the lamp-stand?'

GWN Mark 4:21 Jesus said to them, "Does anyone bring a lamp into a room to put it under a basket or under a bed? Isn't it put on a lamp stand?"

BBE Mark 4:21 And he said to them, When the light comes in, do people put it under a vessel, or under the bed, and not on its table?

- **lamp:** Isa 60:1-3 Mt 5:15 Lu 8:16 Lk 11:33 1Co 12:7 Eph 5:3-15 Php 2:15,16
- **lampstand** Mt 5:15
- Verse 21 in Matthew 5:15, Luke 11:33;
- verse 22 in Matthew 10:26, Luke 12:2;
- verse 24 in Matthew 7:2, Luke 6:38;
- verse 25 in Matthew 13:12, 25:29, and Luke 19:26.
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Parallel Passages:**

Luke 8:16+ "Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, so that those who come in may see the light. 17 "For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light. 18" So take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him."

Matthew 5:15+ nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

Luke 11:33+ "No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it away in a cellar nor under a basket, but on the lampstand, so that those who enter may see the light.

### A Simple Outline on Mark 4:21-25

- Mark 4:21-23 - If You Hide it, You Misuse It
- Mark 4:24-25 - If you Hide it, You Will Lose It!

### Another Outline on Mark 4:21-25

- Mark 4:21 - Light Has Its Purposes
- Mark 4:22 - Light Has Its Powers
- Mark 4:23 - Listen to the Light!
- Mark 4:24 - Light Has Its Privileges
- Mark 4:25 - Light Has Its Promises

Ancient Oil Lamp

## RESPONSIBILITY OF THE HEARERS

Note that while many refer to Mark 4:21-25 as **parables**, others prefer to see these not strictly speaking as parables but more as **proverbial** sayings. Either way, these 4 sayings in this section do present the interpreter with some challenges. I have certainly felt challenged! **William Lane** for example comments on the command in Mk 4:23 that Jesus is indicating "that there is more to this story than appears on the surface. That is why it is "a **parable**." (according to Lane - NICNT-Mk)

**Esoteric** means confined to and understandable by only an enlightened inner circle. One might refer to Jesus' teaching in parables as "esoteric." It would be easy to misunderstand Jesus' statement that He would teach in parables which would conceal truth from those in darkness and reveal truth to those who were in the light, specifically His disciples. It sounds like Jesus is being unfair to those in darkness. That was not the case for those who had **not rejected** His clear teaching which had been validated by multiple miracles, would still be able to comprehend what He was saying. But from now on His teaching would be primarily directed to His disciples and would be in the form of parables. So if you were a disciple you might be thinking "Are we to teach the same way? Are we to conceal the mysteries of the kingdom in parables?" And Mark 4:21-25 is Jesus' answer to that question -- it was a resounding "No!" In short "Let My light shine through you."

**Expositor's Greek Testament** entitles Mark 4:21-25 - **Responsibilities of disciples** (Mt. 5:15, Mt 10:26, Mt 7:2; Lk. 8:16-18) True to His uniform teaching that privileges are to be used for the benefit of others, Jesus tells His disciples that if they have more insight than the multitude they must employ it for the common benefit. These sentences in Mark represent the first special instruction of the disciples.

**He teaches in parables in order that He may teach;  
not in order that He may not teach!**

I like **B B Warfield's** comments on **what Jesus is doing** in this first proverbial saying - The strength of our Lord's emphasis on this important declaration just on this occasion finds its explanation of course in the need that had arisen to guard from misapprehension His own methods of teaching. For a change had just been introduced into His modes of instruction, from which His disciples might be tempted to infer that Christianity was a double system, with an **esoteric** and an **exoteric** aspect. Our Lord, who had hitherto spoken plainly, had suddenly begun to **speak in parables**; and He had not concealed from His disciples that His object was to veil His meaning. Was there not introduced thus the full-blown system of **esoterism**? It is to correct this not unnatural inference that our



Lord declares so emphatically that the truth He is teaching—even in parabolic form—is a **lamp**, and has for its one end to shine; that what is now hid and made secret under this parabolic veil, is hid and made secret **not that it may not be made known but just that it may be made known**. The impulse to use parables thus arises from wisdom and prudence in teaching, not from a desire to conceal. **He teaches in parables in order that He may teach; not in order that He may not teach** (ED: RECALL THE OPPOSITION IS BEGINNING TO RISE AND TO KEEP TEACHING WITHOUT PARABLES WOULD ACCELERATE THAT OPPOSITION. RECALL ALSO THE TIME HE TAUGHT OPENLY IN NAZARETH AND IT AROUSED SUCH OPPOSITION THAT THEY TRIED TO KILL HIM - Lk 4:24-29+). This method of veiled teaching, in a word, is forced on Him by the conditions under which He is teaching and arises from the state of mind of His hearers (ED: MOST OF WHOM REJECTED HIS TRUTH); **it is not chosen by Him in order to conceal His meaning, but in order to convey it to those for whom it is intended** (ED: GOOD SOILS - THOSE WHO HAVE EARS TO HEAR - IN THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT = HIS DISCIPLES - see Mk 4:34+). It is with Him either to teach thus or not to teach at all; and He consequently teaches thus. This is the fundamental doctrine of parabolic teaching. I do not say it is the whole account to be given of it; we may see in the sequel that there is more to say, and that the adoption of **parabolic teaching has a punitive side—as, indeed, it could not fail to have—with reference to those who could and would not endure sound doctrine; whom it puzzled, therefore, rather than instructed**. But this is the fundamental account of it. ([Faith and Life](#) = Chapter on "Light and Shining")

**John MacArthur** entitles Mark 4:23-24 "Fruitful Hearers Witness Obediently" writing that that "In Mark 4:9, Jesus told His audience, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." He underscored the importance of that phrase by repeating it in Mk 4:23. His point was simple: **true disciples listen eagerly and obediently**. As those whose hearts and minds have been opened to the truth by the Holy Spirit, genuine disciples of Jesus love to hear and obey His Word (John 8:32; cf. Jn 10:3-4, 27). Divine truth has found a home in their hearts (ED: CF "GOOD SOIL"). They delight in it, submit to it, and bear fruit by putting it into practice and by proclaiming it to others. The parable of the soils emphasized the importance of being a fruitful hearer by distinguishing the **good soil** from the bad. In this passage (Mark 4:21-34), Jesus articulated three additional parables that expand on that theme. The Lord indicated that understanding the parable of the soils was key to understanding these later parables (Mark 4:13). **These parables, then, should not be regarded as disconnected stories**. Rather, they are interrelated illustrations carefully arranged by Jesus to make a divine truth clear...The parable of the soils focused on the recipients of the gospel, distinguishing between those who would ultimately reject the message and those who would genuinely embrace it. By contrast, these subsequent parables (in Mark 4:21-32) highlight **the responsibility of the faithful hearer as an evangelist**. As those who had received the Gospel and accepted it (ED: THEY WERE [AND YOU ARE] THE **GOOD SOIL!**), Jesus' disciples would now be called to **bear fruit** by obediently proclaiming the message of salvation to others (cf. Ro 1:13; Col 1:3-6) (ED: IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT - Acts 1:8+, 1 Th 1:5+) (MNTC-Mk) (Bolding Added)

**John Phillips** - The parable about life is now followed by a parable about light. A candle is a remarkable invention. It is a simple instrument for dispelling darkness. Darkness, with all of its power to frighten and bewilder, is no match for the light. The faintest gleam will dispel darkness. The function of a candle is to provide the light that dispels the darkness. A candle does that at great expense to itself. It has to give itself up to the flame and be consumed. In the spiritual realm, **the Lord Jesus is the Light that dispels the darkness**. The light that He brings has been provided at infinite cost. When we come to Him, **He kindles that light in us**-which brings us to the point of His parable. The fact that we are now light bearers means that we, too, must pay the price of shining. Our light is not to be hidden. It is to be placed where it will be seen of men. Many people hate and resent the light and will try to extinguish it. On the other hand, many other people will be drawn to it. The light itself is the miracle; we are just candles. (Exploring Mark)

**Steven Cole** explains (In comments on the parallel passage in Luke 8) that "The flow of thought seems to go back to verse Lu 8:10+, (CF Mark 4:11) where Jesus explained that the purpose of His parables was both to *reveal* truth to the spiritually responsive and to *conceal* truth from the spiritually superficial. Jesus does not want His disciples to think that His main purpose is to conceal truth. Thus He gives the **illustration** of the lamp being set on the lampstand, not hidden under a container or bed, to show them that **the main purpose of His teaching is to illumine the truth, not to hide it**. But, at the same time, light serves two functions: it **illuminates**, but it also **exposes**. Jesus' teaching not only **illuminates the truth**, it also **exposes the evil that lurks in the dark corners of the human heart** (Lu 8:17). Therefore, we must take care how we listen, so that we respond obediently to Jesus' teaching, rather than shrink from it because it convicts us of sin. If we respond obediently, we will receive more light. If we shrink back, what light we think we have will be taken from us.

**David Guzik** - If you have the truth of God, you have a solemn responsibility to spread that truth in whatever way God gives you opportunity, even as someone who has the cure for a life-threatening disease has the moral responsibility to spread that cure. God didn't light your lamp so that it would be hidden. One must either spread the word itself, or spread the influence of God's word by bringing others to a place where they will hear it; and you really should be doing both.

The picture here is of an oil lamp that is designed to light up a room. KJV has **candle** but this is not accurate because candles were

not invented until the Middle Ages! In that culture these lamps were often put on a table or up on a nook in the wall in order to dispel the darkness. It would be totally absurd to take this lamp and put it under a basket or under a bed. In ancient times the lamp would have been usually a small oil lamp and most likely every house had at least one because it was the only source of light in house at night. Some homes had formal lampstands, but for the less well of the house had a notch cut in the wall where the oil lamp could be placed. Jesus is saying that when this lamp was lit, it was not hidden under a basket or a bed, but in a location so that everyone in the room could receive the benefit of the light. Jesus spoke of physical light but His deeper meaning was this was to picture spiritual light. Some say the lamp was Jesus Himself and in some ways this is clearly true because He alone was the "**Light of the world**," (Jn 8:12) the only One who had power to light up a dark world, much less a dark room! Jesus Himself testified "While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." John's prologue to his Gospel repeatedly speaks of Jesus as the Light writing "In Him was life, and the life was the **Light** of men. 5 The **Light** shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. 6 There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to testify about the **Light**, so that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the **Light**, but he came to testify about the **Light**. 9 There was the true **Light** which, coming into the world, enlightens every man." (John 1:4-9+)

**Swindoll** comments that "This first parable in the series concerns a **disciple's responsibility to carry the light of divine truth—the gospel message—to the world**. In biblical and other ancient literature, truth is often depicted as light. The same is true of the special manifestation of God's presence, which appeared in the form of a supernatural light called the shekinah (Exod. 3:1-3; 13:21-22; 19:18; 24:17). The apostle John depicted Jesus Christ as light coming into a dark world, which was his way of declaring that God Himself had come to earth (John 1:1-9). John's description of the new heaven and new earth reveals that those who serve God "will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them" (Rev. 22:5). Therefore, Jesus Christ, the new kingdom, and the gospel message are all symbolized by the image of light. Consequently, Mark's Greek is awkward in this parable because he went out of his way to represent Jesus as the Light.....Having identified true disciples in the parable of the sower and the soils, Jesus illustrated the primary responsibility of a disciple in the parable of the lamp. He didn't call disciples so they would keep the gospel to themselves; Jesus expects His followers to hold high the Son of God so that all might benefit from divine truth. He said, in effect, "**Hold Me up before the world so that all may see**." (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary – Mark)

**BACKGROUND** - Recall that Jesus has begun to unfold the mysteries of the Kingdom to the disciples in the form of parables. And yet these truths about the Kingdom of God were never meant to be put under a basket or under a bed.

It would be easy to get bogged down in the minute details of the commentaries in this short set of parables in Mark 4:21-25. Part of the difficulty is introduced immediately by the Greek rendering which literally says '**does the lamp come**'. Clearly a **lamp** is inanimate which raises the question of what is Jesus saying? Many conclude that the **lamp** is Jesus and go into the reasons in the Greek to support their interpretation. A simple approach is that yes Jesus is the Lamp, indeed the Light of the world (John 8:12, Jn 1:1-9, etc) and His teaching was the light that revealed the mystery of the Kingdom of God. But He did this first to His disciples who in turn were to function as the lamp and let the light of Jesus shine through them into the darkness of men's hearts. ("**Hold Me up before the world so that all may see**.") I like that combined approach and think it fits well with the context. In the Sermon on the Mount the disciples had heard a similar teaching by Jesus that

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; 15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 "**Let your light shine** ([aorist imperative](#) - only possible as one relies on [the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) before men in such a way (NOT A WAY THAT DRAWS ATTENTION TO US BUT TO GOD) that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Mt 5:14-16+).

Paul echoes Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom...

**Do** ([present imperative](#)) all things (HOW MANY?) without grumbling or disputing; 15 so that (WHY? WHAT'S THE PURPOSE?) you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach **in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation**, among whom you appear as **lights in the world**, (HOW ARE THEY LIGHTS? BY NOT GRUMBLING - ONLY POSSIBLE SUPERNATURALLY -- EVEN IGNORANT MEN CAN DISCERN THERE IS AN EXTRAORDINARY POWER IN SOMEONE WHO DOES NOT GRUMBLE WHEN THEY CLEARLY HAVE THE RIGHT TO GRUMBLE! AND SEE THE "POWER SOURCE" IN PRECEDING PASSAGE - Phil 2:13NLT+) (Php 2:14-15+)

**And He was saying to them** - Compare a similar beginning **He was saying** in Mark 4:9, 11, 13, 4:24, 26 (v13 has "He said"). Who is **them**? While the phrase **He was saying** has been used to introduce a *new* subject, it does not mean that this requires a *new* audience. I assume He is still addressing His 12 disciples (and those others in the inner circle) as described in Mark 4:10). Indeed, He has been speaking of **the mystery of the Kingdom** (Mk 4:11) and these would be the men to whom He would pass on the baton to carry that mystery into the world.

The unfolding of Your words gives light;  
It gives understanding to the simple.  
Psalm 119:130

**THOUGHT** - In Ps 119:130 the "simple" were the disciples (and you and me) and the "unfolding" was done to them initially by Jesus and to us by the Spirit of Jesus in His written Word and thereby they and we have been granted the privilege of understanding the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. But privilege always brings responsibility. We are responsible like Jesus' first disciples to let our little light shine for the glory of God. Amen

**A lamp is not brought to be put under a basket, is it, or under a bed?** Literally as noted above it reads **"Does the lamp come."** Both questions (**basket** and **bed**) expect a negative reply - "No!" Any other answer would be ridiculous. Jesus wanted His disciples then (and today) to first consider the absurdity in such activity. Why would one light **a lamp** and then purposely try to conceal the light produced by the **lamp**? That makes no sense! If one lights **a lamp**, it is in fact more reasonable to place it on a lampstand where the light could be seen by all in the room and provide the benefit to all. In this case the intended benefit was not physical light but spiritual light to those souls who lived in spiritual darkness. As He would warn in the following parable (Mk 4:25), if you hide it you misuse it and you lose it!

**Wuest** - "Bushel" is modios, a dry measure holding about a peck. To put the lamp under a peck measure, would put out the flame, and it would give no light. To put it under a reclining couch would set it on fire.

**Daniel Akin** - Jesus begins this set of parables with a commonsense **illustration** about a lamp. However, a literal translation of the key phrase in verse 21 is, **"Comes the lamp...."** This is a reference to **Jesus Himself**, who has "come as a light into the world" (John 12:46). He is "the light of men" (John 1:4), "the true light" (John 1:9), and the "light of the world" (John 8:12). How then do we respond to this extraordinary Lamp? The Lamp, and for that matter any lamp, is not brought to be put under a basket or a bed. The very idea is ridiculous. No, you put a lamp up high in the open. Likewise, God has sent this Lamp to bring light to a dark world. He has come to reveal truth, enlighten minds, and conquer the darkness! The light may be, for the most part, hidden at the moment. However, eventually the whole world will see the glory of this light. That which is hidden will be manifest. The resurrection of the crucified King assures this revelation. The second coming of the glorified King will establish it. The world may try to hide Jesus, but it will fail miserably in those attempts. (Exalting Jesus in Mark)

**Expositors** says: "True to His uniform teaching that privileges are to be used for the benefit of others, Jesus tells His disciples that if they have more insight than the multitude, they must employ it for the common benefit. These sentences in Mark represent the first special instruction of the disciples."

**John MacArthur** - The point of Jesus' analogy is clear: Those who have received the light of the gospel are not to conceal it; rather they are to let it shine for others to see....In this analogy, however, Jesus used light to illustrate the message of the gospel. Faithful hearers have an obligation, beyond heeding the gospel themselves, to proclaim it to the world of sinners. Those who have been transformed by the good news are themselves to present that truth to others (cf. Rom. 1:8; 16:19; 1 Thess. 1:8). As Jesus explained in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:14-16)....Perhaps the disciples, observing the shift in Jesus' preaching strategy, wondered if they were also to obscure the gospel message as a judgment on Israel's unbelief. That was not what the Lord planned for them to do. In a short time, He would send them out in pairs to preach the gospel (Mark 6:7-13; cf. Luke 9:1-6). Such was part of the preparation for their full commissioning after His resurrection (Matt. 28:18-20) As Jesus told His disciples before He ascended, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

**Alan Carr** - When Jesus saved us from our sins, the Lord placed His light within us. He does not want us to hide the light away. He wants us to allow His light to shine through our lives so that others might see the way to God, Matt. 5:16; Eph. 5:8; 1 Pet. 2:9. Far too many Christians are guilty of hiding the light, Rom. 13:11-14. Light is a tremendous gift! Can you remember when the darkness of your sinful past was shattered by the light of the Gospel? Can you remember when the Lord placed His light and His life within you? If you can, then you know the value of that light. It must not be secreted away, but it must be shared with a lost and dying world!

**J Vernon McGee** - What we have here is a parable of the candle and its action. Light creates responsibility. A man who receives the truth must act. We are held responsible to the degree to which we have had light given us. The light is shining, and your response to the light is all important. The point is, you and I were in darkness until the light of the gospel got through to us. We get the impression that man is a sinner because of his weakness or because of his ignorance. But Paul says very candidly (in Rom. 1) that men, when they knew God, glorified Him not as God. Man is a willful sinner. That's the kind of sinners all of us are, and the light that comes in will create a responsibility. We are lost, and if we do not accept the Light, if we do not accept Him, we remain lost.

**J D Jones** - Now let us look a little more closely at the figure our Lord uses to enforce this truth. "Is the lamp brought to be put under

the bushel, or under the bed, and not to be put on the stand"? Now it is not by accident that our Lord used that figure. It is not a case simply of a pretty illustration. He uses it because the **lamp** sets forth certain qualities of the Word. The analogy is justified by a kinship. Just as the Word is like the seed, in that it contains within itself potentialities of life, so is it like the lamp, in that it is a source of knowledge and enlightenment. "Thy Word," says the psalmist, "is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" ( Psalm 119:105). A lamp! and a lamp is only used when night falls. The lighted lamp implies the presence of darkness, and when the psalmist says, "Thy Word is a lamp," he implies a darkened world. A world in the dark about God, in the dark about duty, in the dark about the beyond. But "Thy Word is a lamp!" "The entrance of thy Word giveth light!" With the lamp of the Word in his hand, no man need stumble. He may walk safely and surely to his journey's end.

**Chris Benfield** comments "While some may have only considered Jesus' questions from a physical perspective, He was in fact proclaiming great spiritual truth. He had come as the Light of the world. He came to reveal God to humanity. He came as God in flesh, to reveal the truth of God to those who walked in darkness, apart from truth." As believers, we too need to consider these beneficial questions. Once we were saved by His grace, we were filled with the Holy Spirit. We now bear the Light of Christ within. We have been called to share the Light we have received with those who walk in darkness. If the world isn't exposed to the Light through believers, many will never encounter the truth of Christ. Granted, some will read the Scriptures and encounter truth of their own volition, but most are exposed to truth through the witness of believers!

**Hiebert** - The definite articles with each item (lamp...basket...bed...lampstand mentioned denotes that they were all well known as essential furnishings in every Galilean household. The lamp was a small terracotta vessel with a lighted wick. In Jesus' day, it was generally a closed bowl with a hole on top to pour in the oil, a spout for the wick, and usually a handle for carrying. It generally held only a spoonful or two of oil. Mark's expression that the lighted **lamp** "comes" is a colloquial personification, just as we speak about a message coming, or the mail coming....The "light" which Jesus entrusted to His followers by giving them the explanation of the parables was not intended to be kept hidden from those outside. His teaching was not intended to be esoteric, restricted to an inner circle of enlightened followers. Just as it is the function of light to shine, so it is the duty of His disciples to let their light shine that others too may come to know the truth.

NET on lamp - Jesus is comparing revelation to light, particularly the revelation of His ministry.

#### Ancient Lampstand

**Is it not brought to be put on the lampstand?**- This expects a "Yes." Jesus is saying light was to be placed where all in the dark room could benefit from the light. In the deeper spiritual sense, the light of Jesus comes into the world to reveal.

**Application** of Mark 4:21-25 - The Good News that Jesus brought us is not to be kept to ourselves, but to be shared with others.

#### Two Seas - One Alive, One Dead Click to Enlarge

**Brian Bell** illustrates this by noting that "The River Jordan supplies two large lakes. **Sea of Galilee** (full of fish/plant life) & the **Dead Sea** (nothing living in it at all - It's stagnant & lifeless). Both lakes have the same source, but only the Sea of Galilee has an outlet. In other words, it passes on what it has received...the Dead Sea does not! That is the challenge of this passage, the message that Jesus has brought is not to be kept to ourselves but it is to be passed on to others."

**Spurgeon Exposition** - So this wheat, then, is meant to be sown; the Word of God is intended to be spread. "Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed?" If it were put under a bed, it would set the bed on fire; and so, if you have true grace in your heart, there is nothing that can smother its light; the fire and the light together will force their way out.

**Henry Morris** - Mark records two parables (that of the candlestick and also of the silent growth of the seed sown) after that of the Sower, both amplifying the latter. The first stresses the **importance of sowing**--letting our light shine and keeping it bright. The second reminds us that **the actual subterranean growth of the seed**, finally springing out of the ground and producing fruit, is not the work of the sower but of the Creator who designed this amazing mechanism. It symbolizes the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the one who has heard God's Word (compare John 3:8, Ecclesiastes 11:5,6). The human witness conveys the Word, but he does not win the soul. As Paul said: "Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:7).

Ecclesiastes 11:5; 6 Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things. (11:6) Sow your seed in the morning and do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good.

**John David Jones** - Now, we are back here at a principle which runs right through the New Testament, viz, this, that every gift conferred upon us by God is conferred upon us for use; not for our own enjoyment or enrichment, but for service. God never blesses a man for his own sake; He blesses him that he may become a blessing. He never saves a man for his own sake; He saves him that he may become a saviour He never enriches a man for his own sake; He enriches him that he in his turn may become a source of enrichment to others. ([Commentary](#))

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**Bruce Barton** - The disciples may have wondered why Jesus seemed to be deliberately hiding the truth of the gospel through parables. Perhaps they thought that if the Word was going to fall on hard hearts, then why should they sow it so liberally? Shouldn't they just limit their teaching to those who were ready and eager to listen? But Jesus' words answered their question (whether spoken in private or considered in their mind in public). "No," explained Jesus, "I am not deliberately trying to hide the truth from people. That would be like lighting a lamp and then putting it under a bowl. Why then light the lamp at all? If I am hiding the truth, there is no reason for me to teach." The purpose of the parables is not to conceal the truth, but to reveal it; the parables explain in everyday terms truths that human minds cannot grasp. Thus the parables do not obscure, they clarify-but only to those who are willing to listen and believe. The disciples may have been beginning to understand the mission to which Jesus had called them. Like the farmer in the parable, theirs would be the job of sowing the seed of the gospel in a largely hostile world. The light of the truth about Jesus had illuminated them, and it was their ministry to shine that light to a sin-darkened world. Their witness for Christ would be public, not hidden. The benefits of knowing Jesus and receiving salvation were not to be kept to themselves, but passed on to others. Christ's message is intended for all people. We should not hide our Christianity from the watching world. (LAC)

**ARE YOU A "BASKET CASE" CHRISTIAN?** Many Christians today are hidden from sight, reluctant to be identified as Christians. Such a Christian is like a brand-new light that never leaves the carton it came in. If a lamp doesn't help people see, it isn't worth much. Does your life show other people how to find God and how to live for him? If not, ask what "baskets" have hidden your light. Complacency, resentment, embarrassment, stubbornness of heart, or disobedience could keep you from shining.

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### **The Bushel and the Bed**

"Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed?" Mark 4:21

Christ is the Light of the world (John 8:12). Believers are the light of the world (Matt. 5:14). Our light is Christ within. We are to let our light shine, not shine it. It is to be a glow, not a glare.

Two things hinder Christian testimony, the bushel and the bed. The bushel stands for business, commercialism, money-making. Your only business is to do the will of God. That is your vocation but most Christians treat it as a vacation, something to be done only once in a while. If you are a farmer, it really is God's farm; you are just the tenant. If you keep store, really it is God's store; you are but the clerk. Don't let the bushel smother the candle!

The bed stands for pleasure, ease, worldly comfort. There is no testimony among those who are at ease in Zion. Churches are filled with "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4). And if "she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" (1 Tim. 5:6) what a host of animated corpses run around doing church work! Said the Irishman who saw a tombstone marked "I yet live": "If I was dead I wouldn't be ashamed to admit it!" But professing believers are dead and don't know it nor does Sardis know she is dead though she has a name to be alive.

Beware the bushel and the bed!

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**Mattoon** comments on the possible meaning of putting the lamp under a bed - The mention of the **bed** is a **reminder or symbol of leisure**. Beloved, we can become so involved in pleasure-seeking or frivolity, that we cease to shine. Many Christians today do not want to be inconvenienced by sacrifices, interested in spiritual matters, or involved in serving the Lord because they want the freedom to pursue their pleasures. There is nothing wrong in having fun or a good time, but if our frivolity hurts our Christian testimony, causes us to neglect our responsibilities for Christ, or gets us out of church, then we have a problem. We neglect to fulfill the purpose for which Christ saved us and suffer from a case of mistaken identity. Victories for the souls of men are not won on the playground, but on the battlefield of life.

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### **Good Public Relations**

Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket or under a bed? Mark 4:21

The Gospels have much to say about publicity and public relations.

The phenomenon of John the Baptist, for example, points us to the legitimacy of these activities when they are pursued in the best

way, for the best ends. In opposition to the sincere, truthful efforts of John the Baptist (which were not self-serving or self-aggrandizing but intended for the good of the mission) are those of the hypocritical Pharisees, who sought to portray a false image of what they did and who they were in order to gain undeserved praise.

Jesus wants the world to know who we are, who we truly are. A leader will understand this and make every effort to ensure that this happens by first ensuring that his followers know who he is and what he's about. Jesus did this by often questioning his disciples about himself and his mission to be sure that their understanding constantly increased.

He also wanted the world to know the truth of his identity and his mission. So he employed the publicity methods of his day to accomplish this, starting with John the Baptist. If he had not hoped to disseminate his mission or message, he would have stayed in one place to teach his disciples. Instead, he traveled constantly, teaching and preaching in all sorts of venues to all sorts of people.

Years ago, the Mercedes-Benz automobile company ran ads describing a brand new technology to help cars absorb the impact of a front-end collision. Although they owned the rights to the revolutionary technology, they freely shared it with other car companies in the interest of promoting safety. The tag line of the ad consisted of these thought-provoking words: **"Some things in life are too important not to share."** In the same way, a leader must ensure that his "good news" isn't the "world's best kept secret." A wise leader will see the mission at the center of his efforts

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**Herbert Lockyer-** The **reason for teaching in parables is given** (Mark 4:10-12). **Truth is hidden in parables in order that it may be revealed** (Mark 4:21-25). This important principle is further enunciated in the phrase, "The measure you give will be the measure you get" (Mark 4:24. R.S.V.).

This parable follows on that of The Sower, and related to it, teaches them at least two great truths.

1. The light of divine truth is given, not to be obscured by the believer's commercial affairs, the bushel, or by his domestic responsibilities, the bed, but to be manifested before all.
2. The primary obscuration in the parabolic form of teaching was gradually to give way to full illumination. "Now we see through a glass darkly: then face to face." Our Lord promised His own the Divine Spirit, who, when He came, would take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto their minds. This meant that He would unfold the inner, spiritual significance not only of all the parables, but of all the truth He had declared while in their midst. The full revelation once grasped was not hid but published abroad. (All the Parables of the Bible)

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Many Christians today are hidden from sight, reluctant to be identified as Christians. Such a Christian is like a brand-new light that never leaves the carton it came in. If a lamp doesn't help people see, it isn't worth much. Does your life show other people how to find God and how to live for him? If not, ask what "baskets" have hidden your light. Complacency, resentment, embarrassment, stubbornness of heart, or disobedience could keep you from shining. What do you need to do to let your light shine? (Life Application Study Bible)

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### **Let It Shine!**

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Matthew 5:16.

Some hide their light under bushel or bed (Mk. 4:21; Lk. 8:16), being busy or lazy, so that it fails to shine. Some go to the other extreme, like the Pharisees (Mt. 6:1, 2, 16), who wanted to impress people with their piety. It is not a glare but a glow, and we are simply to **let it shine**. Some saints remind us of a man with a high-powered flashlight trying to dazzle people with a blinding display. God prefers stars to comets. His figure is a candle, not a firecracker. Between the saints who hide their light and those who display it we have hard going these days. We learn more and more to appreciate those who just let it shine. We are too aware of the "men" in our text and not aware enough of our Father. Our sole business is to glorify Him and so let our light shine that others will glorify Him too. (Vance Havner)

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**ILLUSTRATION** - A young boy of about nine went with his parents to Europe one summer. Part of their tour included visits to the great old cathedrals of the past. As he visited cathedral after cathedral he saw the massive stained glass portraits of the disciples and of other saints. He was very impressed as he stood in these great empty halls looking through the beautiful stained glass windows. Upon returning to his church, he was asked by his Sunday School teacher about the great churches of Europe, and what he liked the most. He thought for a moment and he said, "I loved the sense of awesomeness and the hugeness of who God must be." "And what is a saint?" his teacher asked next. His mind went back to those massive beautiful stained glass windows and he said, "A saint is a person the light shines through." That is a good definition of what a saint of God is supposed to be. We have no

light of our own, but like the moon, we are to reflect the light of Jesus to a lost and dying world. (From [Alan Carr](#))

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**ILLUSTRATION** - Ramona had the UPS man bring the package inside. With trembling hands, she slit the box open and gently removed the bubble wrap. Ramona had wanted a Tiffany lamp ever since she could remember. On her last birthday, her father had taken her into a store to pick out the one she wanted. And now, it was hers. Ramona found the perfect spot for the lamp in her living room, plugged it in, and flipped the switch. She gasped. It's even more beautiful than I remembered. Then Ramona found her thickest blanket and draped it over her new lamp. ....Jesus said, "As long as I'm in the world, I'm light for the world" (John 9:5). Now it's our responsibility to reflect his light to everyone around us. By living for Christ, we show how dark life is without him, shed light on God's Word, and direct others to the path to find him. We want to be careful not to let timidity, sin, or a reluctance to share our faith dim our light. Wherever we go, our Father wants us to shine so brightly that others will see him. (Drawing Closer to God - Diane Matthews)

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**Daniel Akin - Introduction:** 1) Sometimes the work of the Lord can become frustrating. It can be disappointing. We work hard but see little fruit from our efforts. We shine the light of the gospel and sow the seed of the Word but not much happens. It seems almost futile. Why even continue?

2) William Carey (1761-1834), the father of the modern missionary movement, labored in India 7 years before seeing his 1st Indian convert. He shared the gospel faithfully for more than 40 years but the fruit of his labor was minimal in his lifetime. Still, he could say in the midst of it all, "the future is as bright as the promise of God" and "expect great things [from God], attempt great things [for God]."

3) Adoniram Judson (1788-1850), the father of American Baptist missions, labored in Burma also for 7 years before seeing his 1st convert. He would bury 2 wives, a number of children, and die disappointed his labors for the gospel yielded so little fruit. Yet like Carey, he was faithful to the end, and could voice these words, "In spite of sorrow, loss, and pain, our course be onward still; we sow on Burma's barren plain, we reap on Zion's hill."

4) I cannot help but believe these men, as well as many others, were inspired to press on and stay with it by a **little lamp, a bunch of seeds, and one small mustard seed!** ([What Do We Learn About Jesus And His Kingdom From A Lamp, A Bunch of Seeds And One Small Seed?](#))

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### **The extension of the kingdom**

The kingdom, as it appeared in its beginning, is like the little grains of wheat cast into the damp soil in the chilly days of spring. To the mature Christian of today it is like the city which John saw, filling all his vision, let down out of heaven from God, glowing with strange opaline light, so that neither sun nor moon were longer needed, with jasper walls and pavements of transparent gold, and great gates, each a single pearl, and at each gate a glorious angel. This parable teaches us that one of the agencies bringing about this result is man's work in the kingdom.

1. To make known its character and the conditions of entrance into it. Even the smallest taper is lighted in order that it may give light. The youngest disciple is to shine for the guidance of others. The rays of one little lamp, piercing through miles of gloom, have saved noble ships from destruction, with all their precious living freight. It may have been only such a lamp as lights one little room; but it was surrounded by powerful reflectors, which sent its rays afar, and multiplied its influence a hundredfold.

2. To give his mind and heart to increase his knowledge and experience of the truth by which the kingdom grows. The lighted lamp must have oil to feed upon. We cannot be making known the character of the kingdom unless our knowledge of it is growing. Alas for him before whose eyes the vision of the heavenly city, once seen, is allowed to fade and disappear! On the other hand, the more brightly we shine, the more eagerly we seek and the more fully we receive that which keeps the light burning. The more generously we give to others what we know of the gospel, the more clearly it will be revealed to us. (A. E. Dunning.)

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### **The Word not to be hidden**

This reproves those who hide their knowledge of the Word, and keep it to themselves only, shutting up this light within their own breast, as it were, as in a close and private place, that it cannot be seen of others, and so as others have no benefit by it. They do not shine to others by the light of that knowledge which is in them; they show forth no fruits of it in a holy conversation; neither are they careful to communicate their knowledge to others by instruction of them in the ways of God. What is this but hiding the candle under a bushel, or setting it under a bed, when it should be set upon a candlestick, that the light of it might be plainly seen by those in the house? Let such consider how great a sin it is to hide the spiritual gifts bestowed on us by God, and not to employ them well to the glory of God and the good of our brethren. If thou hast never so much knowledge in the Word, and yet dost hide it only in thine own breast, and in thine own head, and dost not shine to others by the light of it, then thy knowledge is no sanctified and saving knowledge; for if it were, it could not thus lie hid and buried in thee, but it would manifest itself toward others for their good: it would not only enlighten thy mind, but also thy whole outward life and conversation, causing thee to shine as a light or candle unto

### Sharing our light

It might seem a superfluous thing to urge the communication of gospel hopes and comforts, but there is none more needed. For one person who puts the candle on a candlestick, there are twenty that put it under a bushel—a dull wooden measure that keeps in all the light. There are many sorts of bushels.

1. One very bad one, and much employed to cover the light, is modesty (falsely so called). Modesty pretends to be not good enough or wise enough to speak, and turns the soul into a dark lantern.
2. Selfishness is another bushel for the light; forbidding men to take the trouble to shed it.
3. Indolence.
4. Fearfulness.
5. Despair of people heeding.
6. A narrow doctrine of salvation.
7. Sometimes a little scientific knowledge, creating conceit, makes a bushel; men being so anxious to mix the earthly with the heavenly light that the grave, sweet light of godly knowledge cannot get through the mistiness of the earthly mixture. (R. Glover.)

### Mark 4:22 “For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it would come to light.

NET Mark 4:22 For nothing is hidden except to be revealed, and nothing concealed except to be brought to light.

GNT Mark 4:22 ο γ ρ σ τ ι ν κ ρ υ π τ τ ν ν μ ν α φ α ν ε ρ ω θ , ο δ γ ν ε τ ο π κ ρ υ φ ο ν λ λ ν α λ θ ε ρ φ α ν ε ρ ν .

NLT Mark 4:22 For everything that is hidden will eventually be brought into the open, and every secret will be brought to light.

KJV Mark 4:22 For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.

ESV Mark 4:22 For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light.

NIV Mark 4:22 For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open.

ASV Mark 4:22 For there is nothing hid, save that it should be manifested; neither was anything made secret, but that it should come to light.

CSB Mark 4:22 For nothing is concealed except to be revealed, and nothing hidden except to come to light.

NKJ Mark 4:22 "For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light.

NRS Mark 4:22 For there is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed; nor is anything secret, except to come to light.

YLT Mark 4:22 for there is not anything hid that may not be manifested, nor was anything kept hid but that it may come to light.

NAB Mark 4:22 For there is nothing hidden except to be made visible; nothing is secret except to come to light.

NJB Mark 4:22 For there is nothing hidden, but it must be disclosed, nothing kept secret except to be brought to light.

GWN Mark 4:22 There is nothing hidden that will not be revealed. There is nothing kept secret that will not come to light.

BBE Mark 4:22 There is nothing covered which will not be seen openly, and nothing has been made secret which will not come to light.



- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE MANIFESTATION OF THE HIDDEN

**For** ([gar](#)) is a term of explanation. He is explaining the light of the candle and what it would accomplish. It would reveal what was hidden and what was secret.

**For** - Our Lord assigns this as a reason for putting the lamp on the stand. The pertinency of the reasoning is not all at once apparent. But it becomes clear when we look at it more closely. All this connects itself with that Mark 4:11, to which I have already referred, in which Jesus said to his disciples, "**Unto you is given the mystery of the Kingdom of God!**" The disciples may have thought that this was a kind of esoteric doctrine, which was to be kept secret from the crowds. No, says our Lord, whatever light is given to you is given that you may share it, for there is no one thing hidden unless that it may by and by be manifested. **Nothing is to be hidden forever. There is always a final end to the hiding, and that is that it may be manifested.** ([J D Jones](#))

**Nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it would come to light** - He has been speaking of parable of the sower, and now speaks of light. Some say that this verse refers to our hidden thoughts and actions that will be revealed when Christ returns, but that does not fit the context.

**Irving Jensen** - The ultimate purpose of Jesus' parables is to bring light to those who hear and respond. When He hides some deep truths by parables, He still has the long-range purpose. "All that is now hidden will someday come to light" (Mk 4:22, TLB).

### THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO INTERPRET MARK 4:22 –

(1) All of what we do will one day be exposed to the Light - This is more of an application

(2) What Jesus has taught in parable and is temporarily hidden from common understanding will one day come to light. This would begin to come to light first after His crucifixion, resurrection and ascension when they who were now the LAMPS would be given OIL FOR THE LAMPS at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon them with power from on High (Acts 1:8, Lk 24:45) and they would boldly witness – the truth that He had taught them, much of it in parables, that others could not understand would now be revealed and brought to the light in their Spirit filled proclamation of the Gospel. You and I are today the continuation of the line of those who are to reveal and bring to light the truths which are still hidden and secret to men who are lost and without Christ and His Spirit to teach them. Then finally when Jesus returns, the Lamp Jesus Christ will be fully revealed in glory – let me give you just 3 passages that show the revelation and the light of the Lamp at His Second Coming.

- Mt 24:30+ And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.
- Rev 1:7+ BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.
- Phil 2:10-11+ so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

If you needed motivation to go out and reveal what is hidden, and bring to light what is hidden to every lost man's heart, the certainty of His Second Coming should be sufficient motivation. Jesus Himself said "We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work."(John 9:4)

**Hiebert** - The double statement stresses the idea of purpose. The underlying law is that when things are hidden, the intention is that in due time they will be revealed. Things that are precious are hidden in order that they may not be abused or misappropriated by those who do not recognize their true nature or function. But they are hidden in order that at the proper time they may be brought forth; for things that are never seen again are lost, not hidden. Prudently the parabolic method now hid the mystery of the kingdom from those without, but the intention was that it was to be made known by His enlightened disciples. They must not think that He intended the revelation to them to remain secret. The kingdom of God, as embodied in Jesus' Person and ministry, was now a veiled revelation to those without, but He intended that later it should receive a glorious manifestation through the ministry of His followers. The full content of this revelation could only be known and understood after His death and resurrection.

**MacArthur** - That the Lord did not intend for the gospel to be permanently obscured is made clear from Mk 4:22. In other words, there was an occasion when the truth was **hidden** and obscured from some obstinate rejecters; there was coming an era when the hidden things were to be revealed, and the secret things disclosed to the world. **That era of unveiling mysteries would**

**commence with the preaching ministry of the apostles** (starting while Jesus was still with them—cf. Matt. 10:26), **continue on the other side of the Great Commission, and last until His return** (Matt. 24:14)....That evangelistic mandate did not end with the apostles. It began with them and has fallen on all believers, in every generation of church history. Christians are called to eagerly “proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called [them] out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

**Life Application New Testament Commentary.** - Jesus continued his explanation for his use of parables. Although the truth may be hidden or secret for a while, it will not remain so. One day the truth will be brought to light. This could refer either to Jesus’ resurrection and ascension (when his followers would fully understand Jesus’ words) or the Second Coming. Jesus’ followers did not understand everything about Jesus at that time, but all their questions would be answered one day.

**J D Jones** - Our Lord kept certain things back from His disciples, but He hid them for a time only, that He might manifest them when they were able to bear it. He kept certain things back from the crowd, and revealed them to the disciples, only in order that the disciples might reveal them to the crowd when they were spiritually fit to receive them. (**ED: SEE ALSO [B B WARFIELD'S REASONING](#)**) Jesus did not divide his disciples into two classes, as some of the Greek philosophers did, an outer and an inner circle; an outer circle, to whom He communicated elementary truth; an inner circle, to whom He communicated advanced truth. In Christianity, as Dr. Chadwick says, there is no privileged inner circle. There is no esoteric doctrine. All Christian knowledge is to be communicated and shared. If you have gained possession of any truth which is hidden from the average Christian, you are not to keep it hidden. There is nothing hidden, but that it may by and by be manifested; so set your lamp upon the stand. Nothing hidden but that it may be manifested! Its primary reference is to Christian truth, but one cannot pass it by without a brief word about its broader application. Hiding, says Jesus, is not permanent; manifestation is the ultimate end. Now we see in a mirror darkly, but then face to face. "Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" ( 1 Corinthians 13:12).

**Spurgeon on Nothing is hidden, except to be revealed** -You cannot conceal anything from the eye of God, so do not try to do so. You are like bees in a glass hive, watched while you are working, and your every movement observed. God can read the secret emotions of our hidden nature. “All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”

**Spurgeon** exposition - Tell out, then, what God has told to you; and let everybody hear from you the truth as you yourself have heard it. See the compound interest that there is to be in this blessed trading for Christ.

**Wuest on nothing is hidden, except to be revealed**- Vincent says that things are hidden in order that they may be manifested. Concealment is a means to revelation. **Robertson** quotes Swete as saying that it is stated that the temporary concealment is for final manifestation and a means to an end. Those who are charged with the secret at this time, are given the set responsibility of proclaiming it on the housetops after Ascension.

**Holman NT Commentary** - But whatever is hidden will be revealed. In fact, the disciples found things they did not understand revealed fully with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

**Chris Benfield** - All who were familiar with light knew that once a candle was lit, it exposed what had once been concealed in darkness. Light caused the darkness to flee and exposed what was actually there. The same is true in a spiritual aspect. Nothing can be hidden from the Light of Christ. His Light reveals what is there. It always exposes the sin and impurities within the heart. Just like a dark corner in a room being exposed by the light, the Light of Christ searches the deepest recesses of our hearts and exposes what is actually there. We may be able to conceal our thoughts and desires from others, but the Lord knows our hearts. In fact, He knows them better than we know them ourselves. There is nothing hidden from the Light of Christ. 1 Cor.4:5)

**Alan Carr** - The Lord reminds us that light holds the power to make hidden things plain. The light that Jesus came into this world to display not only reveals the hidden things of God to man; it also reveals the hidden things within man! That is why so many people who have heard the Gospel message have rejected it. The Gospel is a message of salvation, but it is also a message of confrontation. It is a message that reveals the darkness of the human heart. People are like insects and other creatures of the night, they flee light when it shines upon them. Why? Jesus said it was because “their deeds are evil”, John 3:16-21. When the light of the Gospel shines into a person’s heart, it reveals all the darkness contained in that heart. That is a painful experience for the lost sinner. Yet, when the darkness is exposed to the light, the darkness will have to flee and salvation will be the result. The first step in coming to Jesus to be saved is having your sins exposed to the light. We also need to understand that there is coming a day when all the hidden things of darkness will be revealed. Christians will see all of their secrets exposed at the Judgment Seat of Christ, 2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:12. Lost people will see their secrets revealed at the Great White Throne judgment, Rev. 20:11-15. No one has ever gotten away with sin! That is the clear teaching of the Bible, Ill. Reuben, Gen. 49:3-4; Achan, Josh. 7:1-26; Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5:1-11. The hidden works of darkness will always be brought out into the light. You and I will not be able to hide our sins either, Num. 32:23. It is far better to drag your own sins out into the open and confess them to the Lord than it is to hide them away, waiting for God to expose them, Pro. 28:13. And, they will be exposed! When we get honest about our sins, we can experience His forgiveness, 1 John 1:9. When we try to hide our sins away, they will destroy us from within. (Ill. David after his sin with Bathsheba, Ps. 38:1-11; Ps. 32:3-5.)

**Grant Osborne** -4:22 whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed. As in Mk 4:11, the “mysteries” (the hidden realities of the kingdom) are in the process of being revealed to Jesus’s followers. **Some say that this verse refers to our hidden thoughts and actions that will be revealed when Christ returns, but that does not fit the context.** The time of hiddenness was the present time, the time of parables and rejection when the truth of Jesus and his kingdom teaching was “hidden” from the outsiders (Mk 4:11b–12), and throughout Jesus’ life the forces of the world would be used by God to bring about his atoning death. The time of manifestation and light **probably** has two interdependent thrusts. First, at Jesus’ resurrection will come the turning point when his lamp will light up the world (John 8:12), and his true reality as the Messiah and Son of God will be manifest in the universal mission. Second, this will not come to complete fruition until the parousia (second advent), when his glory will universally be revealed and “every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Phil. 2:10). (Teach the Text Commentary Series – Mark)

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### **Immediate revelation not always desirable**

Here our Lord is justifying the parabolic form of teaching, which often serves to veil the truth, on the ground that immediate revelation is not always desirable. Many things are concealed, both in nature and by art, though the concealment is by no means designed to be permanent. What striking illustrations of this principle are furnished in geology! Look at the almost measureless beds of coal, hidden for ages in the bowels of the earth, but designed by Providence to be revealed when necessity should arise. The precise time for the unveiling it is not always easy to decide, because man’s knowledge is finite, but we rest assured that it will coincide with the need for its use. It is a principle worth bearing in mind when human efforts fail; for it is encouraging to know that such a result may be due simply to the fact that we have tried unconsciously to anticipate the fore-appointed time. (H. M. Luckock, D. D.)

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### **Things brought to light sooner or later**

The doctrine of Jesus Christ has nothing in it which fears the light; it is itself the light which must enlighten the world. Everything is brought to light sooner or later. The humble person conceals his virtue in this life, but God will disclose it at the day of eternity. The hypocrite hides his wickedness here, but he shall suffer an eternal confusion for it in the sight of heaven and earth. (Quesnel.)

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### **Secret sin comes out at the judgment** (ED: THIS MAY BE AN APPLICATION BUT IS NOT THE MOST ACCURATE INTERPRETATION - SEE GRANT OSBORNE ABOVE)

One day Thomas Edwards, the Scottish naturalist, went out on one of his expeditions to search for insects. He had on, as usual on such occasions, an old coat with many pockets, and each pocket held a goodly store of chip boxes wherein to place the various specimens of the insect tribe which he might find. He had a most successful day; met with many curious and rare insects, all of which he duly deposited each in its own little box, And now he was returning home laden with the spoils, every box and every pocket full, when suddenly he was overtaken by a tremendous storm. The thunder roared, the lightning blazed around him, the rain came down in torrents, like water from a bucket, and he was soon drenched and wet to the skin. Espying a farmhouse at a short distance, he made for it, and begged leave to shelter himself from the storm. To this the gudewife readily assented, made up a blazing fire, threw on a log, and told him to draw near and dry himself, whilst she went on with her household duties. Accordingly he did so, and soon his benumbed limbs began to feel the pleasant warmth of the fire. Presently the housewife returned, uttered a loud cry of horror and disgust, caught up a broomstick, and, deaf to all entreaties, drove him forth again into the pitiless storm. He now looked at himself, and soon perceived the cause of this strange treatment, for he was covered from head to foot with his beloved insects, so abhorred by others. The soaking rain had loosed and destroyed the boxes, and set their inhabitants at liberty, and they remained unseen in his pockets till the warmth of the fire brought them out. So will it be in the day of judgment: men’s darling sins will come forth to light, and cover the sinner with horror and confusion as with a cloak. The fire of that day will bring them forth, and then the sinner will be driven out by the Judge into the fierce tempest of God’s wrath.

### **Mark 4:23 “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”**

NET Mark 4:23 If anyone has ears to hear, he had better listen!"

GNT Mark 4:23 ε τις χει τα κο ειν κου τω.

NLT Mark 4:23 Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."

KJV Mark 4:23 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

ESV Mark 4:23 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."

NIV Mark 4:23 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."

ASV Mark 4:23 If any man hath ears to hear, let him hear.

CSB Mark 4:23 If anyone has ears to hear, he should listen!"

NKJ Mark 4:23 "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."

NRS Mark 4:23 Let anyone with ears to hear listen!"

YLT Mark 4:23 If any hath ears to hear -- let him hear.'

NAB Mark 4:23 Anyone who has ears to hear ought to hear."

NJB Mark 4:23 Anyone who has ears for listening should listen!"

GWN Mark 4:23 Let the person who has ears listen!"

BBE Mark 4:23 If any man has ears, let him give ear.

- Mk 4:9 Mt 11:15 Rev 2:7,11,17,29
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## COMMAND TO PAY ATTENTION!

If anyone has ears to hear ([akouo](#)), **let him hear** ([akouo](#)) (Mt 13:9+, Lk 8:8+) - Who has **ears**? Everyone. But Jesus is not speaking solely of physical ears, but of "spiritual ears." This translation almost sounds like a proverb, suggesting it is a good idea to hear. More literally this is a command from Jesus because **let him hear** is in the [present imperative](#) (and the only way we can obey is by [depending on the Holy Spirit to give us the desire and power to obey](#) - Php 2:13NLT+). Jesus is not just saying take in the "[sound waves](#)!" He is saying make sure you accurately interpret the "[sound waves](#)" and respond obediently and without hesitation to the "[sound waves](#)!" As Jesus' half-brother **James** would later write "But **prove** ([present imperative](#)) yourselves doers ([poietes](#)) of the word, and not merely hearers ([akroates](#)) who delude ([paralogizomai](#) - [present tense](#) continually deceiving by false reasoning) themselves.." (James 1:22+). While I realize this command of Jesus was spoken Pre-Pentecost and so the Spirit was not yet indwelling believers as He is now in the Church Age (Ro 8:9+), (in my opinion) the principle still applies that for one to **'hearken'** to Jesus' command calling for supernatural action ("[audition](#)"), he or she can only do so by learning to (1)[jettison](#) self-reliance and (2) rely [wholly](#) on the Holy Spirit to provide the enabling power to "listen up" and obey accordingly! Notice James' parallel passage where he commands us to be "**doers**." This charge begs the question "Can we **do** anything supernatural in our own power?" Not really! Jesus amplifies this vitally important principle declaring "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for **apart from Me** (AND TODAY THAT MEANS APART FROM RELYING ON THE ONE HE SENT TO BE OUR "HELPER" OR "ENABLER," THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST!) you can do (GREEK = ABSOLUTELY) nothing (OF ETERNAL VALUE OR SPIRITUAL FRUIT THAT "**REMAINS**" - Jn 15:16)." (Jn 15:5) .

I like the **NET Note** - The translation "**had better listen!**" captures the force of the third person imperative more effectively than the traditional "let him hear," which sounds more like a [permissive](#) than an imperative to the modern English reader. This was Jesus' common expression to listen and heed carefully (cf. Matt 11:15, 13:43; Mark 4:9, 23; Luke 8:8, 14:35).

**Let him hear** - Only on the lips of Jesus and found 16x in NT, 8 times while He was still on earth and 8 times after He ascended to Heaven! - Mt. 11:15; Mt. 13:9; Mt. 13:43; Mk. 4:9; Mk. 4:23; Mk. 7:16; Lk. 8:8; Lk. 14:35; Rev. 2:7; Rev. 2:11; Rev. 2:17; Rev. 2:29; Rev. 3:6; Rev. 3:13; Rev. 3:22; Rev. 13:9 (Click for comment on **let him hear** in Jesus' command to the church at Ephesus)

**Barton** explains "This saying, which repeats Mark 4:9, often concluded Jesus' important statements. As explained in 4:9 above, Jesus spoke of a deeper kind of listening: hearing not with the ears, but with the mind and heart. Only then could the hearers gain spiritual understanding from his parables. The honest seekers would understand the parables (see James 1:22+)."

**Moule** paraphrases it: "Now think that one out for yourself, if you can!"

**Hiebert** - a call found here in all the synoptics, marking the special importance of the parable. It was more than a pleasant story; it set forth truth that required serious consideration. It called for attention as well as discernment. The [present imperative](#) pressed upon the hearers their continuing duty to hear and heed what was taught. Jesus placed serious responsibility upon the hearer of the Word of God. Effective communication makes its demands upon the hearer as well as the speaker. (Ibid)

**William Lane** - With the admonition, "If you have ears to hear, then hear," Jesus indicates that there is more to this story than appears on the surface. That is why it is "a parable." (NICNT-Mk)

**Spurgeon** rightly said "There are many, who have ears, who do not hear to any real purpose. There is the physical act of hearing, but they do not hear in the heart and the mind. It is a very different thing to have an impression on the drum of the ear and to have an impression on the tablet of the heart. "He that hath ears to hear, **let him hear.**"

**Chris Benfield** - If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. Jesus often made similar statements following His parables, but these words were not without significance. They were a call to consider and respond to the truth received. This statement is very fitting in this particular parable. Jesus had spoken of the exposure and penetration of light. We all know that light also illuminates, providing guidance in darkness. **These had heard truth, their hearts had been illuminated by the light of Christ, and they were now responsible for what they had received.** I fear we often tend to be too casual with the truth we have received. The Lord has provided light for our benefit, and we are obligated to respond to the light. The truth we have received serves to guide our path as we walk with the Lord. We have a responsibility to heed what the light reveals, and avoid the pitfalls in our way, illuminated by the light. Those who know the truth, and willfully engage in sin, have no one to blame but themselves. Jesus provides light to guide our path, and we must continue to walk in the light. 1 John 1:7 – But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

**John Phillips** - Again the Lord's challenge rings forth. He has used these very words before (Mk 4:9). It is a phrase often repeated. In writing from glory to the seven churches of Asia, the Lord uses the expression over and over again (Rev. 2-3). Shakespeare borrowed the expression and used it in a different form when recounting Mark Anthony's speech to the Romans attending Caesar's funeral: "**Friends, Romans and countrymen, lend me your ears.**" The words are a challenge to us to pay attention to what is being said. That is important when listening to any communication. When the speaker is God, it is vital.

**Avery Willis** - The simplest way to receive the Word is to hear it. Even a child or a person who cannot read can hear the Bible. "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear" (Mark 4:23). "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). Matthew 13:3-23 lists four kinds of hearers of the Word: the apathetic hearer who hears the Word but is not prepared to receive and understand it (v. 19); the superficial hearer who receives the Word temporarily but does not let it take root in the heart (vv. 20, 21); the preoccupied hearer who receives the Word but lets the worries of this world and the desire for other things choke it out (v. 22); and the reproducing hearer who receives the Word, understands it, bears fruit, and brings forth results (v. 23). (Master Life)

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### Analysis of Mark 4:21-23 by Irving Jensen (Mark - Do it Yourself)

**SETTING** This passage continues Mark's reporting of selected parables of Jesus. The setting is still that of Mark 4:10, which reports Jesus as alone with "His followers, along with the twelve [who are] asking Him about the parables."

1. What two words of verse 22 answer to the parable word, "lampstand"?
2. What is the main point of this parable?

Apply this to teaching by parables, since that is the context of the paragraph.

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### Vance Havner - Are You Listening?

Speak; for thy servant heareth. 1 Samuel 3:10.  
He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. Matthew 11:15.  
He that hath an ear, let him hear. Revelation 2:7.

It is an oft-recurring word from our Lord, found throughout the Gospels—"He that hath ears to hear..." Some have ears—period! Samuel was listening—and God spoke. God has much to say today, but we have "ears to hear, and hear not" (Ezek. 12:2). Some stop their ears (Acts 7:57). Some turn their ears from the truth (2Ti 4:4). Some have itching ears (2Ti 4:3).

Are you tuned in on God? It is said that John Burroughs, the naturalist, could walk along a noisy street and overhear a cricket in the hedge. His ear was tuned to the little voices of nature. You can make your way through the hubbub and still keep in touch with heaven.

Samuel was listening. The boy who listens for God to speak will hear Him, for God is looking for such boys. God's men have been men of a double resolve: "I will hear what God the Lord will speak" (Ps. 85:8); and then, "What the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak" (1Ki 22:14).

### Related Resource:

- [ARE YOU LISTENING?](#)

- [What are some Bible verses about listening? | GotQuestions.org](#)

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**Vance Havner** - A lot of Sunday-morning Christians, who want to sit with folded hands and listen to a mild discourse on the Teacher of Galilee, need to be aroused from their stupor by a vision of the flaming Christ of the Candlesticks. Eight times in these messages to the churches He says, "He that hath an ear, let him hear." Eight times in the Gospels He says, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Some of us have ears ... period. "Hearing we hear not." We sit at church looking but not listening. God grant us ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches! And eyes to behold the Lord of the Lampstands bidding us "Repent ... or else!"

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### **Vance Havner - Learn How to Listen**

We spend much time and money learning how to speak when we need to learn how to listen.

"... hearing they hear not" (Matt. 13:13).

"... if any man hear my words" (John 12:47).

"He that hath ears, let him hear" (Mark 4:9).

After all, we have two ears to hear with and only one mouth to speak with—thank the Lord!

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### **QUESTION - [What did Jesus mean when He said, "He who has ears to hear"?](#)**

**ANSWER** - In the Gospels, Jesus speaks of those who have "ears to hear" at the end of a difficult saying or parable (e.g., Matthew 11:15; Mark 4:9, 23). Who is "he who has ears to hear"? Better yet, who is "he who has ears"? Ears are a feature shared by all of humanity—to not have ears would be an unnatural occurrence. Therefore, when Jesus addresses those who have ears, He refers to all who have been given His words—no matter their age, ethnicity, language, or status.

But there is a difference between having ears and having "ears to hear." Jesus' [parable of the sower and the seed](#) contrasts types of hearers: those who let the Word of God pass straight through their ears and those who truly listen and seek understanding (Mark 4:13–20). Some hear the Word, yet they do not allow it to take root because the seduction of worldly pleasures and comfort overcomes them. Others end up rejecting the Word because of persecution or trials. Others hear the Word and open themselves to understand and accept it so that it transforms them. Those who have "ears to hear" allow the Word to bear fruit to the glory of God. It is up to the hearer to decide whether to take the Word seriously and pursue understanding; only a few are willing—the rest have ears, but they do not have "ears to hear" (Matthew 7:13–14, 24–27).

Whenever Jesus says, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear," He is calling for people to pay careful heed. It's another way of saying, "Listen up! Pay close attention!" Speaking in parables was one way in which Jesus sought to gain the attention of the crowds—people love stories, and the [parables](#) depicted events and characters with which they could readily relate. But unless they were willing to tune out other distractions and come to Jesus to understand the meaning of His preaching, His words would be only empty stories. They needed more than ears, however keen they were; they needed ears to hear.

When asked by His disciples why He was speaking to the crowds in parables, Jesus refers to Isaiah 6, which speaks of people who have eyes and ears, yet who have hardened their hearts and chosen to ignore the Word of the Lord (Matthew 13:10–15; cf. Isaiah 6:8–10). Part of the judgment on those who refuse to believe is that they will eventually lose their opportunity to believe: "Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them" (Matthew 13:12; cf. Romans 1:18–32).

A similar phrase is found in Revelation in each of the seven letters to the churches: "Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). And in Revelation 13:9, immediately following a description of the [Antichrist](#), we read, "Whoever has ears, let them hear." The readers of Revelation are called upon to pay close attention and seek God's wisdom concerning what's written.

Who is "he who has ears"? The simple answer: all people who have been or are being given the words of God. Like the parables' original audience, we must also "Listen up! Pay close attention!" Jesus' simple request is that we use our God-given faculties (eyes to see, ears to hear) to tune in to His words (John 10:27–28; Mark 4:24; Revelation 3:20). "For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open" (Mark 4:22). Seeking God's truth takes energy and focus; it takes a willingness to be challenged and changed. While the way of God's truth is not the most convenient or fun path to take, we can be assured that it is the best one (John 1:4; 10:9; 14:6). And so He bids us, "Come" (Matthew 11:28–30).

*Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live. I will make an*

## Vance Havner - The Deaf Generation

In Caesarea we saw an outdoor theatre, not an amphitheatre, but a semicircular stone auditorium. From the back row we could hear our leader speak in conversational tones from the platform. Moreover, he told us that a larger theatre in Ephesus that could hold twenty-four thousand was constructed centuries ago with the same marvelous acoustics. All this in a day when in my travels all over America I have had congregations of a hundred or so complain that they could not hear in a tiny church! Larger edifices wrestle continually with the problem. All our experts somehow cannot come up with the acoustics of antiquity!

How many times have listeners in little auditoriums lamented that hearing was bad only a few yards from the pulpit! Could it be that we slaves of our own devices have become so accustomed to hearing aids of all sorts that we imagine we cannot hear without them? We limp on our crutches and if the amplifier does not work "hearing we hear not" (Matthew 13:13).

Once I listened to the veteran evangelist, Gipsy Smith. He was a preacher of the old days and abhorred all new devices. I thought I could not hear him and when he asked if any of us were having trouble about it, I raised my hand. "You're not listening!" was his reply. Could it be that, conditioned as we are to mechanical aids, we just think we cannot hear the preacher?

And of course those dear souls who come to church early to get a back seat could move up closer and fill that empty lumberyard of ten rows of seats right in front of the pulpit. But they never do, yet still insist that they cannot hear!

"Ears that hear not." "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Mark 4:9). Ears to hear! All of us are equipped with ears but hearing is another matter. We hear and we do not hear. Our ears catch vocal sounds emanating from the pulpit, but the message escapes us. We hear (after a fashion) what the minister says but our Lord said, "Let him hear what the Spirit saith..." (Revelation 2:7). Of course sometimes the preacher is not saying what the Spirit says and if we listened ever so well there would be no word from God. Or the trouble, may be not with the transmitter but with our receiver! There is a preparation to hear the sermon as well as a preparation to deliver the sermon.

We live now in an ear-splitting age of amplified dissonance and some think the next generation will have to be equipped with hearing aids. The more our eardrums are bombarded with demonic waves of music (which is not music but only an excuse for not being able to make music), the deafer our souls will be.

Something has gone wrong with our hearing—both physically and spiritually. We are not going to correct it by clever devices. We must get at the cause. We need to do something about how we hear as well as what we hear. There is famine of the hearing of the Word of God—a famine because in some quarters it is not being preached and in others because our ears are not tuned and trained to hear it.

God grant us more Samuels who can say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth" (1 Samuel 3:9)!

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**ILLUSTRATION OF EARS TO HEAR** - The Battle of Britain was at its height. Night and day the enemy bombers flew in across the English Channel to unload their cargoes of death and destruction on the cities and villages below. The Royal Air Force had put up a magnificent fight. Sir Winston Churchill, in recounting later what the world owed to that valiant group of men who flew their battered Hurricanes and Spitfires against incalculable odds, declared, "Never before in the field of human conflict have so many owed so much to so few." In one lonely RAF outpost, a group of fighter pilots was gathered in the mess hall. It was a scene often repeated in those days. The men were worn out with fatigue, they were dirty and disheveled, their eyes were bleary, and beards sprouted on their chins. They were snatching a moment's relaxation before climbing the skies again to fight off more of the Nazi airwaves. Suddenly a buzzer sounded, and a voice came over the intercom from the operations room. "Bandits at fifteen thousand feet over P25. Over!" At once the pilots were on their feet and racing for the runways. Pausing on his way, the squadron leader barked back into the intercom one short reply: "**Message received and understood.**"

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**Joseph Parker - "If any man have ears."** - This is a common expression in the Scriptures.

**"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."**

The text says, "If any man have ears." All men have ears, but that is not the meaning of this particular text. He must not only have ears, he must have ears to hear, ears that can hear, and that do hear. It is not enough to have the sense of hearing, it must be put into exercise, and it must be kept at the highest point of attention. Many persons have ears who never hear anything worth hearing. You cannot hear unless you listen. If you were in earnest you would listen—are you? Do not leave all the work upon the preacher: meet him half-way, give him your attention, and he cannot fail; his message is such as to protect him from failure, but he cannot do many mighty works among you if you shut the door of your ear. Take a thousand men listening to a sermon; probably not one in ten

hears the sermon as the preacher meant it to be heard. Every man hears a voice, a sound, a noise—he hears one sentence following another; but that inner music which seeks the soul in its loneliness, to heal it with the love and hope of God, who hears in its ineffable meaning and its sweet benediction! Nor is this much to be wondered at. Consider how the ear has been treated all the week. Do not condemn the ear unheard. Let it plead its own cause, and it will mitigate the harshness of our judgment. "All the week long," says the ear, "I have heard nothing throughout the day but the clang of money, the tumult of bargaining, the uproar of commerce, the clamour of selfish controversy; and at night I have heard nothing but gossip, and twaddle, and childish remarks on childish topics—I cannot easily liberate myself from these degradations, and listen to words most ghostly and to gospels that seem to come from other worlds. Have patience with me, for I need awakening first out of an entangled and troubled dream." Verily there is sense in that fair speech; then it should have due weight. But the sense of the speech imposes a corresponding responsibility upon the speaker. We should prepare ourselves to hear the Divine voice. The reader of an immortal play asks, and asks in reason, that the audience should be seated ten minutes before the reading begins. It is a sensible stipulation. Shall I be unjust if I ask that my friends should be an hour with God before coming to hear the public proclamation of his word? Is it decent that we should wait on Shakespeare and leave the Eternal to wait on us? The ear should have a little prayer all its own. I will teach it one: "Lord, still the waves that are heaving and foaming in me, or I shall miss all that is tenderest in the music of thy voice. Quiet the mean noises which fill me with a worldly din, and let me hear the words, every one of them, which will bless the life. Circumcise me: yea, put thy sharp knife upon me, thou God of the circumcision, and make me hear. Then speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." There would be no poor sermons if we came thus; we should be all ATTENTION. As a matter of fact, how does the case stand? What was the last word you spoke at the door? Some mean word about the cold wind, some poor little narrow word of criticism upon a neighbour's reputation, some childish remark upon a puerile topic, chaffer and chatter, and hollowness, and nothing, and then rushing in you sing, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts." It cannot be done; such miracles are beyond your power. Can you be dragging your wings in the mud this moment, and in the flash of an eye spreading them out in the sun? Then say not that the age of miracles is past! I cannot do it. I must have time. I must think and pray, and then the banquet is always more than enough, abundant to redundancy, the lavish generosity of God!

That I am not speaking unjustly of the ear, I may refer to your own proverb, "Believe nothing you hear." Why? Because you do not hear it. The first man did not hear it: he twisted it; in passing through his corkscrew hearing, the straight line got a twist, and he never can straighten it out. So it has come down to him a marvellous story, a wondrous narrative of self-contradiction, utter and palpable absurdity. Then men say, "I thought he said so and so; I understood him to mean thus and thus; O, I beg pardon, I did not catch then what he said." And out of such foul springs do the streams of conversation rise, carrying their mud with them all through the acreage of our social economy. Thus we tell lies without lying; we are carriers of falsehood, though we never mean to be untrue. How is this? Because we do not hear. The ear is preoccupied; invisible speakers are addressing it, lovers unseen are soliciting its attention, or it is asleep or on a journey, or under a spell. Hardly a man in this congregation can listen. It takes a Judge to listen. How the Judges do listen! We are buying and selling all the time the man is preaching; yea, we are doing a little business in the middle of his prayer! To listen—who can do it? God knew this, and therefore again and again he says, "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear." Who would attempt to deliver a message to a man asleep, or propose to speak to a man a mile off? There are men in this house who are just now three thousand miles away!

Many a message has been lost because the speaker has not first roused the attention of his hearers. There is a man standing a little averted from you—his back is partly towards you—he is engaged in doing something, and you say, "Bring me three volumes of the 'Family Magazine,' John." He hears his own name at last, and says, "Sir?" Poor rhetorician thou! That was beginning at the wrong end. You should have said, "JOHN! Bring me three volumes of the 'Family Magazine' out of the library." "Yes, sir." See? Is that in the Bible? Every word of it—as to purpose and philosophy. How does God speak? First, attention. "Moses, Moses," and he said, "Here am I." "Samuel, Samuel." "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." "O earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." There is a science herein; study it, speaker and hearer.

The first thing to be done is to compel the ear to listen for the right thing. When I enter the house of God, it is to hear the word of God. If I went to hear a professional elocutionist I should go to judge of the balance of his voice; I should look out for the colouring of his tones; I should measure the velocity and the weight of his articulation; I should make an elocutionary study of the man. But in going to hear God's preacher, I go to hear God's word, how I may be saved, redeemed, purified, and fitted for Divine uses in this world. I want to hear how I may get home again after many weary wanderings in stony places; I want to hear what Christ said about sin, and pain, and woe, and want, and pardon; I want to hear about those who have gone up, who cares for them, what do they, how near are they; I want to hear about the secret place where the light is pure and the rest is without shock, or pain, or dream. My soul being alive with expectation and aflame with hope, God will not disappoint it, or he will expunge from his own book the sweet promise 'Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.'

It is said that the manner of the speaker has a good deal to do with the attention of the hearer. That is true, but an earnest hearer will care very little about the manner if he is deeply interested in the matter itself. Just look at that company of men, and listen to that person with a long paper standing at the head of the table. He seems to have chronic bronchitis. How he chammers his words, how



hoarsely he utters his sentences, how poor his enunciation! he calls a bush a bash, and a foot a fut. Listen to him and see how the people are all on the qui vive. What is the matter? He is reading a WILL, and every man in the company expects to get something. How choice they are about the elocution! They say to one another, "Rather a bad manner, don't you think? His manner is much against him, don't you think?" No, no. "What is there for me? and how much for me?" and they would go twenty times a day to hear that wheezy, asthmatic, non-elocutionist read a WILL, if they had any hope of getting anything out of it. Now I have a will; hear it:—"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." That is your portion. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." That is yours. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Claim your inheritance and enjoy it! "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Take it all. Have you heard the will? Claim your property!

You say that manner has a good deal to do with speaking. So it has. Let me remind you that manner has a good deal to do with hearing. Our Saviour is reported in the Gospel of Luke to have said, "Take heed, therefore, how ye hear." There is an art of hearing; attention is not without a science of its own. Hear for eternity, hear for your soul's good. Do you want to hear the gospel now? Then you shall. "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." You hear that? "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sin." "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come." Hear ye these words, or do they fall upon the cold ears of a dead soul? If you have heard these words you never can say again, long as you live, that you never heard the gospel!

Yes, there is a manner of hearing. Some persons listen captiously—they go for the purpose, express, of finding fault and showing their own cleverness in pointing out the fault which they suppose they have found. "These are spots in your feasts of charity." Some listen critically. They will make a man an offender for a word. They will dwell upon non-essential points: they prefer the pleasure-ground of art to the entangled forests of nature, out of which you cut the navies of the world. "These are clouds without water." Some listen indifferently: they care not what is said, or who says it: the preacher sheds his blood in vain for them—they see not nor heed the living sacrifice; they know not what the passion costs. "These are trees twice dead," and will be "plucked up by the roots."

When I was at Niagara I could not get a drink of water out of the cascade, not because there was so little water, but because there was so much. It is the worst place in the world to go for a glass of water, is the torrent of Niagara; it will drown both you and your glass! If there had been less, I could have got more. It is even so with some discourses. You do not get the benefit of them at the time, but down the river of the week, as far as about Wednesday, you can stoop and drink the quiet stream; the water that was shattered into foam by its infinite plunge is now healed and calmed like a redeemed life, and a mile down you may see your face reflected in the water that was snow a day since, silver foam making rainbows round the rocks—now it falls and quiets itself into a stream which makes glad the city of your life. The torrents of Chalmers are even now settling into quiet streams which many people are drinking with thankful gladness. Even as far down the Time-river as this, the torrents of puritan eloquence and theology are only just flowing at pace enough to be caught and used for the soul's drinking. Wondrous is this. Jesus Christ's speeches dazed the people at the time; they said, "He is mad;" and now these speeches, having taken their plunge like the Niagara cascade, are streams that make glad the city of God.

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." "If any man have ears to hear, let him hear." "Take heed how ye hear."

"Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man." Have you heard these things? If you say, "Yes, every word," then "Be ye DOERS of the word, and not hearers only."

**Mark 4:24 And He was saying to them, "Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides.**

NET Mark 4:24 And he said to them, "Take care about what you hear. The measure you use will be the measure you receive, and more will be added to you.

GNT Mark 4:24 Κα λεγεν α το ς, Βλ πετε τ κο ετε. ν μ τρ μετρε τε μετρηθ σεται μ ν κα προστεθ σεται μ ν.

NLT Mark 4:24 Then he added, "Pay close attention to what you hear. The closer you listen, the more understanding you will be given-- and you will receive even more.

KJV Mark 4:24 And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given.

ESV Mark 4:24 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.

NIV Mark 4:24 "Consider carefully what you hear," he continued. "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you--and even more.

ASV Mark 4:24 And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you; and more shall be given unto you.

CSB Mark 4:24 Then He said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear. By the measure you use, it will be measured and added to you.

NKJ Mark 4:24 Then He said to them, "Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given.

NRS Mark 4:24 And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you.

YLT Mark 4:24 And he said to them, 'Take heed what ye hear; in what measure ye measure, it shall be measured to you; and to you who hear it shall be added;

NAB Mark 4:24 He also told them, "Take care what you hear. The measure with which you measure will be measured out to you, and still more will be given to you.

NJB Mark 4:24 He also said to them, 'Take notice of what you are hearing. The standard you use will be used for you -- and you will receive more besides;

GWN Mark 4:24 He went on to say, "Pay attention to what you're listening to! Knowledge will be measured out to you by the measure of attention you give. This is the way knowledge increases.

BBE Mark 4:24 And he said to them, Take care what you give ear to: in the same measure as you give you will get, and more will be given to you.

- **Take care:** Pr 19:27 Lu 8:18 Acts 17:11 Heb 2:1 1Jn 4:1 1 Pe 2:2 2 Pe 2:1-3
- **by your standard:** Mt 7:2 Lu 6:37,38 2 Co 9:6
- **listen:** Mk 9:7 Isa 55:3 Joh 5:25 Jn 10:16,27
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Luke 8:18+ "So take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him."

2 Jn 1:8 Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.

Luke 6:38+ "Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure--pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."

2 Corinthians 9:6 Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

## PRINCIPLE OF RECIPROCITY

This is the **principle of reciprocity** – we get out what we put in. **Reciprocity** is responding to a positive action with another positive action, rewarding in kind. Every time you receive God's Word with eagerness, openness and obedience, God will give you more truth. This principle is summarized in Jesus' conditional statement...

"If anyone is willing to do His will (THE CONDITION = OBEDIENCE), (THE GIFT) he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself." (Jn 7:17)

**And He was saying to them, "Take care what you listen to - Who is them?** Some say the multitudes, but others the disciples, which I favor. Jesus is calling for His hearers again to have listening ears (as in Mk 4:23).

**Irving Jensen** - The command "**Take care**" (4:24) is the key to the remainder of the second paragraph. If a person listens attentively and accepts Jesus' words, he will be given more teaching. And if he responds favorably to that, he will be given even more (Mk 4:25).

**Spurgeon - Be careful what you hear; hear the truth, and the truth only.** It does seem to me as if some people said, "Here is a place of worship; there is sure to be a sermon, let us go in and hear it." Ah! but all that is preached is not gospel, and it is not all hearing that will be valuable to your souls. Especially at this present time it is incumbent upon Christians to learn how to use the discerning faculty with regard to what is, and what is not, truth. Would you eat all meat indiscriminately without tasting and testing its quality? If so, would you not soon be ill? Does a man take any drug that may happen to be upon the chemist's shelves? Does he not expect great care to be exercised in the doctor's dispensary, lest he should be taking poison where he hoped for a salutary medicine? Remember what the apostle John says, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God." And when you do know what the truth is, be not ready to listen to that which is contrary to it; or you will rue the day in which you lent your ear to the deceiver. Ulysses was not unwise when he sealed the ears of his sailors while they passed by the rocks of the sirens, for they sang so sweetly that they tempted mariners to run their ships upon the rocks where they would be wrecked. So, dear friends, with sealed ears pass by those who have nothing to communicate that can tend to your spiritual edification, and thus carry out our Saviour's words, "Take heed what ye hear." **This command is also a very clear note of warning.** We take heed what we eat, and what we drink; every person who desires to have health does that; and shall we be careless of what we hear? May we not, by hearing error and falsehood, engender disease in our spirit, and bring our soul into sin, and sorrow, and eternal ruin? Time is too short for us to be listening to every babler; heaven and earth are too important for us to be running any risk concerning our eternal state by giving heed to the speculations of evil men.

**Holman NT Commentary - Hear** in the Bible also carries the meaning of "act upon." Jesus was telling us to pay attention to what we hear and beware how we act upon it.

**Vance Havner - THE RESPONSIBILITY OF LISTENING** Take heed therefore how ye hear.... Luke 8:18. What we hear is important (Mark 4:24), but it is equally important how we hear. Receiving with meekness the engrafted Word (James 1:21-22+) is a solemn duty. One reason why we do not have many great preachers, is because we do not have many great listeners! It is just as important that Christians prepare to hear the sermon as it is that the preacher prepare to preach it. How few churchgoers ever think of readying ears and heart to hear the Word of God! We must be doers of the Word, of course, as well as hearers, but good hearing prepares for good doing.

**Bob Utley** says "This refers to the personal acceptance or rejection of Jesus. The rabbis believed that the mind was a plowed garden ready for seed. What we let our eyes see and ears hear (cf. Mark 4:9, 23) takes root. We become what we dwell on, focus on, make priority!"

**B B Warfield** - the passage culminates in a great warning. "Take heed how ye hear." And this warning is supported by the verses already incidentally adduced: "With what measure ye mete ..."; "He that hath ...; He that hath not ..." The warning is, of course, of universal application. It is spoken here to Christ's immediate disciples, and it is most immediately a warning to them to look with care and loving scrutiny on the teaching He was giving about the Kingdom. Do you not fail, it says, to hear and ponder; to understand and profit by this teaching. But it stretches further. As we, too, are His disciples it comes in these times also to us. Let us not fail to-day to hear and ponder and understand and profit by the teaching brought to us by these pungent words! (Faith and Life)

This is the **CAUTION**. **Phillips** explains that "We are to take heed what we hear. We must be careful about that to which we listen. There are many voices. We hear false words, foolish words, and filthy words spoken. There are fanciful words and fiendish words. Some words flatter. Some are fierce. We would do well to censor the books we read, the programs we watch, and the voices we hear."

**THOUGHT** - This is a good reminder for us to be careful about what comes in through our **eyes** and **ears**: Why? Because **Take care** is **blepo** which means literally to "**look at what you hear!**" It is a command in the [present imperative](#) which means to continually, as the habitual practice of your life made the conscious choice to be spiritually alert, an attitude you can only fulfill by continually depending on the [Holy Spirit to obey](#). See Pastor's Bill's words to men regarding "[fantasy](#)".

Luke's parallel is similar - "So **take care** (also [present imperative](#)) how you **listen**; for whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him." (Lk. 8:18+)

**THOUGHT** - Just a thought to consider. I began "fasting" totally from ALL news (even Fox News, etc) about 3 years ago as it was so negative, so disturbing, so anxiety producing, so frustrating, etc, etc. Now if there is something that I absolutely need to know, a friend will usually let me know. I am sure I have missed a lot of real news but I have also been spared the agony of having to stomach the fake news that was epidemic three years ago! Perhaps it is better now. I think I will still pass on the news, as I have saved over \$1000 on my expensive generally godless newspaper that littered my driveway each morning!

**Take care** (beware, take heed) ([991](#)) ([blepo](#)) basically means to have sight, to see, to look at, then to

observe, to discern, to perceive with the eye, and frequently implies special contemplation (e.g., often in the sense of “keep your eyes open,” or “beware”) It can speak of spiritual perception including the nuances of taking warning (taking heed, being aware) and speaks of careful observation. **TDNT** says “**blepo** also means “to see” with a stronger emphasis on the function of the eye, so that it serves as the opposite of “to be blind.” It can also be used for intellectual or spiritual perception.” All uses in Mark - Mk. 4:12; Mk. 4:24; Mk. 5:31; Mk. 8:15; Mk. 8:18; Mk. 8:23; Mk. 8:24; Mk. 12:14; Mk. 12:38; Mk. 13:2; Mk. 13:5; Mk. 13:9; Mk. 13:23; Mk. 13:33

**By your standard of measure it will be measured to you**- What is the **standard of measure** in context? It certainly seems to that the **standard of measure** refers to our hearing. If we have good hearing (like good soil), we will be receptive to His words and receive back even more ([reciprocity](#)). Respond to God’s truth and more truth will follow.

We are to pay close attention to what we hear. The closer you listen to what is being said, the more understanding you will gain. (Mattoon)

Proverbs 9:9 records a similar truth "Give instruction to a wise man and he will be still wiser, Teach a righteous man and he will increase his learning."

This is the **COUNSEL** - As **Phillips** says "We are to measure out to others wholesome words that come our way. We are particularly responsible to pass on divine truth. There is something reciprocal about it. The more we pass on to others, the more we will have passed on to us."

We see this same principle in giving of our treasure -

Lu 6:38+ Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."

2 Co 9:6 Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

**Grant Osborne** -With the **measure** you use, it will be **measured** to you—and even more. This begins with the third repetition of the basic command of the parable discourse. “Consider carefully (pay close attention) to what you hear” (see also vv. 9, 23). The parable of the **measure** was a common Jewish proverb (cf. Matt. 7:2) stemming from commerce. It was a scoop used to **measure** out grain or goods purchased to assure fairness in the sale. This is the principle of *lex talionis* (the law of retribution or reciprocity), also central to Revelation (on the absolute justice of God). What we do for God we will also receive from God (note the divine passive “**will be measured**” here). Here it means that careful hearing of Jesus’s teaching will be rewarded by God. Then Jesus adds that by the grace of God the reward will exceed the effort. God will give us even more understanding. There is a superabundance of riches for those who search the Word carefully.

(Teach the Text Commentary Series – Mark)

**Akin** interprets it "If the measure of your hearing is good, rich, receptive to the Word, you will receive it back and even more. Indeed, “the one who has (v. 25), more, will be given.” Note the repetition in vs. 24 and 25. - “still more will be added” (v. 24) - “still more will be given” (v. 25) ([Sermon](#))

**and more will be given you besides** - This is the **CLARIFICATION** (or better COMFORT). As **Phillips** says "Those who hear what God has to say will want to hear more. In the Lord's encounter with the woman at the well, we see the rapid growth of a soul in the knowledge of Christ. First, she called Him "a Jew." Then she said, "Sir." Then she called Him "a prophet." Finally, she confessed Him as Messiah and as "Christ" (John 4:7-29)"

**Alan Carr** feels "The idea here is that those who listen to what the Lord is telling them, and obey Him by giving their faith away, will see Him reveal even more truth to them. If you truly want to know the deep things of God, take the time to share the things you already know. Give away what He has given you!...As you give away the truth the Lord has revealed to you, He will give you more truth. If you hoard up the truth and keep it to yourself, the Lord has no reason to give you more truth. The Gospel is the only commodity that becomes more valuable as you give it away. The more you share the truth with others, the more the Lord will share His truth with you. As we share our faith, we are making an investment in others and in our own spiritual growth. We are called to be “rivers of living water”, John 7:38. We are supposed to let the truth flow out from us. Far too many Christians act like they are ponds. The truth flows in and nothing ever flows back out. As a result their life stagnates.

**Chris Benfield** - B. The Expectation (24b) – And he said unto them, **Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given.** Jesus revealed those who embraced truth and were committed to sharing truth could expect to receive more truth. Those who listened and responded by faith, would receive more and more from the Lord. This principle remains as well. If we desire to receive truth, we can expect to have our desire fulfilled. Those who seek the Lord, and His truth, are promised an abundant supply. The key to obtaining wisdom is to seek the Lord to provide.

James 1:5 – If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. Clearly, many lack wisdom because they have no desire for wisdom. I pray we will draw nigh to the Lord in order to receive the wisdom we need in this difficult and dark day!

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### Analysis of Mark 4:24-25 by Irving Jensen (Mark - Do it Yourself)

1. What is the one command of the paragraph?
  2. How is the remainder of the paragraph related to that command?
  3. How is stewardship taught in verse 25?
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#### Sowing Seed and Sleeping Well - Diligence

That calls to mind a third attitude highlighted in the parables of Mark 4: diligence. We undertake the task of evangelism humbly; we do it obediently; and we stay at the task diligently.

You have no doubt heard people argue that if we openly acknowledge God's sovereignty in the salvation of sinners, that will take all the motivation out of evangelism. That's a common criticism of Reformed theology and its emphasis on the sovereignty of God.

But look at Mark 4:24-25: "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. 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." That is another axiomatic analogy. You reap what you sow (Gal. 6:7). "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully" (2 Cor. 9:6).

Now, let me just stop there and say this: we are not the source of anyone's salvation, but we are the means by which the gospel is disseminated into this fallen world. We must be humble when we consider how God saves sinners, and we must be obedient when we observe the means by which the seed is scattered. It is our duty to let the light shine. We must be diligent to broadcast the seed.

How diligent should we be? Here's the motivation: "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you" (Mark 4:24). Here we come right back to this astonishing promise, this truism, the axiom that ought to spur us to diligence: usefulness in the work of the gospel is proportionate to the seed sown and leads directly to eternal reward. Sow sparingly, reap sparingly. Sow bountifully, reap bountifully.

So you sow the seed; you sow it diligently because you know that your usefulness is proportionate to your sowing. And that leads to divine blessing. That leads to eternal reward. That's how you purchase friends for eternity. "To the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away" (v. 25).

Now there are plenty of false evangelists, phony Christians, and professional hypocrites who think they're going to get a reward. They're going to say, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" (Matt. 7:22). Jesus will say to them, "I never knew you; depart from me" (v. 23).

But the true believers who sowed authentic gospel seed will receive "still more" (Mark 4:24). More of what? More of everything, more of all the grace and goodness and kindness of God. In the words of Matthew 13:12, "He will have an abundance"—an overflowing abundance of blessing in life and eternity. That is certainly a motive for diligence. (John MacArthur in the Unadjusted Gospel)

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Hosea 4:6 - My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

When people lack the knowledge of God, it is because they have rejected the knowledge already received, which could have led them to God. "Unto you that hear shall more be given" (Mark 4:24).

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**Spurgeon** applies this warning - This command is also a very clear note of warning. We take heed what we eat, and what we drink; every person who desires to have health does that; and shall we be careless of what we hear? May we not, by hearing error and falsehood, engender disease in our spirit, and bring our soul into sin, and sorrow, and eternal ruin? Time is too short for us to be listening to every babbling; heaven and earth are too important for us to be running any risk concerning our eternal state by giving heed to the speculations of evil men.

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#### Nothing Lost

"With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you."—Mark 4:24

During the summer a clergyman called on a lady who had a very fine collection of roses. She took him out to see them—white roses, red roses, yellow roses, climbing roses, and roses in pots, the gay giant of battles and the modest moss rose—every species he had ever heard of, and a great many he had never heard of, were there in rich profusion. The lady began plucking, right and left. Some bushes with but a single flower she despoiled. The clergyman remonstrated. "You are robbing yourself," dear madam." "Ah," she said, "do you not know that the way to make the rosebush bear is to pluck its flowers freely? I lose nothing by what I give away." This

is a universal law. We never lose anything by what we give away.

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### **Warren Wiersbe on Mark 4:24**

In ancient times, most people didn't own copies of the Scriptures. However, they learned to listen with attention and remember the Scriptures as they were read or sung in the temple and the synagogue. People were better listeners and learners in those days. Today we have so many editions of the Bible available, including audio recordings and Braille editions, that we should know the Scriptures better than we do. But it isn't too late to get started reading God's Word systematically. After all, people take time to read novels and newspapers and to watch television, but they don't seem to have time for the Bible, the most important book ever published. Jesus warns us to exercise discernment in what we hear and see. Why?

**What we choose to hear and see reveals what we are.** The Scottish preacher George H. Morrison said, "Men hear with all that they have made themselves." Our appetite determines the menu we seek. If we know Jesus Christ and follow him, we will have an appetite for the truth as it is in Jesus and will daily spend time in the Scriptures. "But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night" (Ps. 1:2). Jesus compared the Word of God to seed (Luke 8:11), and seeds must be planted and watered before they can take root and bear fruit. The people who open their hearts and minds to the poisonous seeds of this world are planting lies where they should be planting God's truth. "Take heed what you hear!" (Mark 4:24).

**What we choose to hear and see determines whether we gain or lose.** In Scripture, the word **hear** carries with it the idea of obeying. It isn't enough just to read or hear the Bible; we must understand it and obey it. If we do, we grow in the knowledge of the Lord as well as in the graces of the Christian life. If we measure out time and energy to study the Word, God will measure out the blessing of the Spirit to us. The more we take in, the more the Lord will add to us every time we feed on God's truth. To waste time that could be devoted to the Word of God and prayer is to rob ourselves of spiritual riches. Paul told Timothy to exercise himself to godliness (1 Tim. 4:7). Nobody criticizes a person who follows a healthy exercise schedule, and God honors his children when they take time to be holy.

**What we choose to hear and see determines how much we have to share with others.** The measure we give to the Lord in our devotional exercises determines how much we will receive from him. The more we gratefully receive from God, the more he gives us; the more he gives us, the more we can share with others. The teacher, preacher, and Christian witness will always have spiritual treasures in their hearts to pass along to those in need. By exercising diligence and discernment, we reject the wisdom of the world and the lies of the devil and we help to nurture people in God's Word. If God's children would only feed on the milk, bread, meat, and honey of the Word, what a difference it would make in their lives and ministries!

The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing;  
But the soul of the diligent shall be made rich.  
Proverbs 13:4

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### **The Good Way Mark 4:24**

Christ gives some good advice in this text. We note three lessons given here for our learning and profit.

#### **FIRST—THE ALARM**

**"Take heed what you hear."**

If we are not careful what goes in our ears we can ruin our character. The gossip and slanderer would fill our ears with dirt which will defile our character. The foul mouth will fill our ears with dirt which will likewise defile our character. It does make a difference what you hear. Elsewhere in the Scripture we are told to leave the presence of one who is speaking folly. Listen to the liberal news media and politician, and you will become fouled up in your thinking. Be careful what you hear. Sometimes it is not words but music that defiles the ear. The wrong kind of music has ruined more people than almost anything else. You can tell the spirituality of a person and a school by the music they produce.

#### **SECOND—THE AXIOM**

**"With what measure you mete [measure], it shall be measured to you."**

The context of this axiom tells us that the kind of stuff we listen to affects us in the way we listen to it. We would take this axiom out of its context to give it a more universal application. In this it says, you get what you paid for. If you put forth a great effort you will reap accordingly, but if you put forth a lame effort you will not reap abundantly. Many folk want but are unwilling to pay the money or time or energy that it takes to get what they want. They want to know the Bible but will not study it much, so they are spiritual dunces. They want to advance in their job but do not put forth much effort on the job. The farmer who wants a good crop has to work

for it. It does not come automatically simply because he wants a good crop. If you want to achieve in life, you will have to sacrifice and give much time and effort to achieving or you will not make it. Many folk have a champagne taste and a Pepsi-cola budget. They want to purchase a Cadillac at a price of a used Ford. Then they wonder why they do so little.

### **THIRD—THE AWARD**

#### **"Unto you that hear shall more be given."**

This is part of the axiom, we apply it to our text. If you hear the truth diligently, your award will be to be knowledgeable in the truth. Those who burn the midnight oil gain the award of learning because they pursued the truth diligently. If you are disinterested in hearing God's Word preached and in reading your Bible, you will not do well in spiritual knowledge. But the diligent in this area will be "given more," they will grow in the knowledge of the Lord. It is those who give themselves to learning who have the award of learning the Word. Spiritual ignorance is for the dilatory, but the spiritual award comes to the diligent. (John Butler - Sermon Starters)

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#### **Instruction from the Lord to Hearers C. H. Spurgeon.**

Mark 4:23-24 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear....

In these days we have many instructions as to preaching; but our Lord principally gave directions as to hearing. The art of attention is quite as difficult as that of homiletics. The text may be viewed as a note of discrimination. Hear the truth, and the truth only. Be not indifferent as to your spiritual meat, but use discernment, We shall use it as a note of arousing. When you do hear the truth, give it such attention as it deserves. Give good heed to it.

#### **I. HEAR IS A PRECEPT: "Take heed what ye hear."**

1. Hear with discrimination, shunning false doctrine (John 10:5).
2. Hear with attention; really and earnestly hearing (Matthew 13:23).
3. Hear for yourself, with personal application (1 Samuel 3:9).
4. Hear retentively, endeavouring to remember the truth.
5. Hear desiringly, praying that the Word may be blessed to you.
6. Hear practically, obeying the exhortation which has come to you. Note — this hearing is to be given, not to a favourite set of doctrines, but to the whole of the Word of God (Psalm 119:128).

#### **II. HERE IS A PROVERB: "with what measure," etc. In proportion as you give yourself to hearing, you shall gain by hearing.**

1. Those who have no interest in the Word find it uninteresting.
2. Those who desire to find fault, find faults enough.
3. Those who seek solid truth, learn it from any faithful ministry.
4. Those who hunger find food.
5. Those who bring faith, receive assurance.
6. Those who come joyfully are made glad. But no man finds blessing by hearing error; nor by careless, forgetful, cavilling hearing of the truth.

#### **III. HERE IS A PROMISE: "Unto you that hear," etc. You that hear shall have —**

1. More desire to hear.
2. More understanding of what ye hear.
3. More conviction of its truth.
4. More personal possession of the blessings of which you hear.
5. More delight in hearing.
6. More practical benefit from it. God gives more to those who value what they have.

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The light of Jesus' truth is revealed to us, not hidden. But we may not be able to see or to use all of that truth right now. Only as we put God's teachings into practice will we understand and see more of the truth. The truth is clear, but our ability to understand is imperfect. As we obey, we will sharpen our vision and increase our understanding (see James 1:22-25). (Life Application Study Bible)

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Carr adds - By the way, we serve a God Who specializes in giving us “more”.

- ·God doesn't just pardon, He “abundantly pardons”, Isa. 55:7.
- ·God doesn't just give mercy, He “delighteth in mercy”, Micah 7:18.
- ·God doesn't just save, He saves “to the uttermost”, Heb. 7:25.
- ·God doesn't just save the sinner and forgive his sins; He adopts him into His family. He gives him peace, joy, hope and blessing. He provides absolute assurance and eternal security.
- ·Our God majors in the “more”.

You see we have a Savior Who gives not “of” His riches, but “according to His riches”, Phil. 4:19. When a billionaire gives a dollar out “of” his wealth he has given, but he hasn't given much. When a billionaire gives “according to his riches” he can do great good.

On one occasion, billionaire Bill Gates spent hundreds of millions of dollars to have every child in the African country of Rhodesia immunized against smallpox. That is giving “according to his riches”.

God's giving makes what Bill Gates' did pale in comparison! God reaches into His vast stores in Heaven and He keeps on giving us “more”. More love, more mercy, more forgiveness, more grace, more hope, more blessings, etc.

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**Mark 4:24 - We Hear What Our Ears are Tuned To-** Anthropologist Ethal Alpenfels once told me about a woodsman who was walking down Fifth Avenue in New York City with a friend. All at once the woodsman said, “Why, I hear a cricket.” “Nonsense,” scoffed the city man. “In this uproar? Not a chance.” “But I do,” said the woodsman, “and I'll show you.” At that he took a dime out of his pocket and dropped it on the pavement. Instantly, people within 30 feet turned around to see whose coin had dropped. “You see,” said the woodsman, “people hear what their ears are tuned to. Mine happen to be tuned to crickets.” (A. Purnell Bailey, columnist, Capper's Weekly)

**Mark 4:24 - THE RESPONSIBILITY OF LISTENING** Take heed therefore how ye hear.... Luke 8:18. What we hear is important (Mark 4:24), but it is equally important how we hear. Receiving with meekness the engrafted Word (James 1:21) is a solemn duty. One reason why we do not have many great preachers, is because we do not have many great listeners! It is just as important that Christians prepare to hear the sermon as it is that the preacher prepare to preach it. How few churchgoers ever think of readying ears and heart to hear the Word of God! We must be doers of the Word, of course, as well as hearers, but good hearing prepares for good doing. (Vance Havner)

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**Mark 4:25 “For whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.”**

NET Mark 4:25 For whoever has will be given more, but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him."

GNT Mark 4:25 ζ γ ρ χει, δοθ σεται α τ · κα ζ ο κ χει, κα χει ρθ σεται π α το .

NLT Mark 4:25 To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given. But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them."

KJV Mark 4:25 For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

ESV Mark 4:25 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."

NIV Mark 4:25 Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him."

ASV Mark 4:25 For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath.

CSB Mark 4:25 For to the one who has, it will be given, and from the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken away."

NKJ Mark 4:25 "For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has



will be taken away from him."

NRS Mark 4:25 For to those who have, more will be given; and from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away."

YLT Mark 4:25 for whoever may have, there shall be given to him, and whoever hath not, also that which he hath shall be taken from him.'

NAB Mark 4:25 To the one who has, more will be given; from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away."

NJB Mark 4:25 anyone who has, will be given more; anyone who has not, will be deprived even of what he has.'

GWN Mark 4:25 Those who understand these mysteries will be given more knowledge. However, some people don't understand these mysteries. Even what they understand will be taken away from them."

BBE Mark 4:25 He who has, to him will be given: and he who has not, from him will be taken even that which he has.

- Mt 13:12 25:28,29 Lu 8:18 16:9-12 19:24-26 Joh 15:2
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## HEAR IT AND HERALD IT!

Luke 8:18+ "So take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him."

**For** (gar) term of explanation.

**Whoever has, to him more shall be given** - The point is that it was only as His disciples shared the light they had received would they be enabled to receive more spiritual light.

**Grant Osborne** - The warning is quite clear, spelling out the two sides of the principle of reciprocity in Mark 4:24. Those who "have ears to hear" (Mark 4:9, 23, 24a) the parables are the fruitful soil from Mark 4:8, 20 and receive "even more" teaching and understanding (thirtyfold, sixtyfold, a hundredfold). Those who do not open their hearts to the kingdom truths (like the first three soils in the opening parable) lose even what little understanding and blessing they originally possessed. This would be especially tragic in this Jewish context because those Jews who reject Jesus lose their covenant place in the olive tree (Ro 11:17). (Teach the Text Commentary Series – Mark)

**Disciples are not made to be reservoirs but conduits!**

**And whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him**- Use it or lose it is the idea! Examples include our physical muscles which we must be used else we lose them (atrophy). Or remember that Hebrew or Greek (or any language) you were so proficient with in school, but now it sounds like a "foreign language" to you because you have not used it for years.

**THOUGHT** - Is this not the same principle Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount when He gave a charge coupled with a caution - Matthew 5:13+ "You are the **salt** of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless (cf "whoever does not have"), how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men (cf "taken away from him". (Mt 5:13+) In Colossians Paul issued a command to "**Conduct** ([present imperative](#) a command calling for us to depend on [the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of (redeeming [exagorazo](#) in [present tense](#) - see [Redeem the Time](#)) the opportunity ([kairos](#)). 6 Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person." (Col 4:5-6+)

**Share the Gospel light frequently in the power of the Spirit.**

**MacArthur** on **whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him** - The parallel statement in Luke 8:18 makes the intent of Jesus' statement clear: "Whoever does not have, **even what he thinks he has** shall be taken away from him." False converts (as illustrated by the rocky and weedy soils) may claim to have spiritual life, but in reality they do not possess it. They may profess to know God, but through their works they deny Him (Titus 1:16). On the day of judgment, with no foundation, their

house will come crashing down (Matt. 7:26–27; cf. Phil. 3:8). The emptiness of their superficial faith will be exposed (cf. James 2:19), and the Lord will say to them “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness” (Matt. 7:23). Jesus’ words also served as a warning to false teachers, those who scatter corrupted seed. Just as there are false disciples, there are also false evangelists. Both will be judged by God. Conversely, genuine believers delight in proclaiming the truth of the gospel to others, knowing that such obedience brings divine blessing both in this world and in heaven

**Spurgeon's Exposition** - When the gospel is not received, when a man refuses it, it becomes a positive loss to him. There is a way by which it so works that, what a man thought he had, disappears. Some have been made worse by the preaching of that Word which ought to have made them better. May it not be so with any one of us!

**B B Warfield** - Observe how pointedly our Lord develops this idea in the later verses of our passage; with what piercing directness He asserts the effect in the last verse of all: **For he that hath to him shall be given, and he that hath not from him shall be taken away even that which he hath**. Here is the underlying philosophy of parabolic teaching; and along with it of all teaching. And is it not so, our own hearts being the judge? Let the parables fall on the ears of one instructed in the Kingdom of Heaven and how beautifully rich in their teaching they are. Points of attachment are discovered at every step and the conceptions that rest half-formed in us are developed in the richest manner. Let them fall on the minds in which no thought of the Kingdom of Heaven was ever lodged; and they are but as rocks in the sky. All teaching as to divine and heavenly things is, in a measure, parabolic; we can reach above the world and ourselves only by symbols. All such teaching comes to us, then, as a test, and the proximate account of its varied reception may be found in the condition of the ears that hear it. Have we ears to hear this music? Or does it beat a vain jangling discord only in our ears? The philosophy of the progress of the Kingdom in the world rests on the one fact—the condition of the hearer. He that has ears to hear, hears; he that has no ears to hear this music, remains unmoved. (Faith and Life)

**Daniel Akin** - Respond to God’s truth and more truth will follow. Embrace the Kingdom now when it is small and you will share in it when it is worldwide! In radical contrast, the one who rejects the Word, even what he has will be taken away (lost). Love Jesus and the Word and you get more of Jesus and the Word. Refuse Jesus and the Word and you lose the little you may once have had. This is a critical spiritual principle we must give careful and close attention. Our spiritual health, our spiritual eternity is at stake.

**ILLUSTRATION** - The value gained by regular exercise. The results of stopping your exercise! Your muscles will atrophy. Use them or lose them! The superior spiritual parallel is seen in Paul's command to young Timothy - "But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, **discipline** ([present imperative](#) only possible to make this your lifestyle by depending on [the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, (1) since it holds promise for the present life and (2) also for the life to come." (1 Ti 4:7-8+). Compare the thought of **whoever has, to him more shall be given!** Given not only in this present passing life, but in the future, forever life! "How we respond to Jesus day by day is of the utmost seriousness. Do not take for granted the relationship you have today. It could all be lost tomorrow." (Daniel Akin)

**Give instruction to a wise man and he will be still wiser,  
Teach a righteous man and he will increase his learning.**  
Proverbs 9:9

**Chris Benfield** - As you study the Scriptures, it becomes evident that God’s economy operates much differently than that of man. Jesus declared those who possess wisdom, earnestly desiring it, are promised to receive more; while those who lack wisdom, with no desire to obtain it, will lose what little they have. The truth of Christ is available for all who desire it, but we must seek it. This presents a challenge for every believer to be a good steward of all the Lord has provided. He gives wisdom for our good and His glory. We are expected to use the wisdom we currently possess in order to obtain more. I certainly desire to possess everything the Lord has to offer. I pray we all will be good stewards of that which the Lord has entrusted us.

The mind of the prudent **acquires knowledge**,  
And the ear of the wise **seeks knowledge**.  
-- Proverbs 18:15

**Brian Bell** - So, how will people respond to their/our message? As we learned last week from the Parable of the Soils there will be many indifferent or hostile to this message. So Jesus gives them two more Parables to encourage them/us, that the going will be rough at times but there will be an exciting harvest. When the going gets tough, the tough (Spirit filled toughness) will get going!

**Chris Benfield** - I don't think anyone would deny that we are living in a dark day spiritually. The cure for **darkness** has always been the introduction of **light**. Those who walk in darkness are not even aware of the severity of their darkness (ED: AKA "THEY ARE DECEIVED!"). They need the **light of Christ** to shine in their path, through the **life of a believer**. We are called to be **salt and light**. Our light was not given to be hidden away within our areas of comfort, but to shine forth in the darkness. Have you been saved by grace, possessing the light of Christ? If so, is your light shining so other may see? If not, I urge you to seek the Lord to remove

whatever's hiding your light, so you can shine for Him. If you do not possess this light, come to Christ for salvation!

Bob Utley- When it comes to the gospel, it continues to give and give to those who have responded, but to those who reject it, it leaves nothing! Jesus is using a paradoxical proverb (cf. 4:22, 25; 6:4; 8:35; 10:43–44). This was typical of near eastern teachers.

### [Go Light Your World - sung by Kathy Troccoli](#)

Written by Christopher M. Rice

There is a candle in every soul  
Some brightly burning, some dark and cold  
There is a Spirit who brings fire  
Ignites a candle and makes His home

Carry your candle, run to the darkness  
Seek out the hopeless, confused and torn  
Hold out your candle for all to see it  
Take your candle, and go light your world  
Take your candle, and go light your world

Frustrated brother, see how he's tried to  
Light his own candle some other way  
See now your sister, she's been robbed and lied to  
Still holds a candle without a flame

Carry your candle, run to the darkness  
Seek out the lonely, the tired and worn  
Hold out your candle for all to see it  
Take your candle, and go light your world  
Take your candle, and go light your world

We are a family whose hearts are blazing  
So let's raise our candles and light up the sky  
Praying to our Father, in the name of Jesus  
Make us a beacon in darkest times

Carry your candle, run to the darkness  
Seek out the helpless, deceived and poor  
Hold out your candle for all to see it  
Take your candle, and go light your world

Carry your candle, run to the darkness  
Seek out the hopeless, confused and torn  
Hold out your candle for all to see it  
Take your candle, and go light your world  
Take your candle, and go light your world

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The light of Jesus' truth is revealed to us, not hidden. But we may not be able to see or to use all of that truth right now. Only as we put God's teachings into practice will we understand and see more of the truth. The truth is clear, but our ability to understand is imperfect. As we obey, we will sharpen our vision and increase our understanding (see James 1:22-25). Jesus' words may have been directed to the Jews who had no understanding of Jesus and would lose even what they had—their privileged status as God's people. Or Jesus might have meant that when people reject him, their hardness of heart drives away or renders useless even the little understanding they had; thus, any opportunity to share in God's Kingdom will eventually be taken away completely. To understand Jesus' message, people must listen and respond. Those who listen casually, for whatever reason, will miss the point. (Life Application Study Bible)

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**Brian Bill** has some **pithy application** of Mark 4:24-25:

Let's flesh this out a bit more.

- **If we have a high capacity for knowing, God will pour knowledge into us. If we bring a big bucket,**

**God will fill it up, and then some:** "...and still more will be added to you. For to the one who has, more will be given." Isaiah 55:7 says that God will not only pardon but "abundantly pardon." Ephesians 3:20: "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think..." And Malachi 3:10 tells us that when we honor God with our giving – BTW, 10% (a tithe) is a good place to start. When we put Him first with our finances, He will "open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need."

• **If we have a distracted capacity for knowing, our knowledge will be diminished.** The end of Mark 4:25 is ominous: "...and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away." It's both obvious and profound – if you want to know, you'll know. If you don't want to, you won't. Or to say it another way: people do what they want to do. That reminds me of the Parable of the Talents where the guy who was given one talent buried it and then ended up with no talents (Mt 25:18, Mt 25:24).

A week ago Thursday about 60 men gathered for a Men's Huddle time as a follow-up to the Iron Sharpens Iron Conference, where 108 men from EBC attended. I had the delight of speaking from 1 Corinthians 16:13-14: "Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love." We pondered 5 Mandates for Men from this passage (there are extra cards available at the Welcome Center if you'd like one).

1. Wake up
2. Stand up
3. Man up
4. Grow up
5. Love up

I referenced an article entitled, "The Modern Man and His Fantasy World." If you want to read it, it's posted on the Sermon Extras tab on our website. Here are some highlights: "I have noticed a trait, particularly among men, where faith is impeded. I'm talking about a cultural fixation upon fantasy...men are giving themselves to something they can see but is not real. However, with Christianity we give ourselves to something that we cannot see but is actually real."

Here are the three fantasy worlds men are giving themselves to...

- Pornography
- Fantasy sports
- Video games

"We find that men are reluctant and stagnant in their Christianity because they are thriving in a fantasy world. Is it any wonder why there is such a decline in biblical masculinity in the church? It is a shame that many men are far too busy conquering fake lands, looking at fake women, and winning fake championships to follow Christ's path of self-denying, cross-bearing, service."

Let me say it more strongly than I did to the men that night. If you live in fantasy land, you won't grow in your faith.

Do you remember the acronym **GIGO** that came out many years ago? It stands for "**Garbage In, Garbage Out**" and is a concept common to computer science and mathematics: the quality of output is determined by the quality of the input. If you put garbage in, garbage will come out. If men (and women) focus on **fantasy**, we will not **glow** for Christ and **our ability to know Him will be short-circuited**.

Let's change this up a bit. GIGO can also mean, "**God In, God Out**."

John Acuff perceptively quips: "If you do the work, things happen. If you don't, they won't. I wish it were more complicated than that because then I'd have a better excuse to not do anything."

Some time ago I heard a pastor say that most American Christians are educated way beyond their level of obedience.

**We must obey what we know and then God will give us more.** (cf Jn 7:17) What measure are you using? Make sure it's big enough and then let God add even more. If you want to know Him, you will because Galatians 6:7-8+ promises:

"**Do not be deceived** ([present imperative with a negative](#)): God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life."

## Mark 4:26 And He was saying, "The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil;

NET Mark 4:26 He also said, "The kingdom of God is like someone who spreads seed on the ground.

GNT Mark 4:26 Κα λεγειν, Ο τω ς σ τ ν βασιλε α το θεο ς νθρωπο ς β λ τ ν σ π ρ ο ν π τ ς γ ς

NLT Mark 4:26 Jesus also said, "The Kingdom of God is like a farmer who scatters seed on the ground.

KJV Mark 4:26 And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground;

ESV Mark 4:26 And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground.

NIV Mark 4:26 He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground.

ASV Mark 4:26 And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth;

CSB Mark 4:26 "The kingdom of God is like this," He said. "A man scatters seed on the ground;

NKJ Mark 4:26 And He said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground,

NRS Mark 4:26 He also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground,

YLT Mark 4:26 And he said, 'Thus is the reign of God: as if a man may cast the seed on the earth,

NAB Mark 4:26 He said, "This is how it is with the kingdom of God; it is as if a man were to scatter seed on the land

NJB Mark 4:26 He also said, 'This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the land.

GWN Mark 4:26 Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is like a man who scatters seeds on the ground.

BBE Mark 4:26 And he said, Such is the kingdom of God, as if a man put seed in the earth,

- **The kingdom of God:** Mt 3:2 4:17 13:11,31,33 Lu 13:18
- **like a man who casts seed:** Mk 4:3,4,14-20 Pr 11:18 Ec 11:4,6 Isa 28:24-26 32:20 Mt 13:3,24 Lu 8:5,11 Joh 4:36-38 12:24 1Co 3:6-9 Jas 3:18 1Pe 1:23-25
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### [Video](#)

## PARABLE OF THE SEED GROWING

### A Simple Outline:

- Sowing - Mk 4:26
- Growing - Mk 4:27-28
- Harvesting - Mk 4:29

This parable is found only in the Gospel of Mark. Given the subject matter, this parable seems to supplement the parable of the sower/soils. This parable does not have some similarity to Matthew's parable of the tares, in Mt 13:24–30+, but it is a distinct, separate parable. The audience is apparently the entire multitude not just the disciples because of what Mark writes at the end of these parables

With many such parables He was speaking the word to them (MULTITUDES), so far as they were able to hear it; and He did not speak to them without a parable; but (CONTRAST WITH THE WORD SPOKEN TO THE MULTITUDES) He was explaining everything privately **to His own disciples.** (Mk 4:33-34<sup>+</sup>)

If you have ever been discouraged preaching the Word or sharing the Word in an evangelistic setting than the truth of this short, pithy parable should encourage you to "not lose heart in doing good (SOWING), for in due time we will reap (HARVEST) if we do not grow weary." (Gal 6:9+). You will notice that the man, obviously a farmer, in this parable shows up only two times, at the beginning to sow the seed and at the end to harvest the fruit or crop. While this parable is in the context of the mysteries of the kingdom and most clearly describes how the kingdom of God grows, it is also clearly applicable to all of us who are in the Kingdom of God and are God's sowers. Without the sowing of the seed there would be no harvest.

So let this parable be an encouragement to your heart. As **Oswald Chambers** said "It is one thing to go through a crisis grandly, but a different thing to go through every day glorifying God when there is no witness, no limelight, and no one paying the remotest attention to you."

**Irving Jensen** - The vast project and institution of God's kingdom involves inviting souls into it (Mk 4:26) and then receiving them (Mk 4:29). It is a supernatural work of God, mysterious and incomprehensible to man (Mk 4:27).

**Bock** - At this point, Mark resumes his collection of seed parables (Mk 4:3–20), which has been interrupted by the parables of the lamp and the measure (Mk 4:21–25), with the parables of the seed growing secretly (Mk 4:26–29) and the mustard seed (Mk 4:30–32)....despite the hiddenness of the kingdom of God, growth is certain and inevitable (Mk 4:26–29)....The banal nature of the parable (J. Edwards 2002: 142) fits well the **already now—not yet** dimension of the kingdom of God.(BECNT-Mk)

**John Phillips** - The Lord turns now from the necessity of spiritual growth to the mystery of spiritual growth. Spiritual growth is divided into two parts—our part and God's part. We cannot do very much. All we can do is take the seed and sow it. Anyone can do that. Nobody needs a degree in agriculture to be able to take handful after handful of seed and throw it on the soil. However, the marvel and wonder of what follows ought never to cease to amaze us. (Exploring the Gospel of Mark)

**And He was saying** - This phrase **He was saying** is repeatedly used by the Gospel writers, especially Mark (10/22 NT uses) and usually introduces a new subject/topic. **Hiebert** thinks the phrase in this context is "apparently marking the resumption of the account of the public teaching. (cf. Mk 4:33–34)." Indeed, it seems that Jesus is now speaking to the multitude. That is a reasonable interpretation but the text does not tell us who the audience is for this unique parable. What we do know is that only His disciples could understand "for He was explaining everything to them privately." (Mk 4:34) After speaking a number of parables to His disciples in Matthew 13 Jesus asked them "**Have you understood all these things?**" To which they answered "**Yes.**" (Mt 13:51).

**He was saying** - Matt. 9:18; Mk. 4:9; Mk. 4:11; Mk. 4:21; Mk. 4:24; Mk. 4:26; Mk. 7:20; Mk. 7:27; Mk. 8:21; Mk. 12:38; Mk. 14:36; Lk. 6:5; Lk. 9:23; Lk. 9:33; Lk. 9:34; Lk. 10:2; Lk. 13:18; Lk. 23:42; Jn. 6:6; Jn. 6:65; Jn. 8:23; Jn. 12:33

**James Edwards on the Kingdom of God** - A more banal comparison could not be imagined. The kingdom of God should be likened to something grand and glorious: to shimmering mountain peaks, crimson sunsets, the opulence of potentates, the lusty glory of a gladiator. But Jesus likens it to seeds. The paradox of the gospel—indeed, the scandal of the Incarnation—is disguised in such commonplaces. The God whom Jesus introduces will not be kept at celestial arm's length. Jesus does not tell us how high and lofty God is but how very near and present he is, and how the routines of planting and harvesting are mundane clues to the nature and plan of God. (PNTC-Mk)

**The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil**- Like is a [term of comparison](#), specifically a [simile](#), which was the way Jesus began many of His parables. He focused on something His audience knew or saw and then pointed to the similarity between the known and the unknown truth about the **Kingdom of God**. And so the focus of the [simile](#) in this parable is on one aspect of the **Kingdom of God** (synonymous with [Kingdom of Heaven](#), the more common term in Matthew), which in simple terms is that sphere over which God exercises supreme, sovereign authority. In Jesus' day and in the Church Age the **Kingdom of God** is invisible and internal, being manifest in the hearts of Jesus' followers who are subject His rule (cf Lk 17:21+). For more discussion of the future aspect of the **Kingdom of God** see the resources below. And so in this [simile](#) once again Jesus presents the familiar figure of a farmer sowing seeds. **Seed** is the same word used by Luke in Lk 8:5+ of a sower sowing his **seed** which Jesus then explained was the **Word of God** in Lk 8:11+. Mark 4:14+ describes the seed as **the Word**. So here Jesus gives a familiar literal picture, which points to an underlying spiritual truth. In the previous parable of the sower/soils, the **soil** was identified as the heart of those who heard the Word of God.

**Hiebert** points out that "This parable may point to the analogous growth of the kingdom in the world at large or to its development in the life of the individual," adding that "the sower is left unidentified, the main point being the growth of the seed. **Cast** does not imply carelessness but points to the usual method of sowing the seed broadcast by hand. The aorist tense denotes a definite act that needed not to be repeated. The subjunctive mode presents the whole scene as hypothetical, although it was a common scene of rural life." (Ibid)

**Seed** ([4703](#))([sporos](#) from [speiro](#) = to sow) means literally seed (Lk 8:5, Mk 4.26) and metaphorically refers to God's Word, which like literal seed is also able to "germinate" and produce spiritual life (Lk 8.11). Surprisingly there are only 5 NT uses - Mk. 4:26; Mk. 4:27; Lk. 8:5; Lk. 8:11; 2 Co. 9:10

#### Related Resources:

- Expectation of the Jews Regarding the Kingdom of God
- In depth comments on the Kingdom of God

- See commentary on the Kingdom of God in Luke 17:21
- What is the kingdom of God
- [What is the difference between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven?](#)

**Wuest** has an interesting comment who could be true - Expositors says, "This new parable refers to the disciples as representing the fertile soil, and is a pendant to the parable of the Sower, teaching that even in the case of the fourth type of hearers the production of fruit is a gradual process demanding time. Put negatively, it amounts to saying that Christ's ministry has as yet produced no fruit properly speaking at all, but only in some cases has met with soil that gives promise of fruit (the disciples)."

**John MacArthur** - In the spiritual realm, the evangelist (represented by the sower) distributes the message of the gospel (the seed). Some of the hearers (the good soil) respond to the gospel in saving faith and exhibit spiritual life. This regeneration and spiritual transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:5-8). Clearly, it does not depend on the evangelist but only on God, who imparts life through the power of the gospel (cf. John 6:37-44; Rom. 1:16; 1 Thess. 1:5; 1 Peter 1:23). Human ingenuity, emotional manipulation, man-centered techniques, and market-driven strategies cannot create new life in the heart of a sinner. Regeneration is only by the Spirit of God (cf. Eph. 2:1-4; Titus 3:5). Though believers are all called to faithfully proclaim the message, they can take no credit when unbelievers respond in repentant faith (cf. 1 Cor. 3:6-7).

**William MacDonald** - This parable is found only in Mark. **It can be interpreted in at least two ways.** The man may picture the Lord Jesus casting seed on the earth during His public ministry, then returning to heaven. The seed begins to grow—mysteriously, imperceptively but invincibly. From a small beginning, a harvest of true believers develops. When the grain ripens ... the harvest will be taken to the heavenly garner. **Or, the parable may be intended to encourage the disciples** Their responsibility is to sow the seed. They may sleep by night and rise by day, knowing that God's Word will not return to Him void, but will accomplish what He has intended it to do. By a mysterious and miraculous process, quite apart from man's strength and skill, the Word works in human hearts, producing fruit for God. Man plants and waters but God gives the increase. The difficulty with this interpretation lies in verse 29. Only God can put forth the sickle at harvest time. But in the parable, the same man who sows the seed puts in the sickle when the grain is ripe. (Believer's Bible Commentary)

**Adrian Rogers** applies the truth of this parable in what he calls **"the law of dissemination.** The law of dissemination says this: You must sow, if you would reap. There can be no reaping unless you put seed in the ground. Now, in the laws of biology, we know there's no such thing as spontaneous generation. There can be no life without, first of all, sowing to produce that life. God's entire economy, in the physical realm, and in the spiritual realm, is based upon this principle: There can be no reaping unless we first disseminate—unless we first scatter, unless we first sow. As a matter of fact, the Lord Jesus said the entire Kingdom of Heaven is based on the principle of sowing and reaping. You might want to put in your margin, Mark 4:26. Jesus said, "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground" (Mark 4:26). He said this: "The whole Kingdom of Heaven is based on this, as if a man should cast seed into the ground." And so, what is the first law? It's the law of dissemination. What does it say? You can't reap unless you sow. Got it? Got it! Move to the second law of the harvest. (The Law of the Harvest)

### **Inductive Bible Study - Analysis of Mark 4:26-29 by Irving Jensen (Mark - Do it Yourself)**

SETTING This passage continues Mark's reporting of selected parables of Jesus. The setting is still that of Mark 4:10, which reports Jesus as alone with "His followers, along with the twelve [who are] asking Him about the parables."

1. What work does the man do (Mk 4:26, 29)?
2. What does this statement teach about the kingdom: "he himself does not know" (Mk 4:27)?

### **QUESTION - [What is the meaning of the Parable of the Growing Seed \(Mark 4:26-29\)?](#)**

**ANSWER** - The first thing we notice about this parable is its similarity to the [Parable of the Sower](#) in Mark 4:2-9. In some ways, this parable expands on Jesus' teaching of how the "good soil" (a receptive heart) receives the "seed" (the Word of God).

In the Parable of the Growing Seed, Jesus tells of a man who scatters seed on the ground and then allows nature to take its course. As the man who sowed the seed goes about his business day by day, the seed begins to have an effect. First, the seed sprouts; then it produces a stalk and leaves, then a head of grain, and, finally, fully developed kernels in the head. Jesus emphasizes that all of this happens without the man's help. The man who scattered the seed cannot even fully understand how it happens—it is simply the work of nature. "All by itself the soil produces" (verse 28).

The parable ends with a harvest. As soon as the grain is ripe, the sickle is employed, and the seed is harvested. This happens at just the right time.

Jesus did not explain this parable, as He did some others. Instead, He left it to us to understand its meaning. Taking the seed to be

the Word of God, as in Mark 4:14, we can interpret the growth of the plants as the working of God's Word in individual hearts. The fact that the crop grows without the farmer's intervention means that God can accomplish His purposes even when we are absent or unaware of what He's doing. The goal is the ripened grain. At the proper time, the Word will bring forth its fruit, and the Lord of the harvest (Luke 10:2) will be glorified.

The truth of this parable is well illustrated in the growth of the early church: "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow" (1 Corinthians 3:6). Just like a farmer cannot force a crop to grow, an evangelist cannot force spiritual life or growth on others.

To summarize the point of the Parable of the Growing Seed: "The way God uses His Word in the heart of an individual is mysterious and completely independent of human effort." May we be faithful in "sowing the seed," praying for a harvest, and leaving the results to the Lord! [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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### Brian Bell summarizes Mark 4:26-29-

We learn 3 other things from this also: (*David Hewitt, Mark, pg.71*)

1. **It has Mysterious Growth** – Sharing the gospel is never a matter of **formulas & techniques**. There is always another dimension...the mysterious working of **God!**
2. **It has Gradual Growth** – The Sower needs **patience**. You can't **plant** today & **pick** tomorrow! The seed needs to germinate & grow.
  1. James 5:7,8+ Therefore be **patient**, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer**waits** for the precious fruit of the earth, **waiting patiently** for it until it receives the early and latter rain. **You also be patient**. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.
  2. When you **sow**...give it time to **grow**.
    1. Never expect a **full crop of Christian graces** immediately from them.
      1. But, you can water it with your **tears & prayers!**
        1. Ps.126:5 Those who sow in tears Shall reap in joy.
    3. It germinates, sprouts, grows & he **did not know how** nor could he **explain it**.
      1. Meaning it was w/o human intervention. It's "**Miracle Grow!**" [God Grow]
  3. **It has Certain Growth** – The seed's growth is inherent in the seed.
    1. Note **by itself** in (vs.28). Try to guess the Greek meaning **α τὸματος**.
      1. Used 1 other time in NT, in Acts 12:10 when the prison gate opened **by itself** automatically.
    2. When the word of God is faithfully sown it **will** grow...there **will be** a harvest!
      1. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is **the power of God** to salvation for everyone who believes. Rom.1:16
    3. "The world has more winnable people than ever before...but it is **possible** to come out of a **ripe field** empty-handed."

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**Alan Carr** - There is a sense in which we are like that farmer. We have been called to sow seed. We have not been called to sow wheat seed into a plowed field, but we have been called to sow the Gospel seed into the hearts of other people. (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; Rom. 10:13-18)

We have been sent into a lost and dying world to tell others about what Jesus has done for us. You may not be a preacher, a missionary or a Pastor; but if you are saved, you have a testimony. You have been saved by the grace of God and you have a story to tell.

We should be like the great examples we find in the Bible, a get busy telling others about Jesus, Ill. Paul, 1 Tim. 1:12-15; The Blind man – John 9:25; The woman at the well – John 4:28-30.

When we share the Gospel with another person, we have no control over the results. In fact, the results are not our worry. Our duty is to sow the seed; the results are in the hands of the Lord.....

**ILLUSTRATION** - Modern science has made some amazing discoveries in our lifetimes. Scientists can even take a seed apart and analyze its structure and composition. They can also create a seed that is an absolute duplicate to a seed produced in nature. Their seed had the same size, shape and chemical composition. If you placed a seed made in a laboratory beside a seed produced in nature, you would not be able to tell the difference. But, when those seeds are planted, the difference becomes clear. Both seeds can be planted in good soil and both can receive plenty of sunshine and water, the seed produced in nature will germinate and grow. The seed produced in the laboratory will merely rot away. Why? Science has learned how to make a seed, but they have never learned to produce life! Only God can do that! The process involved in the transformation from seed to fruit is a work of God!.....



When the Word of God is planted in a human heart, the Spirit of God uses that Word to produce conviction in the heart of the hearer, John 16:7-11. This process can be seen several times in the pages of Scripture.

- As Jesus talked to the woman of Samaria, she became convicted of her sins, John 4:7-26. She was saved!
- As Saul of Tarsus listened to Stephen preach the Word of God, and as he watched him die, Saul was convicted of his sinful condition, Acts 7:54-60; 9:1-6. He was saved!
- As Jesus spoke to a rich young man about his soul, this young man was convicted, Matt. 19:16-22. He remained lost in his sins.

This is a secret process, John 3:8. We never know where and how the Spirit of God is working....

**ILLUSTRATION** - A pastor had served a country church for many years. He had faithfully preached the Word of God and had regularly visited and witnessed in the community. His ministry in that church spanned many years, but there was little fruit and very few conversions. Eventually the old preacher died. He went to his death convinced that his ministry in the little country church had been a failure. A while later the church called a new Pastor. He preached the same Gospel the old preacher had preached, but an amazing thing happened. People began to get saved. In fact, a revival broke out and many of the people in that community came to know the Lord. As they testified about their experiences, the people share on things in common. One new convert after the other testified and said that it was the faithful ministry of the old preacher that God had used to awaken them to their need of a Savior.....

Many godly parents have spent their lives praying for and witnessing to their wayward children. Many of them have gone to Heaven without seeing their prayers answered. God, however, touched the seed that had been sowed in those hearts and He had saved multitudes because a mom or a dad dropped the Gospel seed in the heart of a child. **Never give up!** Never stop telling a lost world about a saving Lord! Never allow this world to silence your witness for Jesus! Keep telling them about Him and trust Him to do His secret work in the hearts and lives of men, women, boys and girls. (**ED: MY FATHER PRAYED FOR ME FOR 20 YEARS BEFORE I ACCEPTED CHRIST! I PRAYED FOR MY OPIOID ADDICTED SON FOR 20 YEARS BEFORE HE ACCEPTED CHRIST AND WAS SET FREE FROM THAT HORRIBLE ADDICTION! SO DO NOT GIVE UP PRAYING BELOVED!** - SEE [My Testimony to the God's Grace](#)) You never know, that barren life that you have been sowing seed into might just spring to life on day! You might go to school, to work, to church and see that person profess their faith in Jesus. You might just get to watch them push away from the earth, grow tall in Jesus and bring forth fruit to the glory of God....

There is a precious promise given to every child of God who faithfully sows the Gospel seed, Gal. 6:9-10; Psa. 126:5-6. Therefore, child of God, keep sowing, keep watering, in the Lord's time there will be a harvest!

**ILLUSTRATION** - There is power in the seed! Some time ago, archeologists dug into a pyramid tomb in Egypt. In that tomb they found several jars of seeds. These seeds had been buried with the deceased person 3,000 years earlier. Those scientists took the seeds they found and planted them in good soil. They watered the soil and waited patiently. After a time, those ancient seeds germinated and tiny plants pushed their way through the surface of the soil. Those tender plants matured and produced fruit. Isn't that amazing? When that seed found its way into the right soil, a secret work took place and life came out of death.

Such is the power of the Gospel we preach here today! If you have never been saved by the grace of God; if you have never trusted Jesus Christ to be the Savior of your soul, you need to know that the Gospel has the power to transform your life. If the Lord has been speaking to you about your spiritual condition and you know you need to come to Jesus, this would be a good day for you to be saved. That seed will germinate in your heart and the Lord will make you a fruitful plant for His glory.

Still others need to get about the business of telling others about Jesus. This would be a good day for you to put aside all your excuses about why you can't tell others about Jesus. This would be a good day for you to come before Him and make a commitment to be a witness for His glory.

Others here are a little discouraged today because you think your prayers and your witness are in vain. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Why don't you get down before the Lord and talk to Him about your concerns. Ask Him to let you see a few sprouts in your field.

If He has spoken to your heart through this message, please let Him have His way in your heart and life. (Full message - [Mark 4:26-29 The Parable Of The Growing Seed](#))

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**ILLUSTRATION OF EFFECT OF SOWING SEED** - The difference between building a house and growing a garden. With the house the subtle changes can be seen day by day and often hour by hour. With the garden, nothing can be seen, often for long periods of time! (Note: So it is with the Gospel of grace! The witness can but sow the seed and then he must leave the results in the hands of sovereignty! You see, the Gospel has power, Rom. 1:16. God has placed within the Gospel seed everything necessary to

being life out of death. And, when that seed is sown into a prepared heart you can rest easy knowing that God will produce His harvest in His time, Isa. 55:11. So, let us spread the Gospel seed around liberally, knowing that when God brings His good seed into contact with a prepared heart, the result will be the salvation of that soul!) (Note: Why doesn't every witness produce a saved soul? Not all seed falls into good soil, Matt. 13:1-9! All the sower can do is sow the seed, the condition of the soil is not his worry!) (Alan Carr - [Mark 4:26-29 Principles Of Kingdom Growth](#))

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### **Chris Benfield - Incapable, yet Faithful Mark 4: 26-29**

Our text today once again deals with sowing and harvest. While the sower must put forth sufficient effort in preparing the soil and sowing the seed, he has no control over the harvest. He can faithfully cultivate the ground, keeping the field free of weeds that rob the plants of nutrients and hinder growth, but the Lord is responsible for the harvest. The sower is incapable of causing the seed to germinate in the ground, producing much needed rain at the right times throughout growth, or making the sun to shine on the field. While the sower does all he can, he must depend upon the Lord for a good harvest.

Our work in ministry is guided by these same principles. We are called to share our faith, planting the seeds of the Gospel, but we have no control over the harvest. We can be faithful to plant good seed, but the Lord must prepare the hearts of those who hear and cause the seed to germinate and take root in their hearts. He alone is responsible for the harvest.

As believers, this can be frustrating at times. We like to share our faith and see immediate results. While this can happen, most of the time it doesn't. When we are met with immediate success while sharing our faith, very likely someone has already come before us planting the seed, and we have been used to water that which has been planted. We must always remember that the Lord is responsible for the harvest. We are not called or able to save anyone; we are called to present the Gospel. While we have limitations regarding the harvest, we must remain faithful to sow the good seed. Let's take a few moments to consider the principles of this parable as we think on: Incapable, yet Faithful.

**I. The Activity in the Harvest (26-27)** – In the opening verses we discover Jesus' description of the activities involved in the growing process, leading up to the harvest. **Consider:**

**A. The Sowing (26)** – And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground. Again Jesus reminded the hearers of the necessity for seed to be sown if there was to be any hope of a harvest. In order for the farmer to reap a harvest, he had to be committed to sowing good seed. This was foundational for the harvest. Apart from sowing seed, one could never expect to reap a harvest.

We will discuss several aspects of the harvest that are completely out of our control, but this principle will never change – if we ever expect to reap a harvest, we must be willing to sow good seed. This principle is true in the physical realm, as well as within the spiritual realm. A farmer can't expect a harvest if he never takes the time to plant the seed. Likewise, we can't expect those apart from Christ to come to Him in salvation if the Gospel is never presented. If we desire a spiritual harvest, we must be willing to sow the Gospel.

**B. The Waiting (27)** – And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. Jesus revealed that following the planting of the seed comes a period of waiting. The farmer has done his part; he has prepared the soil and sowed the seed. Now all he can do is wait for the Lord to provide the harvest. There will be some work along the way to keep the weeds removed, but the farmer has no control over the growth of the plants or the yield of the harvest. Only time will reveal the abundance within the harvest.

This is often the hardest aspect of sowing and harvest. Many of us lack patience. We desire immediate results. However, reaping a harvest never happens overnight. We must do our part, faithfully sowing the seed, and wait patiently for the Lord to provide the increase.

**C. The Hoping (27)** – While the farmer waits for the plants to mature and yield their fruit, he is required to depend on the Lord and hope for a good harvest. The amount of yield is totally out of his control. No doubt he tends the field as the harvest is producing, but he cannot cause the plant to produce her fruit. He must patiently wait, with hopeful anticipation for the harvest.

This too is a difficult aspect for many who sow the Gospel seed. We must be careful not to pick green fruit. We have no control over the harvest. We lack the ability to save. As much as we would like to see folks come to saving faith in Christ, the harvest is out of our hands. We must do our part, bathe our efforts in prayer, and trust the sovereign will of God for the harvest.

**II. The Mystery in the Harvest (27b-28)** – As Jesus continued to share the principles related to sowing and harvest, He addressed the great mystery within the harvest. **Consider:**

**A. The Germination (27b)** – And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. While the farmer was faithful to sow the seed, he could not control whether the seed would germinate and produce a plant or not. He was faithful to sow the seed, and in time the seed germinated and produced a plant. The farmer did not create anything, and he really can't explain how it happened. He did his part and Lord did the rest.

The principles related to sowing and harvest are quite miraculous. One takes a mere seed, places it in the ground, and with the right temperatures and moisture, the seed produces a plant. Sometimes seeds can lay dormant for extended periods of time, but eventually germinate and a plant is produced. The same is true regarding the sowing of the Gospel. As desperately as we would like our efforts to be fruitful, only the Spirit can prepare the heart and cause the seed to germinate, producing life. We don't understand it, and we can't explain it! Fortunately we don't have to; we are not called to produce life, just plant the seed!

**B. The Growth (28)** – For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. The mystery and miracle of sowing and harvest continues. Given the right conditions, eventually the seed will germinate, producing a plant. The plant will be small and tender at first, but eventually it will grow and mature, producing small fruits and vegetables. In time these will mature for the harvest. Again, this is a mystery to the farmer. Remember, all he did was plant the seed. The germination and continued growth of the plant were out of his hands. He planted the seed and God gave the increase.

I enjoy working in my garden and seeing the various phases of growth. I plant the seed, but the Lord provides the increase. As the plants grow, my excitement and anticipation does as well. Looking at this from a spiritual perspective, growth is possible and expected. We can encourage others in the faith, investing in them, but really their growth comes from the Lord. As one yields to the Spirit, He provides the spiritual growth necessary.

**C. The Gain (28)** – For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. As the farmer patiently waits, eventually the harvest is received. What began as a tiny seed placed in the ground, produced a plant that yielded fruit. In time the fruit matured and was ready for harvest. In a good year, most of the fruit reaches maturity, but one never enjoys a 100% maturity rate. Inevitably, some of the fruit will not reach maturity. Again, the farmer has no control over the fruit maturing. That is the work of the Lord alone.

We can do all we can to nurture and equip young believers to be fruitful, but their maturity rests in the Lord. As much as we would like to see every believer develop into mature believers, this is never the reality. Again, this is not our responsibility. The maturity of fruit rests in the Lord. While many may become anxious and try to persuade a conversion, genuine salvation is never obtained until the Lord has prepared the heart and it is ready for harvest.

**III. The Maturity in the Harvest (29)** – But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. Here Jesus described the field becoming mature and the harvest being reaped. **Consider:**

**A. The Patience Involved (29)** – Jesus revealed the harvest is never reaped until the fruit is brought forth. It would do no good to pick the harvest early. The fruit would not be mature and the yield would not be what it should be. The farmer must wait until the harvest is ready before he decides to reap. We too must wait on the Lord and His timing. Trying to reap a harvest before the fruit is ready will not produce the yield desired. Someone may make a profession of faith, but lack the conviction and understanding for true conversion. Patience is necessary when seeking to reap a harvest.

**B. The Prudence Involved (29b)** – But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. The time of patient anticipation eventually comes to a close. The fruit is mature and ready to harvest. A wise farmer knows he only has a certain amount of time to reap the harvest. Too much delay will result in the fruit becoming to ripe or drying out on the vine. Both situations would ruin the harvest, and the yield produced.

While we need patience to wait upon the Lord until the harvest is ready, we also need wisdom to reap the harvest when the time is right. If you are faithful to sow the Gospel seed, you will eventually encounter mature fruit. There will be occasions when the time is right for the harvest, and we must be committed to sharing our faith. It is impossible for us to know during the initial encounter, but the fields are white, ready to harvest!

**C. The Providence Involved (29c)** – But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. The farmer's faithfulness and patience eventually paid dividends. The Lord saw fit to bless his efforts and produced a harvest, ready to reap. Remember, all the farmer had control over was the planting of the seed. God honored his faithfulness to sow and provided the increase. All glory for the harvest goes to God.

Nothing in this parable promotes or insinuates laziness on the part of the farmer. He was faithful to sow and labor in the field. However, the end result was out of his control. There is a measure of comfort in this parable

for those who sow the Gospel seed. While the Lord does expect us to faithfully sow, nowhere does He reveal that we are responsible for the production of fruit. That is an act of His sovereign grace and providence. In His time, and according to His will, the Lord will produce fruit and superintend the harvest. We must ensure we are faithful to engage in the work He is already doing!

**Conclusion:** I hope this parable has challenged and encouraged us to remain faithful to the Lord. We must be willing to sow the Gospel seed and trust Him for the harvest. If you are struggling to sow, seek the Lord's guidance and help. If He is dealing with you regarding salvation, respond by faith with a repentant heart unto salvation! ([Pulpit Pages](#))

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**Brian Bill - I see two main encouragements in this passage.**

### **1. We can sow but we can't make the seed grow (Mark 4:26-27).**

One of our tasks as Christ-- followers is to sow the seed of the Word of God: "as if a man should scatter seed on the ground..." That is our responsibility and according to Spurgeon, "Holy seed sowing should be adopted as our highest pursuit." We must get the seed of God's Word into the souls of people because if Jesus is to be known, the seed must be sown!

After the ground is prepared and cultivated and fertilized, the seed is sown but the sower can't make the growth happen. He doesn't dig up the seed to see if germination has taken place. He may water and remove weeds but he doesn't touch the seed. We can sow but we can't make the seed sprout. No matter if the farmer is sleeping or doing something else, the growth of the seed is in God's hands: "and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow..." The farmer goes through his daily routines without exerting any extra energy into the plant to make it sprout.

This past weekend some friends from Pontiac surprised us by coming to the second service. We went out for lunch afterwards and had a blast catching up with them. Wes is a farmer and I asked him how his crops were doing. He smiled and said, "I've done everything I can do. Now I just wait. It's all up to God now."

When good seed goes into good soil, good things happen. When the seed takes root, there will be fruit.

Friends, we don't have to understand how things work in order for them to work. I don't know how this microwave or iPad or Twinkie work, but that doesn't stop them from working. According to the last phrase in verse 27, things grow but "he himself does not know how." In Greek, the word order is quite lively: "How, he does not know."

Ecclesiastes 11:5 reminds us that the way God works is not always understandable: "As you do not know what is the way of the wind, or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child, so you do not know the works of God who makes everything." That verse, and many others, reminds me that God is growing life in the wombs of mothers all over the world right now...and those lives need to be protected. I celebrate the work of the Pregnancy Resource Centers in the Quad Cities and our family looks forward to joining in on the Walk for Life on September 21st. You can sponsor some walkers out in the lobby after the service.

I sometimes hear people say that they don't share Jesus with people because they think they don't know enough. Listen: Our part is to sow; God's part is to make it grow. After establishing the necessity of the new birth, Jesus told Nicodemus that there's a sense of mystery about the Spirit in John 3:7--8: "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." If someone were to ask you to explain exactly how the new birth works, you'd probably struggle a bit. If anyone does ask you this, tell him or her that once they experience it, then they'll know what it is.

What's true in an agricultural setting is true in the spiritual world. We can sow but we can't make the seed grow. The beginning is often insignificant. What we see next is that spiritual progress is often imperceptible.

### **2. Growth is slow but it will eventually show (Mark 4:28-29).**

In verse 28 we see that something spontaneous happens when the seed is put into the soil: "For the earth yields crops by itself..." The phrase "all by itself" in Greek is where we get the word "automatic." It's the idea of being self--acting or without visible cause. The only other time this word is used is in Acts 12:10 where we read about the iron gate "which opened to them of its own accord."

We cannot make seed grow; we can't even explain how it grows. This statement describes the organic growth that explodes underground leading to impressive growth above. Just like the seed germinates out of sight, so too, the seed of the gospel begins to grow before it will show.

**ILLUSTRATION** - Martin Luther was spot on when he said, "After I preach my sermon on Sunday...I return home...and I just let the gospel run its course." When someone was converted, he would give them two items -- a Bible and a hymnal and would say, "Let them loose and like fire they will spread on their own."

**ILLUSTRATION** - I read recently that a seed that was buried in an Egyptian tomb was found thousands of years later and when it was planted in the ground, it grew! Why? Because there is life in the seed. I love what 1 Peter 1:23 says about the seed of the Word of God: "Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever."

While germination is spontaneous, growth is always gradual. Look at Mark 4:28: "First the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head." Check out this time-lapse presentation of how corn germinates and grows. [[Show YouTube Video](#)]

Watching that video makes me marvel even more at the miracle of growth. An ancient Jewish prayer goes like this: "Blessed are you, O God, King of the world, who brings forth bread from the earth." I don't know much about how corn grows, but here are some "fast facts" about how faith grows. (See [Mark 4:21-34 Unstoppable Growth](#))

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## **J D Jones - The Gospel According to St Mark -**

**THIS is not a parable altogether easy of interpretation. In fact, scarcely two of the commentators I have consulted agree as to what is the real heart of the parable.** And the difference between them becomes evident by the different titles they give to it. In our English Bible the parable is spoken of as the parable of the "Seed growing secretly," and in that description of it, apparently, Bishop Chadwick and Archbishop Trenchard agree. That places the centre of gravity of the parable in verse 27, and makes the sentence "the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how," the salient and all-important sentence. Dr A. B. Bruce, on the other hand, calls the parable "The Blade, the Ear, the Full Corn," and he maintains that the chief lesson of the parable is that of the orderly development of the Kingdom of God. Dr Salmond takes yet another point of view, and calls the parable the Parable of the Fruit-bearing Earth, and finds its central lesson in the statement, "The earth beareth fruit of itself;" and apparently Dr Glover agrees with Dr Salmond, for he says that the subject of the parable is the power of growth inherent in things divine.

Now, when commentators differ so widely, it is perhaps presumption for an ordinary working minister to express an opinion. Especially, as all the truths which the different commentators maintain to be the central and primary truths are to be found in it. For the secret and mysterious growth of the seed is certainly here; and the orderly growth of the seed is also here; and the fruit-bearing power of the earth is also here. It is only a question, after all, of relative importance. It is only a question which of these various truths which are to be found in the parable is to be regarded as the central and primary one. On that question I side with Dr Salmond and Dr Glover, and believe that the lesson the parable is meant chiefly to emphasise is that there is a power of growth inherent in things Divine, "and that the Kingdom of God working, in quiet and without haste, through the moral forces deposited in human nature and society, is moving on to its assured end, by laws of its own." The parable is meant to be a parable of encouragement and in that respect is a complement to the Parable of the Sower.

The Parable of the Sower, from one point of view, was a discouraging parable. For it spoke of the disappointments and failures that attend upon the work of the man who sows the Gospel seed. It mentions three cases of failure to one case of success. In the case of the way-side hearer and the rocky-ground hearer and the thorn-patch hearer, the seed might just as well not have been sown, for it brought forth no fruit to perfection. Now, I say, that was a discouraging parable, enough almost to frighten any one from work attended with so much disappointment. This parable is meant in a way to counteract any discouraging effect produced by the former parable. For this parable speaks, as Dr Salmond says, of hidden forces beyond our knowledge or control, which secure the growth of the seed; it speaks of secret and prolonged processes, and tells us how seed which we have sown and almost forgotten, may at last issue in the full corn in the ear. This parable is the New Testament counterpart of that great Old Testament promise, "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth; it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa. 55:10, 11).

Now let us turn to the parable itself. "**So is the Kingdom of God," says our Lord, "as if a man should cast seed upon the earth; and should sleep and rise night and day"** (ver. 26, 27, R.V.). What is the meaning of this sentence about "**sleeping and rising night and day?**" Does it signify indolence or carelessness, or indifference to the fate of the seed? Not at all, but rather the consciousness that the farmer had done all he could do, and that he must just leave the rest to Nature's processes. In connection with the seed and its growth, the farmer has something to do at the beginning, and he has something to do at the end. He has to do the sowing, and when the harvest is ripe he has to do the reaping. But all that lies between the sowing and the reaping is God's part, and not man's. No anxiety on the farmer's part will help the growth of the seed; it depends now on the sunshine and the dew and the rain—things in God's control, and not in his. There is a limit to what a man can do in the matter of preparing for a harvest. He can prepare the earth, and sow the seed in it. There is practically nothing else that he can do. Having done that, he may sleep and rise night and day, i.e., go about the ordinary duties of life, and pursue his varied avocations, for the future growth of the seed depends not upon him, but upon Nature and Nature's God.

And the Kingdom of God in its growth and development is much like that. There is a strict limit to what man can do. The growth of religion in the soul is not a human work, it is a Divine work. What can a man do? He can sow the seed. He can preach the Word. But

having done that he has practically done all that he can do. Nothing that we can do can ensure that the seed shall take root and fructify. Nothing that we can do can ensure the thirty-fold and the sixty-fold and the hundred-fold. We have not the power to give a man a new heart, or to beget within him a new life. In a word, we have not the power to change and convert men. We can sow the seed, and we can take care it is good seed that we sow, but the question of fruitage and harvest we must leave entirely to God. The best and saintliest of men have to leave it there. Paul may plant, Apollos may water, but God giveth the increase. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4:6).

This is a fact to be recognised with humility and thankfulness, says Dr Bruce. With thankfulness, for it relieves the heart of the too heavy burden of an unlimited responsibility. It would be more than flesh and blood could bear, to think that it depended upon us, and us alone, whether men were saved or not. But God relieves us of that heavy burden. We have to scatter the seed; to preach the Word, to declare the Gospel in all sincerity and earnestness. We must leave results and effects to God. Our business is to do the sowing; the harvest is God's care.

It is a fact to be recognised also with humility. For it teaches us that the real worker is God, and it drives us to a more humble dependence upon Him. We can oftentimes do more by prayer and humble waiting upon God than we can by fussy zeal. I am not sure whether we do not sometimes think we can manufacture a harvest of our own. I mean this; the tendency of our time is perhaps to multiply our forms of activity, and to neglect prayer. But the limits of the good that any activities of ours may do are very quickly reached. No amount of activity on our part can make religion take root and grow in the soul. That is God's work. And, if we want to see a harvest from the seed we scatter, it is to Him we should address ourselves. "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from Him" (Psa. 62:5).

The farmer flings his seed upon the ground, and leaves it there. He goes off to other work, to one or other of the varied duties of the farm. He sleeps and rises night and day; and what of the seed itself? The seed springs up and grows, he knoweth not how; quietly and silently. Here we are at that truth which our Authorised Version emphasises as the central lesson of the parable—the lesson of the quiet and steady growth of the seed. You have noticed how silently the very mightiest forces work. The law of gravitation that holds the worlds in their places makes no noise. The light that transforms the entire face of nature comes without tumult. The sunshine and the dew that cause the earth to bring forth and bud, visit us with absolutely noiseless tread. But there is no process more wonderful than the death and resurrection process, that takes place in the history of every seed planted in the bosom of the brown earth. God has, as Dr Raleigh used to say, His laboratory beneath the soil. He opens in every field ten thousand times ten thousand fountains of life. He kindles there ten thousand invisible fires; He never leaves the field. And by and by, for every seed he scattered, the farmer receives back thirty, sixty, and a hundred. This marvellous multiplying process has taken place in absolute silence and quietness. You can see and hear a building grow. You can mark its rise, brick by brick, storey by storey; but you cannot trace the growth of the seed beneath the soil. The child who plants the seed to-day, and then digs it up to-morrow, will not see the growth. It is a silent, quiet, unperceptible process, and it is like that, our Lord says, with the Kingdom of God.

**I think that possibly the original reference in the parable is not so much to the growth of religion in the individual soul, as to the spread of religion in the community. The disciples were expecting an outward and visible Kingdom. They wanted it to come at once. You remember their question, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6+). They did not see why it should not come suddenly, as the result of some great act of power. But "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation" (Luke 17:20+). Men can never say, "Lo, here! Lo, there!" And yet quietly it is growing, ceaselessly growing, and grow it will till the kingdoms of the world become the Kingdoms of our God and of His Christ.**

**(ED: APPLICATION)** But though the **primary reference may be to the Kingdom in its broadest sense** what our Lord says here is true of the growth of religion in the individual soul. Spiritual growth is mysterious in its beginning. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). And it is quiet and imperceptible in its development. God is quietly at work in many hearts unknown to us. We can see no signs of life or change, perhaps; and yet the seed is springing up and growing up.

There is infinite encouragement and hope in all this. We soon come to the end of our little resources, and we grieve that we see no visible results. But when that is so, remember that God never leaves the field. He never ceases His work, and under His fostering care the seed we scattered, unknown to us and unseen by us, is growing up. Where we never see it, faith is in existence. Where we never suspect it, it has often made considerable progress. Think of God's answer to Elijah, when he moaned out, that he alone in the whole of Israel was left to worship the living God. "Yet I have left Me seven thousand in Israel," was God's word to him, "all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal" (1 Kings 19:18). Think of God's message to Paul, when he was cast down and almost broken-hearted, at the seeming failure of his work at Corinth. Our Lord appeared to him in a vision by night, and told him, "I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:10). The seed, that Paul thought had been scattered in vain had all the time been growing secretly. And so still in unsuspected places, and without any arresting sign, the truth takes effect. The minister sees nothing. Members of the family see nothing. Companions see nothing. Yet under God's fostering care the seed is growing up.

Shall I tell you a personal incident? When I was at Lincoln I preached a sermon on "Friendship." It was addressed especially to young men. I remember feeling particularly discouraged after preaching that day. I kept company with Elijah under the juniper tree, and felt I had laboured for naught and in vain. But since coming to Bournemouth I received a letter from Australia about that very sermon. And this was what it said. The writer was in Lincoln the Sunday I preached it. He was a complete stranger, and quite casually, or rather shall we say **providentially**, he turned into my old Church. He went out to Australia immediately afterwards, and lived rather a rough and careless life; but the sermon he heard at Lincoln clung to him. In his wildest days he said he kept hearing the appeal to make a **Friend of Him who sticketh closer than a brother. And at last, six years after the sermon was preached, he gave himself body and soul to the Lord.** Who would have thought of what was passing in the heart of that young fellow during these wild and careless years? Let us be of good cheer. Let us scatter the seed. In the most solitary places, in the most stubborn and obstinate hearts, it grows and springs up we know not how.

**"For," says our Lord, "the earth beareth fruit of herself."** This is not meant, of course, to exclude the Divine agency. What our Lord means to say is this; that when man has done with the seed, other forces begin to act upon it, forces inherent in the earth to which it is committed, forces of God's own providing in the way of fructifying sun and showers. Thus the truth Jesus wants us to remember is, that there are other forces besides our own human efforts which make for the growth and development of the seed.

**The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword,**

-- Hebrews 4:12<sup>+</sup>

First of all, there is an amazing life in the seed itself, **"The Word is quick and powerful."** By itself and of itself often the mere Word seems to effect great spiritual changes. Then let us never forget that the heart of man is made for the reception of the Divine Word. We say that the heart of man is "desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9); and that is true. But we have to remember the truth expressed by Augustine in that well-known saying, "O God, Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee." There are hearts described by our Lord as "good ground," hearts favorable to the growth of the Divine Word. Is not Augustine himself an illustration of this. His mother's prayers and teaching for years seemed wasted upon him, while he plunged into folly and excess and sin. But all the time the heart was retaining the Word, and bringing it to fruition, and then one day, to his mother's delighted surprise, Augustine gave himself in glad surrender to the Lord. And then, in addition to the life in the seed and the capacity of the heart, there is the ceaseless ministry of the Spirit of God. He is continually working upon the souls of men, and in the most wonderful ways bringing the seed to harvest. And so my brethren we may venture to hope and trust; though we may see no sign of harvest, yet we may with patience wait for it.

**"The earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear,"** (ver. 28, R.V.). Notice the progression. "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." This is the orderliness of growth. Through all these stages the corn passes, and you must give it its time. You must not expect the full corn in the ear in the springtime. It is the blade that you will see then. The full corn in the ear belongs to the golden and mellow autumn. There are similar stages in the development of the good seed of the Kingdom. There are the feeble beginnings, the enlarging strength, and the full maturity of Christian growth. There are some Christians who are in the infant class, engaged with the beggarly elements. There are some who are pressing on to perfection. John in his Epistle seems to refer to three distinct stages of Christian development. There are the little children who have had their sins forgiven,—the blade; there are the young men who are strong and have overcome the evil one—the ear. There are the fathers rich in experience, mature in knowledge, who have known Him who is from the beginning (1 John 2:12-14)—the full corn in the ear. The Christian life is a gradual and ordered growth. Sanctification is a lifelong process. And this ought to teach us patience and kindness. You have no right to expect in the young beginner the rich experience of an old disciple. However crude the beginner's religion may be, hope the best, and believe the best. When Dr Dale was a young man, many of the old saints in Carr's Lane shook their heads over him. I daresay his preaching then was a little violent and ill-balanced. "Let him alone," said John Angell James; "he'll come right." The blade with patience and kindly care will develop into the ear, and the full corn in the ear.

In what stage are we? Some of us have been Christians for many years. Is our sanctification making progress? Are we getting to that stage of Christian life when our Lord is getting a rich harvest in us? When He sends forth the sickle, because the harvest is come, will He find us with full corn in the ear?

**Mark 4:27 and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he himself does not know.**

NET Mark 4:27 He goes to sleep and gets up, night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how.

GNT Mark 4:27 κα̅ κα̅θε̅ δ̅ κα̅ γε̅ ρη̅ται̅ ν̅ κ̅τα̅ κα̅ μ̅ραν̅, κα̅ σ̅πι̅ρος̅ β̅λα̅στ̅ κα̅ μη̅κ̅νη̅ται̅ ς̅ ο̅ κ̅ ο̅ δ̅εν̅ α̅τ̅ς̅.

NLT Mark 4:27 Night and day, while he's asleep or awake, the seed sprouts and grows, but he does not

understand how it happens.

KJV Mark 4:27 And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

ESV Mark 4:27 He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how.

NIV Mark 4:27 Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how.

ASV Mark 4:27 and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how.

CSB Mark 4:27 he sleeps and rises-- night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows-- he doesn't know how.

NKJ Mark 4:27 "and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how.

NRS Mark 4:27 and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how.

YLT Mark 4:27 and may sleep, and may rise night and day, and the seed spring up and grow, he hath not known how;

NAB Mark 4:27 and would sleep and rise night and day and the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how.

NJB Mark 4:27 Night and day, while he sleeps, when he is awake, the seed is sprouting and growing; how, he does not know.

GWN Mark 4:27 He sleeps at night and is awake during the day. The seeds sprout and grow, although the man doesn't know how.

BBE Mark 4:27 And went to sleep and got up, night and day, and the seed came to growth, though he had no idea how.

- **grows:** Ec 8:17 11:5 Joh 3:7,8 1Co 15:37,38 2Th 1:3 2Pe 3:18
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE FARMER'S ROLE IS DE-EMPHASIZED

There is no mention of activities a farmer might carry out to assure a successful crop - plowing, tilling, fertilizing, weeding, etc.

**Edwards** - Jesus likens the **kingdom of God** to a process of growth. A seed is not spectacular, nor does its laborious growth attract attention. (Ibid)

**Paul Apple** points out - Look at how this passage balances the teaching on God's Sovereignty and Man's Responsibility – here the emphasis switches back to the sovereign work of God.

**Dwight Pentecost** - This parable was given to reveal to those who will be sent to sow the Word that they must do their sowing in utter dependence on the power of the Word to produce its own fruit. The essential contribution of this parable to the unfolding of the kingdom program in the present age is to stress that while human agencies may disseminate the Word of God, fruitfulness will be the result of the Word itself, not the human agent. (Parables of Jesus)

**Bock** adds "Nor do we read of the role of the sun and rain, or of destructive elements such as drought, heat, hail, weeds, and locusts. This is true also in the following parable. The focus of this parable is upon the seed and its inevitable growth."

**And he goes to bed at night and gets up by day** - Both verbs **goes to bed** and **gets up** are in the [present tense](#) picturing this as this man's life day after day. Hiebert points out that "The order "night and day," rather than "day and night," "reflects the oriental understanding of a 'day' beginning at sundown." This is the life of a farmer – he does not stay up all night fretting over the growth of the seed; one season is condensed here into a series of repetitive acts of going to bed each night and getting up each day until you see growth Importance of Faithfulness in daily tasks

**Ray Stedman** - As Jesus draws the picture, this farmer goes out to sow. It is hard work as he sows the field, but this is what he can do. But then he goes home and goes to bed. He does not sit up all night biting his fingernails, wondering if the seed fell in the right



places, or whether it will take root. Nor does he rise the next morning and go out and dig it up to see whether or not it has sprouted yet. He rests secure in the fact that God is at work, that he has a part in this process, and he must do it; no one can do it for him. But he will faithfully perform it. So the farmer rests secure, knowing that as the seed grows there are stages which are observable: "... first the blade, then the ear then the full grain in the ear." It is only as the grain is ripe that he is called into action again. When the harvest is ready, then he is to act once more. [1 Cor. 3:6 "we are laborers together with God."] ([Seed Thoughts](#))

**Grant Osborne** - The account is deliberately unnatural; no farmer would fail to work the ground or weed the plot. The point here is that in the final analysis the farmer's activity cannot cause the growth of the plant. It is nature/God that determines the final outcome. (Teach the Text Commentary Series – Mark)

**Warren Wiersbe** - This parable can be summarized in four words: sowing (Mk 4:26), sleeping (Mk 4:27), growing (Mk 4:28), reaping (Mk 4:29). All we can do is sow the seed; God alone can give the increase (1 Cor. 3:6–7). We cannot make the seed grow; in fact, we do not fully understand how the seed grows. Our task is to sow the seed and be alert when the harvest is ready (John 4:35–38). While sleeping is sometimes a picture of sin (Ro 13:11–14; 1 Th 5:1–11), here it simply reminds us that hard-working people need their rest (see Mark 6:31). If workers do not take care of themselves, they cannot do the work God has called them to do. (Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the NT)

**John MacArthur** - The point of this parable is simple: in the same way that the farmer is not the power behind the regeneration of the seed, so also the evangelist is not the power behind the regeneration of souls. What a comfort this must have been for Jesus' disciples to hear. Perhaps they were concerned that the task of saving sinners rested on their shoulders. Jesus countered that notion by reminding them that only God can change the human heart. Their responsibility was to faithfully preach the message. Having done so, they could trust God with the results. The diligent evangelist, whose message corresponds to the true gospel, can sleep soundly at night, knowing that it is God who causes the growth (1 Cor. 3:6). All the evangelist can do is proclaim the Word (cf. Rom. 10:13–17). The rest is God's work, and believers can fully trust in His sovereign prerogative. (MNTC-Mt)

**Bock** says "the ignoring of any human activities necessary in successful agriculture, emphasizes the independence of the seed's growth from any action on the part of the farmer and is meant to show that the [consummation](#) of the kingdom of God is not dependent on any human action." (BECNT-Mk)

**John Phillips** - All is now up to God. He alone has the ultimate secret of life. The biologist can dissect the seed and expose and name its various parts. The geneticist can go even deeper into the structure of things and define the seed's genetic code. He can clone and produce identical plants. He can breed and produce hybrid plants. But if no life is there, it is all in vain. The law of biogenesis states, "There can be no life without antecedent life." Ultimately, all life comes from God. The most zealous believer can no more convert a soul than he could create a star. Life, especially spiritual life, remains a mystery. (Ibid)

**'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts.**

-- Zechariah 4:6

**And the seed sprouts and grows** - Life goes on day after day, and yet God is simultaneously and independently mysteriously at work in the fields! The man is sleeping and despite doing no work, the **seed** still **sprouts**. Both **sprouts** and **grows** are in the [present tense](#), indicating a continuous process, a process which has been set in motion. The seed has the inherent power to germinate, sprout and grow. What occurs mysteriously in nature in the soil, occurs just as mysteriously in a supernatural manner in the good soil of one's heart. The implication is that nothing can stop the Gospel seed from growing in the good heart. And in context Jesus is saying that the coming Kingdom of God is not dependent on human activity but on God's supernatural work.

So then neither the one who plants  
nor the one who waters is anything,  
**but God who causes the growth.**

-- 1 Corinthians 3:7

**how, he himself does not know** - More literally "How, he knows not." How does the seed sprout and grow. The man did not cause the seed to grow and did not fully understand how the seed sprouted and grew. This emphasizes the marvel of the seed sprouting independent of other variables.

**A T Robertson** - "The mystery of growth still puzzles farmers and scientists of today with all our modern knowledge. But nature's secret processes do not fail to operate because we are ignorant. This secret and mysterious growth of the kingdom in the heart and life is the point of this beautiful parable by Mark. 'When man has done his part, the actual process of growth is beyond his reach or comprehension' (Swete)."

**Hiebert** - The farmer well knows the conditions that aid or hinder that growth, but the growth process itself is part of the mystery of life in the seed, which even today challenges man's ability to explain fully. "How could the essence of life lay dormant for 4000 years

in the seeds found in an Egyptian tomb and still spring to full life when planted?" Even so today, the process of spiritual growth, while "natural" to the kingdom, remains a mystery to the unsaved.

One is reminded of the exhortation by Jesus half-brother James

Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility **receive** ([dechomai](#) = "put out the welcome mat"; command in the [aorist imperative](#)) the Word implanted, which is able ([dunamai](#) in [present tense](#) = continually has the inherent supernatural power - noun [dunamis](#) describes the Gospel - Ro 1:16+) to save ([sozo](#)) your souls. (James 1:21+)

**Comment** - Notice the "cultivation" (clearing out the "weeds" of filthiness and wickedness) of the "soil" (the heart) of the one who welcomed the Word of the Gospel which was implanted in his heart. The result of this seed planted in good soil was so great a salvation!

#### Mark 4:28 "The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head."

NET Mark 4:28 By itself the soil produces a crop, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head.

GNT Mark 4:28 α τομ τη γ καρποφορε , πρ τον χ ρτον ε τα στ χυν ε τα πλ ρη[ς] σ τον ν τ στ χυϊ.

NLT Mark 4:28 The earth produces the crops on its own. First a leaf blade pushes through, then the heads of wheat are formed, and finally the grain ripens.

KJV Mark 4:28 For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.

ESV Mark 4:28 The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.

NIV Mark 4:28 All by itself the soil produces grain--first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head.

ASV Mark 4:28 The earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.

CSB Mark 4:28 The soil produces a crop by itself-- first the blade, then the head, and then the ripe grain on the head.

NKJ Mark 4:28 "For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head.

NRS Mark 4:28 The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head.

YLT Mark 4:28 for of itself doth the earth bear fruit, first a blade, afterwards an ear, afterwards full corn in the ear;

NAB Mark 4:28 Of its own accord the land yields fruit, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.

NJB Mark 4:28 Of its own accord the land produces first the shoot, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.

GWN Mark 4:28 The ground produces grain by itself. First the green blade appears, then the head, then the head full of grain.

BBE Mark 4:28 The earth gives fruit by herself; first the leaf, then the head, then the full grain.

- **The soil produces crops** : Ge 1:11,12 2:4,5,9 4:11,12 Isa 61:11, 1 Cor 3:7, 9
- **crops** : Ge 1:12, Jn 15:16
- **first the blade**: Mk 4:31,32 Ps 1:3 Ps 92:13,14 Pr 4:18 Ec 3:1,11 Ho 6:3 Php 1:6,9-11 Col 1:10 1Th 3:12,13
- **blade**: Mt 13:26
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### SUCCESSIVE STAGES IN CROP PRODUCTION

**The soil produces crops by itself** - The first word in the Greek is **automatos** (automate), which places the emphasis on by itself. More literally it would read, "By itself the soil produces crops." Or "Automatically, the soil brings forth fruit," describing this as happening without visible cause (as in the [preceding video](#) of the seed growing). In other words the soil **itself** somehow causes the

seed to grow "automatically" as it moves through the stages from germination to maturity.

If you were a disciple hearing this parable, would you not be encouraged that the preaching about the Kingdom of God which your Master had done and that you would later do would bear fruit in time? In some ways this parable "takes the pressure off" the sowers of the seed. One is reminded of Jesus' promise to the leader of the disciples, Peter "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock **I will build My church**; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." (Mt 16:18)

**So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth;  
It will not return to Me empty,  
Without accomplishing what I desire,  
And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.**

--- Isaiah 55:11

**Bock** - Since the kingdom of God is likened to a seed whose growth is not determined by the farmer's knowing **how** this takes place but rather to the earth "**bearing grain**" ( karpophorei; cf. Mk 4:20) "of itself" (automatē—an adjective used adverbially), this indicates that the ultimate success of the kingdom of God does not depend on the understanding or actions of Mark's readers. The kingdom will come "**of itself.**" For the audience of Jesus and Mark, this would have been understood to mean that God would bring about the growth of the seed, that is, God will bring the [consummation](#) of the kingdom apart from human effort. "Here ... divine causation would be taken for granted" (Hultgren 2000: 387). Compare Ge 1:12, where the earth brings forth vegetation because God said "Let the earth put forth ..." (Ge 1:11).

**Let us mark this truth also, for it is deeply instructive.  
It is humbling no doubt to ministers, and teachers of others.  
The highest abilities, the most powerful preaching,  
the most diligent working, cannot command success.  
God alone can give life!**

-- J C Ryle

**Hiebert** explains that "the growth is produced by a self-acting, spontaneous power within the seed which acts independently of man's agency. The earth itself does not produce the growth but is the medium for the germinating power in the seed. What is produced depends upon the nature of the seed sown. So the human heart responds to the seed of the Word sown into it, but it also responds to tares sown in it. The need for suitable weather conditions is not denied but simply assumed. The point is that the seed does not require cultivation during the period of growth. The continued growth is independent of man's action."

**By itself** ([844](#))([automatos](#) from **autós** = himself + **máō** = to be excited, eager, ready) means of oneself, spontaneous, of its own accord, acting of one's own will, of its own accord. The heart of the definition of **automatos** is in its **auto-** prefix. It thus means "acting of one's own will" or even "accidental, without apparent cause." "The word means in its totality, "self-moved, spontaneously, without external aid, and also beyond external control, with a way and will, so to speak, of its own that must be respected and waited for." " (Wuest) The Septuagint reflects the idea of self-induced action in reference to the growth or death (cf. Job 24:24, no Hebrew equivalent) of plants. The Septuagint (no Hebrew parallel) also tells of the walls of Jericho which would "fall down by themselves" at the shout of the people (Joshua 6:5). In the only other NT use in Acts 12:10+ the word describes a door opened up "automatically" allowing Peter to walk out of the prison. In Mark 4:29 **automatos** stands for the vital power in nature which produces fruit. In Mark, this is a picture of the spiritual life which "by itself" brings forth the fruit of the kingdom of God.

**Produces crops** ([2592](#))([karpophoreo](#) from **karpos** = fruit, produce + **phero** = bear, bring) literally means to bring forth fruit, to be fertile, productive. It is used figuratively to refer to bringing forth deeds or works (fruit),

**First the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head-** Notice this depicts divine power and divine order! Note the two uses of **then** which mark the progressive growth from one stage (blade) followed by another (head) and another (grain). Obviously the nature of the soil, the weather and cultivation are important to the growth, but Jesus' emphasis is that the real secret of growth is in the seed.

**James Edwards** comments that "An earlier theology tended to emphasize the role of human activity in ushering in the kingdom of God.

Rise up, O men of God! His kingdom tarries long;  
Bring in the day of brotherhood, And end the night of wrong.

This hymn could not have been written by Jesus or Mark. Apart from sowing, the only human activity in this parable is waiting in

faith, confident of a harvest to come (see Jas 5:7+). The coming of the kingdom of God is likened to a process of growth but a process strangely independent of human activity. Despite inauspicious beginnings and the absence of human involvement, the seed contains within itself fruit-bearing potential. The seed, like the gospel, prospers of itself, and once sown sets in motion a process that leads to harvest. (PNTC-Mk)

**Hiebert** explains that this describes "the successive stages in the production of the fruit. The repeated then stresses the progressive development from stage to stage; the grasslike, green, leaf-equipped stalk; the green, unfilled head; and finally the soft, pulpy kernels swelling to full size and hardening as ripening grain. Any effort on the part of the farmer to hasten the process would only result in damage. Even so, spiritual development cannot be prematurely forced."

**Gould** says, "This single fact creates the confidence shown by Jesus in the ultimate establishment of His kingdom in spite of the obstacles which obstruct its progress."

#### Mark 4:29 "But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

NET Mark 4:29 And when the grain is ripe, he sends in the sickle because the harvest has come."

GNT Mark 4:29 τὰν ὀ παραδο καρπ ς, ε θ ς ποστ λλει τ ὄρ πανον, τι παρ στηκεν θερισμ ς.

NLT Mark 4:29 And as soon as the grain is ready, the farmer comes and harvests it with a sickle, for the harvest time has come."

KJV Mark 4:29 But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

ESV Mark 4:29 But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

NIV Mark 4:29 As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

ASV Mark 4:29 But when the fruit is ripe, straightway he putteth forth the sickle, because the harvest is come.

CSB Mark 4:29 But as soon as the crop is ready, he sends for the sickle, because the harvest has come."

NKJ Mark 4:29 "But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

NRS Mark 4:29 But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come."

YLT Mark 4:29 and whenever the fruit may yield itself, immediately he doth send forth the sickle, because the harvest hath come.'

NAB Mark 4:29 And when the grain is ripe, he wields the sickle at once, for the harvest has come."

NJB Mark 4:29 And when the crop is ready, at once he starts to reap because the harvest has come.'

GWN Mark 4:29 As soon as the grain is ready, he cuts it with a sickle, because harvest time has come."

BBE Mark 4:29 But when the grain is ready, he quickly sends men to get it cut, because the time for cutting has come.

- **when the crop permits**, Job 5:26 2Ti 4:7,8
- **he immediately puts in the sickle**: Isa 57:1,2 Joel 3:13 Mt 13:30,40-43 Rev 14:13-17
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Luke 16:2+ (GOOD STEWARDSHIP) "And he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an accounting of your management, for you can no longer be manager.'

### THE SICKLE SWINGS WHEN THE HARVEST IS RIPE

**But when the crop permits** - NLT = "as soon as the grain is ready." More literally "When the condition of the grain allows it." The word **when** means at the time that something else happens or as soon as another action occurs, in this case the growth of the seed. The idea in this context is **whenever** (at any time or in any situation when something may be possible) indicating that "that the time

of reaping is not predetermined by the wish of the farmer but dependent upon the condition of the grain." (Hiebert)

**Permits** (3860)([paradidomi](#) from **para** = alongside, beside, to the side of, over to + **didomi** = to give) conveys the basic meaning of to give over. In this passage *paradidomi* means whenever the crop "gives itself over" to allow it to be harvested.

**Vincent** on **paradidomi** in this passage - This rendering cannot be correct, for the verb is active, not passive, meaning to *deliver up*. Hence it is usually explained, *shall have delivered itself up to harvest*; which is stilted and artificial. Rev. *is ripe*, is a free rendering from the margin of A.V. It is, perhaps, better to explain, as Meyer does, whose rendering is adopted by Rev. in margin: *When the fruit shall have allowed*, i.e., shall have admitted of being harvested. Xenophon and Herodotus use the word in the sense of *permit* or *allow*; and an exact parallel to this occurs in the historian Polybius (xxii., 24, 9): "When the season permitted (παράδιδό σης)." (Word Studies in the New Testament)

**he immediately puts in the sickle because the harvest has come**- Now the farmer comes back on the scene which **immediately** "vividly marks the termination of his inactivity as soon as the grain is ripe. At once, he sends forth the sickle, the familiar harvesting instrument, in the hand of the reaper. The farmer has not produced the grain, but his action is needed to preserve the result achieved by the seed he has sown." (Hiebert) **Has come** is in the [perfect tense](#) indicating the process is complete with present results.

**Puts in** (649)([apostello](#) from **apo** = from, away from + **stello** = to withdraw from, avoid) means to send off, to send forth, to send out. To send out; to commission as a representative, an ambassador, an envoy. The idea is to send forth from one place to another. But the meaning of *apostello* is more than just to send because it means "to send off on a commission to do something as one's personal representative, with credentials furnished" (Wuest) To send upon some business (Mt. 2:16; 10:5; 20:2). To send away in the sense of to dismiss (Mk 12:3, 4). To send or thrust forth as a sickle among corn (Mk 4:29). Vincent adds that "The rendering, *putteth in*, misses the figure. The verb is the same as that used of sending forth the apostles to reap the harvest of souls. See especially John 4:38: "I **sent** (*apostello*) you to reap.[\(therizo\)](#) "

**Harvest** (2326)([therismos](#) from [therizo](#) = to reap or theros = summer, harvest time) means means the process of harvesting or reaping (Jn 4:35; Lxx = Ge 8:22, 30:14), but most NT uses are figurative - harvest of converts or saved souls (Mt 9:37, 38, Lk 10:2), the time of future judgment (Mt 13:30, Rev 14:15 because their iniquity is "ripe"). In the Septuagint the Feast of **Harvest** (First Fruits, Pentecost in Ex 23:16). 8x in NT = Matt. 9:37; Matt. 9:38; Matt. 13:30; Matt. 13:39; Mk. 4:29; Lk. 10:2; Jn. 4:35; Rev. 14:15

Does this passage not recall to mind some of the final words of exhortation and encouragement to young Timothy -

The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops. (2 Ti 2:6)

The question arises as to what is the meaning of the **harvest**? Some say that the **harvest** is an image of judgment because of passages like Joel 3:13+ which says "Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great." While this seems reasonable, the context is the growth of the seed in the **Kingdom of God**, growth which does not result in production of unrighteous, wicked or evil "fruit." So as I read the overall message of this parable of growth in the **Kingdom of God**, it does not seem to point to the **harvest** of wicked fruit, but righteous fruit.

**John MacArthur** agrees writing "In a similar manner, although the human messenger plays no role in the actual work of regeneration, he is still given the privileged blessing of enjoying the spiritual harvest. One primary aspect of that blessing is the added fellowship that comes every time a new believer is added to the body of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 4:15; 1 Thess. 2:19). The riches of that fellowship will last for all of eternity, as the glorified saints—as one great spiritual harvest—gather around the throne to worship their Savior and King." (MNTC-Mk)

**John Phillips** - Now it's up to the farmer again. God works the miracle of creating a crop, but now it is the farmer's responsibility to reap and conserve the harvest. God does not do for us what we can do for ourselves. The law of growth operates in the spiritual realm. We can sow the seed of Scripture but, after that, it is up to the Spirit of God. He causes the seed to germinate. He superintends the various stages of its growth. We can water it with our tears and prayers, but we can no more force spiritual growth than we can arrange for a plant to grow. But we can reap the harvest when the process is complete and anticipate a reward at the judgment seat of Christ for playing our little part both in the sowing end and the mowing end of things.

**Paul Apple** - So there is an immediate **harvest** that is available to be reaped right now ... but this picture points toward the eschatological **harvest** when the kingdom of God will be fully developed

**Grant Osborne** - The detailed description of the sowing and the step-by-step growth of the plant (the stalk, the head [the grain

appearing], the full kernel [the ripe grain ready for harvest]) means that every stage of the proclamation of the gospel is sovereignly controlled and guaranteed by God. This does not mean that God's people can stand by and do nothing. In the action of the farmer the saints are part of the process. The point is that we sow the seed and wait for God, who superintends the process, to produce the harvest. "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow" (1 Cor. 3:6). (Teach the Text Commentary Series – Mark)

**POSB** - Spiritual Growth: the growth is consummated and harvested. The fruit does ripen; the day does come when the corn is fully grown and is ready to be harvested. This can mean at least two things. 1. The believer's sowing does bear fruit. Jesus does honor His Word, and it never returns to Him void. The believer can rest assured of reaping some harvest. What an encouragement to believers! How we should be challenged to work and work for our Lord! We are assured of results before we ever labor. God assures that fruit will be borne. (Gal 6:8-9, Jn 4:35-36, Isaiah 55:11, Hos 10:12). 2. The believer himself is harvested, taken on to heaven when his growth is completed. When the believer has done all that God wills for him or all that he is going to do, God then escorts the believer home forever.

**H. Thielicke** - "One day, perhaps, when we look back from God's throne on the last day we shall say with amazement and surprise, 'If I had ever dreamed when I stood at the graves of my loved ones and everything seemed to be ended; if I had ever dreamed when I saw the specter of atomic war creeping upon us; if I had ever dreamed when I faced the meaningless fate of an endless imprisonment or a malignant disease; if I had ever dreamed that God was only carrying out his design and plan through all these woes, that in the midst of my cares and troubles and despair his harvest was ripening, and that every thing was pressing on toward his last kingly day—if I had known this I would have been more calm and confident; yes, then I would have been more cheerful and far more tranquil and composed'" (The Waiting Father)

**James Brooks** - The end emphasis and perhaps primary focus of the parable is the assurance of the **harvest**. The harvest almost certainly represents the judgment at the end of the age. Even so the concern is **not** the condemnation of the wicked (cf. Joel 3:13) but the **manifestation of the righteous**. Jesus by telling the story—and Mark by recording it—encouraged disciples who were experiencing rejection of their message and frustration at their lack of understanding of God's mysterious purposes that God's kingdom would surely come. (NAC - Mk) (Bold added)

**Bruce Barton** - This verse has a tone of warning, echoing Joel 3:13, "Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe" (NIV). Joel prophesied about God's coming and the final judgment of the world. While some see Jesus' words as referring to evangelism, and others to spiritual growth in individual believers, it seems most likely that this pictures the mysterious coming of God's kingdom. Jesus came and sowed the seed, as did his followers after him. The Word takes root and grows in individuals, and the church grows throughout the ages. (Life Application Commentary)

Note that the **Life Application Study Bible** notes actually counter the notes by Barton in his **Life Application Commentary** - God promises that his harvest will be magnificent and prolific—the best fruit ever grown. Your witness may be weak and your efforts may seem to influence so few, but the Word of God is a powerful growth agent. Keep your eyes on **the great harvest to come** and don't let bad soil or weeds discourage you from faithful service and witness.

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**INTERPRETATION - Hiebert** - Some view the parable **as giving a picture of the kingdom as a whole, from the time of Christ's sowing until the eschatological harvest**. According to this view, Jesus recognized that His sowing had not yet produced a harvest, but a sowing was being accomplished in His disciples which He confidently trusted God would bring to its future fruitful [consummation](#). This view seems in keeping with the broad scope of the parabolic teaching during this day.

**Others see in the parable a picture of the work of the gospel in the life of an individual.** The development of spiritual character follows a slow but orderly process and cannot be forced prematurely by human means. Then the harvest is viewed as denoting the ingathering of the results of evangelistic endeavors (cf. John 4:35–36). The duty of the Christian worker is to sow the seed and wisely conserve the God-wrought results, while allowing the Word of God to do its work in the individual according to the laws of development which God has established in human nature.

I like J C Ryle's application of Jesus teaching on the harvest - God deals with His work of grace exactly in the same way. He never removes His people from this world till they are ripe and ready. He never takes them away till their work is done. They never die at the wrong time, however mysterious their deaths appear sometimes to man.

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**INTERPRETATION** - The parable may have three applications. Some see a picture of evangelism, others of spiritual growth in a believer. The last view, that of the mysterious growth of the kingdom of God between the initial sowing of Christ and His apostles, and the final manifestation of the Kingdom with Christ as the Harvester, seems to suit the context. Whatever view is taken, (all have elements of truth) this parable is a very encouraging one. The psalmist's words are suited to the ideas it expresses: "They that sow

in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him" (Ps 126:5, 6). (What the Bible teaches – Matthew and Mark)

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#### **INTERPRETATION - Grassmick -**

- Some interpreters view this parable as a picture of evangelism.
- Some take it as depicting spiritual growth in a believer.
- Others see it as a picture of the coming of God's kingdom by the mysterious, sovereign work of God.

Its emphasis is on growth under God's initiative in the interim phase between the proclamation by Jesus (the lowly Sower) and His disciples and the ultimate manifestation of the kingdom by Jesus (the mighty Harvester). The third view is preferred in light of the overall context of the kingdom parables. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

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**LOOKING FORWARD** - God promises that his harvest will be magnificent and prolific-the best fruit ever grown. Our witness may be weak and our efforts may seem to influence so few, but the Word of God is a powerful growth agent. We should keep our eyes on the great harvest to come and not let bad soil or weeds discourage us from faithful service and witness.

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**Wait for Harvest-Time** - Crops go through three stages: green, ripe, rotten. Harvest is effective only at one stage. Likewise, intervention, at the right time, can produce a rich spiritual harvest. —Marshall Shelley in Leadership

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**Don't Come Out Empty-Handed** - The world has more winnable people than ever before... but it is possible to come out of a ripe field empty-handed. —Donal McGavran

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**Tony Evans** - Over time, a crop was produced that was ready for the harvesters (Mk 4:28-29). Similarly, the disciple of Jesus Christ who faithfully proclaims God's Word can have confidence that it will accomplish its work (see Isa 55:10-11). The Word has life within itself, so God will ensure growth and harvest as people respond to his Word when it is rightly explained. (Tony Evans Bible Commentary, The: Advancing God's Kingdom Agenda)

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**THOUGHT** - an outline on Mark 4:26-29

- **RELEASE THE WORD** (Mark 4:26-27a)
- **REST IN THE POWER OF THE WORD** (Mark 4:27b-28)
- **REAP THE HARVEST OF THE WORD** (Mark 4:29)

#### **What is the harvest? Souls into which you have sowed!**

Paul gives us a preview in 1 Th 2:19-20<sup>±</sup> - CONTEXT - He is addressing believers in Thessalonica in whom he had sown the Gospel seed and they were born again.

"For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? 20 For you are our glory and joy."

WHAT IS PAUL SAYING? In essence he is saying the believers he played a role in God saving will in some way be his reward for all eternity.

SO LET ME ASK YOU --

DO YOU HAVE AN ETERNAL INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO? THE STOCK MARKET HAS BEEN ROCKING AND ROLLING RECENTLY, BUT THIS PORTFOLIO WILL REAP DIVIDENDS FOR ETERNITY (cf Jesus' promise in Mt 6:20-21<sup>±</sup>)?

SO LET ME ASK YOU AGAIN...

(1) ARE YOU PRAYING (OR GIVING) FOR THE MISSIONARIES AS THEY SOW IN THE FOREIGN FIELDS? IF YOU ARE YOU WILL REAP AN ETERNAL HARVEST OF SOULS JUST AS IF YOU HAD SOWN THE SEED IN AFRICA OR THE MIDDLE EAST OR INDIA OR CHINA!

(2) ARE YOU SOWING SEED IN YOUR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE - SCHOOL, WORKPLACE, FAMILY, NEIGHBORHOOD? IT MAY NOT APPEAR TO BEAR FRUIT TODAY, BUT IN ETERNITY YOU WILL SEE

THAT YOUR SOWING WAS PART OF GOD'S PROCESS OF BRINGING SOULS TO SALVATION.

AND THEY WILL BY YOUR **"HOPE AND CROWN OF EXULTATION"** THROUGHOUT ETERNITY!!! (cf Jesus' words to His first disciples and applicable to all disciples through the ages in Jn 15:16 "I appointed you that you would **go and bear fruit**, and that **your fruit would remain**," YOUR FRUIT WILL REMAIN!!!)

THAT'S AN INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY THAT IS NOT RISKY OR SPECULATIVE!!!

**J VERNON MCGEE's** comment on 1 Thes 2:19-20 --

McGee sums up this last section by asking "is anyone going to be in heaven who will come up to you and thank you for having a part in giving out the Word of God? Have you given your support to missions? If you have, someone you have never known, someone from the other side of the earth, may come up to you and thank you for your support of missions. He will thank you for being interested in getting out the Word of God because the Word reached him and enabled him to be saved. That, my friend, is going to be part of the reward that we will get in heaven. We need to recognize that. It is a wonderful hope to look forward to the time when Christ Jesus takes the church out of this world. It is even more joyous to know that someone who trusted Christ because of your witness will go along with you to meet the Lord!

If Paul were speaking to us today he might say something like this "So then, **while we have opportunity**, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith." (Gal 6:10+) Today is your "opportunity of a lifetime!" May our Father in Heaven grant you amazing grace by His Spirit to be energized and motivated to intercede for peoples you have never seen but will one day see in the presence of the Lamb Who Alone is Worthy (1 Th 2:19-20+). Amen.

#### **Related Resources:**

- [Praying for People from Every Tribe, Tongue, People and Nation](#)
- <https://joshuaproject.net/> Bookmark the site and/or download the Joshua Project APP today.
- <http://www.globalprayerdigest.org/issue/day/>
- [Sermon by Michael Andrus on Luke 16:1-9 Money—Godly Ways of Giving It: A Bad Man's Good Example](#) (Excerpt - "I am not a wealthy man by most standards, but I do have a **global investment portfolio**.")

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#### **J C Ryle - Mark 4:26-29**

THE parable contained in these verses is short, and only recorded in St. Mark's Gospel. But it is one that ought to be deeply interesting to all who have reason to hope that they are true Christians. It sets before us the history of the work of grace in an individual soul. It summons us to an examination of our own experience in divine things. There are some expressions in the parable which we must not press too far. Such are the "sleeping and rising" of the husband-man, and the "night and day." In this, as in many of our Lord's parables, we must carefully keep in view the main scope and object of the whole story, and not lay too much stress on lesser points. In the case before us the main thing taught is the close resemblance between some familiar operations in the culture of corn, and the work of grace in the heart. To this let us rigidly confine our attention.

**We are taught firstly, that, as in the growth of corn, so in the work of grace, there must be a sower.** The earth, as we all know, never brings forth corn of itself. It is a mother of weeds, but not of wheat. The hand of man must plough it, and scatter the seed, or else there would never be a harvest. The heart of man, in like manner, will never of itself turn to God, repent, believe, and obey. It is utterly barren of grace. It is entirely dead towards God, and unable to give itself spiritual life. The Son of man must break it up by His Spirit, and give it a new nature. He must scatter over it by the hand of His labouring ministers the good seed of the word. Let us mark this truth well. Grace in the heart of man is an exotic. It is a new principle from without, sent down from heaven and implanted in his soul. Left to himself no man living would ever seek God. And yet in communicating grace, God ordinarily works by means. To despise the instrumentality of teachers and preachers, is to expect corn where no seed has been sown.

**We are taught, secondly, that, as in the growth of corn, so in the work of grace, there is much that is beyond man's comprehension and control.** The wisest farmer on earth can never explain all that takes place in a grain of wheat, when he has sown it. He knows the broad fact that unless he puts it into the land, and covers it up, there will not be an ear of corn in time of harvest. But he cannot command the prosperity of each grain. He cannot explain why some grains come up and others die. He cannot specify the hour or the minute when life shall begin to show itself. He cannot define what that life is. These are matters he must leave alone. He sows his seed, and leaves the growth to God. "God giveth the increase."\* (1 Cor. 3:7.) The workings of grace in the heart in like manner, are utterly mysterious and unsearchable. We cannot explain why the word produces effects on one person in a congregation, and not upon another. We cannot explain why, in some cases,—with every possible advantage, and in spite of every entreaty,—people reject the word, and continue dead in trespasses and sins. We cannot explain why in other cases,—



with every possible difficulty, and with no encouragement,—people are born again, and become decided Christians. We cannot define the manner in which the Spirit of God conveys life to a soul, and the exact process by which a believer receives a new nature. All these are hidden things to us. We see certain results, but we can go no further. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:10.) **Let us mark this truth also, for it is deeply instructive. It is humbling no doubt to ministers, and teachers of others. The highest abilities, the most powerful preaching, the most diligent working, cannot command success. God alone can give life.** But it is a truth at the same time, which supplies an admirable antidote to over-carefulness and despondency. Our principal work is to sow the seed. That done, we may wait with faith and patience for the result. “We may sleep, and rise night and day,” and leave our work with the Lord. He alone can, and, if He thinks fit, He will give success.

We are taught, thirdly, that, as in the growth of corn, so in the work of grace, life manifests itself gradually. There is a true proverb which says, “Nature does nothing at a bound.” The ripe ear of wheat does not appear at once, as soon as the seed bursts forth into life. The plant goes through many stages, before it arrives at perfection,—“first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.” But in all these stages one great thing is true about it,—even at its weakest, it is a living plant.

The work of grace, in like manner, goes on in the heart by degrees. The children of God are not born perfect in faith, or hope, or knowledge, or experience. Their beginning is generally a “day of small things.” They see in part their own sinfulness, and Christ’s fulness, and the beauty of holiness. But for all that, the weakest child in God’s family is a true child of God. With all his weakness and infirmity he is alive. The seed of grace has really come up in his heart, though at present it be only in the blade. He is “alive from the dead.” And the wise man says, “a living dog is better than a dead lion.” (Eccles. 9:4.)

Let us mark this truth also, for it is full of consolation. Let us not despise grace, because it is weak, or think people are not converted, because they are not yet as strong in the faith as St. Paul. Let us remember that grace, like everything else, must have a beginning. The mightiest oak was once an acorn. The strongest man was once a babe. Better a thousand times have grace in the blade than no grace at all.

We are taught, lastly, that, as in the growth of corn, so in the work of grace, there is no harvest till the seed is ripe. No farmer thinks of cutting his wheat when it is green. He waits till the sun, and rain, and heat, and cold, have done their appointed work, and the golden ears hang down. Then, and not till then, he puts in the sickle, and gathers the wheat into his barn. God deals with His work of grace exactly in the same way. He never removes His people from this world till they are ripe and ready. He never takes them away till their work is done. They never die at the wrong time, however mysterious their deaths appear sometimes to man. Josiah, and James the brother of John were both cut off in the midst of usefulness. Our own King Edward the Sixth was not allowed to reach man’s estate. But we shall see in the resurrection morning that there was a needs-be. All was done well about their deaths, as well as about their births. The Great Husbandman never cuts His corn till it is ripe.

Let us leave the parable with this truth on our minds, and take comfort about the death of every believer. Let us rest satisfied, that there is no chance, no accident, no mistake about the decease of any of God’s children. They are all “God’s husbandry,” and God knows best when they are ready for the harvest.

#### **Mark 4:30 And He said, “How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it?”**

NET Mark 4:30 He also asked, "To what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable can we use to present it?"

GNT Mark 4:30 Κα λέγειν, Π ς μοι σωμεν τ ν βασιλε αν το θεο ν τ ν ι α τ ν παραβολ θ μεν;

NLT Mark 4:30 Jesus said, "How can I describe the Kingdom of God? What story should I use to illustrate it?"

KJV Mark 4:30 And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?

ESV Mark 4:30 And he said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it?"

NIV Mark 4:30 Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it?"

ASV Mark 4:30 And he said, How shall we liken the kingdom of God? or in what parable shall we set it forth?

CSB Mark 4:30 And He said: "How can we illustrate the kingdom of God, or what parable can we use to describe it?"

NKJ Mark 4:30 Then He said, "To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we picture it?"

NRS Mark 4:30 He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it?"

YLT Mark 4:30 And he said, 'To what may we liken the reign of God, or in what simile may we compare it?'

NAB Mark 4:30 He said, "To what shall we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable can we use for it?"

NJB Mark 4:30 He also said, "What can we say that the kingdom is like? What parable can we find for it?"

GWN Mark 4:30 Jesus asked, "How can we show what the kingdom of God is like? To what can we compare it?"

BBE Mark 4:30 And he said, What picture may we give of the kingdom of God, or with what story may we make it clear?"

- La 2:13 Mt 11:16 Lu 13:18,20,21
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Parallel Passages:

Mt 13:31-32+ He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; 32 and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES."

Lk 13:18-19+ So He was saying, "What is the kingdom of God like, and to what shall I compare it? 19 "It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and threw into his own garden; and it grew and became a tree, and THE BIRDS OF THE AIR NESTED IN ITS BRANCHES."

## A PICTURE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Note that Matthew places this parable immediately after that of the tares (Mt 13:24–30), but Luke has it in an entirely different setting (Lk 13:18–19). Notice that Matthew does not mention Jesus beginning this parable with questions as do Mark and Luke.

Van Parunak: The previous illustration describes the MEANS of the kingdom's spread: by God's power, not man's efforts. This illustration emphasizes the MAGNITUDE of its expansion.

**And He said** - This introduces a new subject, specifically a new **parable**. Matthew says Jesus "presented another parable to them saying," and in Mt 13:36+ it says "then He left the crowds," so the parable of the mustard seed was clearly given to the entire multitude, but was only explained to the disciples (Mt 13:36+, Mk 4:34)

Now place yourself in the sandals of a Jewish person in Jesus' day, a person who was suppressed by foreign rule, subjected to the oppressive Roman government. In this historical context, the Jews were looking for a Messiah Who would defeat the Romans and set up His Kingdom in their day. They expected that the Messiah would liberate them by use of military force. Instead God sent Jesus to save the Jews from a far more deadly and oppressive enemy, their own sin! In this parable of the mustard seed, the Kingdom clearly was not one that would immediately destroy all the other plants and take over the garden (so to speak). To the contrary, it was a Kingdom that would grow and grow and grow over time and, yes, one day it would be the greatest Kingdom in the world. But that would take time and that is the picture that Jesus is depicting in this parable.

As we have noted even His disciples to whom He explained the meaning of all the parables (Mk 4:34), failed to fully comprehend this critical truth. And so we see that even after His triumph over the greatest enemy, Death, and then attending a "40 day seminar" on the **Kingdom of God** (Acts 1:3+), the disciples were still asking Him "**Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?**" (Acts 1:6+). One could paraphrase it "Is it time for the mustard plant to take over the garden?" They were still thinking He would defeat the Romans and set up His Kingdom. Notice His response. He did not say "No" but answered "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:7-8+) In other words, the King gave them their marching orders regarding their role to sow the Gospel seed which would result in the progressive growth of His Kingdom. And that is still the "job description" of every one of His disciples.

**THOUGHT** - Are you actively participating in the growth of His Kingdom - praying for souls ([a great tool is the daily prayer guide for unreached people groups](#)), supporting missionaries, sowing the Gospel seed in your sphere of influence?

**John Phillips** makes an interesting comment of how the disciples may have reacted to the kingdom beginning as **amustard seed** - Imagine the astonishment of the disciples when they heard that! The Lord was about to describe the kingdom of God. They had visions of a global empire. They doubtless pictured an ivory palace, a majestic throne, a glittering court, ambassadors from earth's remotest bounds waiting in long lines for an audience, and an invincible army at the command of a powerful, magnificent king. They waited eagerly for the Lord's description of such a kingdom, one in which they would be high ministers of state. Then came the shock. "The kingdom of God," He said, "is like a grain of mustard seed." They must have stared blankly at Him in astonishment. A grain of mustard seed? Why, that was nothing! You could hardly see it; it was so small and insignificant. Ah! But it had life! It would grow! The point of the parable lies in the contrast between the size of the seed when it is sown and the size of the plant when it is grown. In each case, the Lord used hyperbole for emphasis. The kingdom of God seems small and insignificant in men's eyes. In the Lord's day, such was the people's contempt for it that they murdered its King. But when it is fully grown, when it reaches its full potential, they will be awed by it then! (Exploring Mark)

**How shall we picture the kingdom of God or by what parable shall we present it?**- Notice the pronoun **we**, the only time in His teaching that Jesus clearly identified with the crowds! This double question to the crowd could be summarized "How shall we compare the Kingdom of God?" Jesus ever the Master Teacher, begins with two questions to draw His hearers into His story. This is always a good practice for teachers/preachers to emulate. It makes their mind begin to think. "A **parable** is an explanation, presenting a likeness to the thing which one wishes to explain (Kingdom of God), thrown in alongside of the fact discussed (Growth of a Mustard Seed)." (Wuest) While it may seem simplistic, don't miss the point that Jesus two questions tell us that the main teaching of this parable is about the **Kingdom of God**.

Recall Jesus' earlier words "And He was saying to them, "To **you** (His true disciples) has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but **those who are outside** get everything in parables," (Mk 4:11<sup>±</sup>). So while the crowds would hear Jesus' parabolic description of the mustard seed, they would not be able to understand "**the mystery of the Kingdom of God**." This certainly raises the question of why teach this way if one knows the hearers will not understand?

To repeat a note from earlier **B B Warfield** helps us understand why Jesus began teaching the crowds in **parables** - He teaches in parables in order that He may teach; not in order that He may not teach (**ED**: WHAT DOES WARFIELD MEAN? RECALL THE TIME HE TAUGHT OPENLY IN NAZARETH AND IT AROUSED SUCH OPPOSITION THAT THEY TRIED TO KILL HIM - Lk 4:24-29+. AND AT THIS POINT IN HIS MINISTRY THE OPPOSITION TO HIS TEACHING WAS BEGINNING TO "**CRESCENDO**" AS EMPHASIZED BY THE MOST RECENT BLASPHEMOUS ACCUSATION OF HIS BEING IN LEAGUE WITH **BEELZEBUL** OR SATAN! See Mt 12:27+, Mk 3:22+). **This method of veiled teaching, in a word, is forced on Him by the conditions under which He is teaching and arises from the state of mind of His hearers** (**ED**: MOST OF WHOM REJECTED HIS TRUTH); it is not chosen by Him in order to conceal His meaning, but in order to convey it to those for whom it is intended (**ED**: GOOD SOILS - THOSE WHO HAVE EARS TO HEAR - IN THE IMMEDIATE CONTEXT = HIS DISCIPLES - see Mk 4:34<sup>±</sup>). (Jesus had a choice) either to teach this way or not to teach at all; and He consequently teaches this way (IN PARABLES). **This is the fundamental doctrine of parabolic teaching**. I do not say it is the whole account to be given of it; we may see in the sequel that there is more to say, and that **the adoption of parabolic teaching has a punitive side** (**ED**: SEE Mark 4:12<sup>±</sup>, cf NOTES ON SIMILAR TEACHING IN Mt 13:14-15+)—as, indeed, it could not fail to have—with **reference to those who could and would not endure sound doctrine** (cf 2 Ti 4:3-4<sup>±</sup> where "turn away" is **active voice** indicating a decision of their will to turn away and "turn aside" is **passive voice** indicating they are acted on by an external force -- I would suggest that this is most likely a **punitive** "divine passive"; cf same pattern in 2 Ti 3:13<sup>±</sup> where "deceiving" is **active voice** and "being deceived" is **passive voice**); **whom it puzzled, therefore, rather than instructed**. But this is the fundamental account of it. (Faith and Life)

**Robert Stein** echoes Warfield's analysis writing "Jesus furthermore could teach about the coming of the **kingdom of God**, a most **incendiary** subject for Pilate and Rome, only through the riddle-like nature of his parables. For Herod and Pilate, Jesus' parabolic teachings concerning the **kingdom of God** and its coming were not revolutionary. For them, they were simply incomprehensible. Thus they would not interfere with Jesus's ministry until in God's time "the hour had come" (cf. Mk 14:41)." (BECNT-Mk)

**Picture** (3666) (**homoioo** from **homoios** = similar, of the same kind, of like disposition, in geometry similar [of figures]) means to make like (active sense). Most of the uses are in the passive sense meaning to become like something or someone (He 2:17). **Homoioo** is used to portray one thing with another in order to compare. To consider something to be like something else. To illustrate by comparison (Mt 7:24, 26, Lk 7:31, 13:20, Mk

4:30). To be like, to resemble, to be similar to (Acts 14:11). In the Gospels (and especially in Matthew) **homoioo** usually serves to introduce parables. Mt 6:8; Mt 7:24; Mt 7:26; Mt 11:16; Mt 13:24; Mt 18:23; Mt 22:2; Mt 25:1; Mk 4:30; Lk 7:31; Lk 13:18; Lk 13:20; Acts 14:11; Ro 9:29; Heb 2:17

**Parable** ([3850](#)) see above on [parabole](#)

#### Related Resources:

- See [in depth comments](#) on [Lk 17:20-21](#) on what constitutes the **Kingdom of God**
- [What is the kingdom of God?](#)
- [What did Jesus mean when He said, "The kingdom of God is within you" \(Luke 17:21, KJV\)?](#)
- [What is the difference between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Heaven?](#)
- [Luke 17:20-37 The Present and Future Kingdom](#) - Steven Cole
- [Luke 17:20-21 The Invisible Kingdom of God, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Luke 17:20-21 The Invisible Kingdom of God, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur
- For those who literally interpret Rev 20:1-10+ here is a proposed schematic...

KINGDOM OF GOD PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE  
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#### Inductive Bible Study - Analysis of Mark 4:30-32 by Irving Jensen (Mark - Do it Yourself)

What does the parable teach about the kingdom of God?

**Mark 4:31 "It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil,**

NET Mark 4:31 It is like a mustard seed that when sown in the ground, even though it is the smallest of all the seeds in the ground—

GNT Mark 4:31 ζ κ κ κ σ ι ν π ε ω ς, ς τ α ν σ π α ρ π τ ς γ ς, μ ι κ ρ τ ε ρ ο ν ν π ν τ ω ν τ ν σ π ε ρ μ τ ω ν τ ν π τ ς γ ς,

NLT Mark 4:31 It is like a mustard seed planted in the ground. It is the smallest of all seeds,

KJV Mark 4:31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth:

ESV Mark 4:31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth,

NIV Mark 4:31 It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground.

ASV Mark 4:31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown upon the earth, though it be less than all the seeds that are upon the earth,

CSB Mark 4:31 It's like a mustard seed that, when sown in the soil, is smaller than all the seeds on the ground.

NKJ Mark 4:31 "It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth;

NRS Mark 4:31 It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth;

YLT Mark 4:31 As a grain of mustard, which, whenever it may be sown on the earth, is less than any of the seeds that are on the earth;

NAB Mark 4:31 It is like a mustard seed that, when it is sown in the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth.

NJB Mark 4:31 It is like a mustard seed which, at the time of its sowing, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth.

GWN Mark 4:31 It's like a mustard seed planted in the ground. The mustard seed is one of the smallest seeds

on earth.

BBE Mark 4:31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is put in the earth, is smaller than all the seeds on the earth,

- **It is like a mustard seed:** Mt 13:31-33 Lu 13:18,19
- **though it is smaller than** Ge 22:17,18 Ps 72:16-19 Isa 2:2,3 9:7 49:6,7 53:2,12 54:1-3 Isa 60:22 Eze 17:22-24 Da 2:34,35,44,45 Am 9:11-15 Mic 4:1,2 Zec 2:11 8:20-23 12:8 14:6-9 Mal 1:11 Ac 2:41 4:4 5:14 19:20 Ac 21:20 Rev 11:15 20:1-6
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Tiny Mustard Seeds

## PARABLE OF A MUSTARD SEED

Jesus now answers the questions He had just presented to the crowd to stimulate their interest.

**It is like a mustard seed** - Like is a [term of comparison](#), specifically known as a [simile](#). A **mustard seed** is a small round seed usually about 1-2 mm diameter and yellowish white to black. While it was not absolutely the smallest seed (seed of black orchid smaller), nevertheless, the **mustard seed** was proverbial for its small size and rabbis referred to it as the smallest of seeds (mishnah Nazir 1:5; mishnah Niddah 5:2). Notice Jesus does not refer to a large number of seeds (as in picture above), but refers to a **seed** singular for this serves His purpose of making His striking comparison. Note also that a **small seed** is something that is difficult to see (especially if you are older like me and your vision is declining)! What a shock this must have been not only for the disciples, but also for the Jewish crowd who were expecting a Messiah Who would defeat Rome soundly and set up His Kingdom with Israel as the lead nation. The Jews were looking for the wrong kind of Messiah and the wrong kind of kingdom, one that was only physical. Jesus proceeds to describe the Kingdom of God, which would be physical (e.g. see physical aspects of the Messianic Kingdom) but more importantly would be spiritual.

**Mustard** ([4615](#))([sinapi](#)) refers to the mustard plant, an herb or shrub with extremely small pungent seeds. BDAG says "The precise species cannot be determined, and some may grow to a height of three or more meters." (some reports up to 15 feet tall!) Several writers feel the plant Jesus describes is [Sinapis nigra](#) (aka [Brassica nigra](#)) but we cannot be dogmatic and we really do not need to know in order to understand the main point of the parable. The expression *kókkon sinápeōs* (*kókkon* = grain), **a grain of mustard seed**, is a proverbial phrase meaning the least, the smallest particle (referring to "small" faith = Mt. 17:20; Lk 17:6+).

**TDNT** - The parable of the grain of mustard seed also comes in different versions. The Marcan version stresses the fact of the contrast between the small seed and the plentiful growth, Lk. 13:18-19 pays more attention to the process, and Mt. 13:31-32 combines the two emphases. Behind the parable is the teaching that the kingdom is already present in Jesus but in hidden and inconspicuous form. This form should not be an offense but a ground of confidence, for in the concealment of God's present work lies the promise of his victorious rule. Having made a beginning, God will carry through his cause to the end.

**Sinapi** - 5x three of the uses in in the related parable of the mustard seed = Mk. 4:31; Lk. 13:19 Mt. 13:31. Then twice to describe faith = Mt. 17:20+ = "if you have faith the size of a mustard seed" and Lk. 17:6+ = "If you had faith like a mustard seed". No uses in the Septuagint.

**Mustard** has long been a widely-used herb throughout much of the world, and in modern times it has found additional commercial value in the manufacture of film. Amazingly, years ago it was discovered that cows whose feed was supplemented with mustard seed developed bones that had a superior quality for use in making the silver compounds used in photographic film. (MacArthur)

**Seed** (grain) ([2848](#))([kokkus](#)) refers to a seed or kernel of various plants. It was also used of the "berry" from which scarlet dye was prepared for clothing (see [kokkinos](#)). Jesus used kokkus figuratively to speak of the Kingdom of heaven (begins small, grows big), of faith (small but real faith is still able to "move mountains" metaphorically speaking), and as an allusion to His death, burial (grain) and resurrection (it bears much fruit - Jn 12:24). Paul compares the "sowing" of the mortal body (i.e., when it dies - 1Cor 15:36) to sowing a bare grain, emphasizing that the "fruit" of that body (the resurrected body) is distinct and much better (1Cor 15:37, see 1Cor 15:42-44) All NT uses Matt. 13:31; Matt. 17:20; Mk. 4:31; Lk. 13:19; Lk. 17:6; Jn. 12:24; 1 Co. 15:37

**Which, when sown upon the soil** - Here the **soil** is not specified. Earlier Jesus referred to four different types of **soil** that pictured the hearts of men as non-receptive or receptive (good soil). The question is what does the **mustard seed** represent or did Jesus

intend it to be specific? Most writers don't comment on the identity of the mustard seed, but **William Lane** says it "is the word of God proclaimed by Christ." (NICNT-Mk) That seems to be a reasonable interpretation or otherwise how would the Kingdom of God grow except by proclamation of the Gospel "seed"?

### **Small beginnings produce great results.**

**Though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil-** The mustard seed was so small that it would take almost twenty thousand seeds to make one ounce. And yet critics challenge Jesus' words and the **inerrancy** of the Bible as discussed more [below](#). "The problem is that the mustard seed is not the smallest seed known to botanists today, though it apparently was to the ancients. In any case, it was used proverbially for "the smallest thing." (R Earle) **MacArthur** adds that "Because of its tiny size, the mustard seed was commonly used in the ancient Near East to represent things that were extremely small. Ancient Jewish literature contains references to a drop of blood or a blemish on an animal that was the size of a mustard seed. To this day Arabs sometimes speak of faith weighing as little as a mustard seed, in much the same way Jesus did (Matt. 17:20)." (MNTC-Mt)

**Seeds** ([04690](#))([sperma](#)) refers to seed sown as containing the germ of new fruit, and often describes the [seed](#) of plants (Mt 13:24, 27, 32, 37, 38; Mk 4:31; 1Co 15:38; 2Co 9:10 Ge 1:11; 47:23) **Sperma** speaks of "the source from which something is propagated." (BDAG) **Vine** says "the seed signifies the divine principle of imparted," whether in a plant or in a believer.

**A T Robertson** on **smaller** says it is "Hyperbole, of course, but clearly meaning that from a very small seed a large plant grows, the gradual pervasive expansive power of the kingdom of God." To be sure the Kingdom of God had a small beginning with Jesus being the foundation (cf Eph 2:20, 21+) Who then passed on the responsibility to grow the Kingdom to 12 men and at most a few hundred believers. Keep in mind that this is all that believed in Jesus while He was on earth ([see note](#))! Most of the Jewish people in Israel did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah, so we see that the Kingdom had an extremely small beginning.

**Alan Carr** - While the mustard seed is not the smallest seed known to man, it was the smallest seed planted in the gardens of Jesus' day. The mustard seed itself is very tiny. It takes about 750 of them to make up a single gram. There are 28 grams in an ounce. Thus, there some 21,000 mustard seeds in an ounce. It is a tiny seed, but it produces a very large plant. Let's consider the facts.

- ·Jesus was born in the tiny town of Bethlehem in abject poverty. (Micah 5:2+)
- ·He was reared in Galilee, and no one believed that a man of God could come from there, John 7:52.
- ·He was raised in a Nazareth. The inhabitants of that city were considered to be wicked and worldly by the Jews.
- ·He had no family connections. He had no money. He had no support from the religious leaders of the day.
- ·Jesus was considered to be a nobody from nowhere Who would amount to nothing! (Isa 53:1-2)
- ·His parentage was questioned, John 8:41 by His enemies.
- ·His followers were, for the most part, the dregs of society.
- ·His Own people rejected Him.
- ·He was despised and rejected by men. (Isa 53:3+)
- ·The Romans eventually nailed Him to a cross and buried Him in a tomb.
- ·His followers preached His resurrection, but most people ignored their message and considered them fools for following a dead man.
- ·Even the Lord's message was hard to swallow. For some it still is! After all, Jesus said to get you have to give away what you have. He told people to love their enemies. He counseled men to turn the other cheek. He spoke of walking the second mile; succeeding through serving and denying self.

There is no question that the Kingdom of our Lord was just like that tiny, insignificant mustard seed in the beginning. No one could see what the tiny seed Jesus was sowing would become! (See his excellent [Sermon](#))

**Smaller** ([3396](#))(**mikros**) has the basic meaning "small, little, translated according to the context; (1) of persons; (a) of physical size small, little (Lk 19.3); (b) of age young, little (Mt 18:6,10, 14), but it possibly belongs to the following; (c) as measuring esteem or importance insignificant, lowly, unimportant (Mt 10.42); comparative mikro,teroj, te,ra, on least, most insignificant (Mt 11.11); (2) of things; (a) of quantity or mass small, little, insignificant (1Co 5.6); neuter (2Co 11.16); (b) of time short (Jn 7.33); neuter as a substantive short time, little while (Jn 13.33); idiomatically in a very little while (Heb 10.37 ); (c) of space, neuter as a substantive little way, short distance ( Mt 26.39)" (Analytical Lexicon) It can be found in classical Greek with reference to numerical quantity or amount of importance of persons, places, things, and even time (e.g., "short"; Liddell-Scott).

**Gilbrant** - In the New Testament **mikros** is used in two major ways: (1) to describe the diminutive height (Luke

19:3), age (Matthew 18:6,10,14), and influence (Matthew 10:42; Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2) of people; (2) to describe the size (Matthew 13:32; James 3:5), number (Luke 12:32), significance (Revelation 3:8), and length of time (Hebrews 10:37) of things. Of special interest to students of the New Testament is the use of the word in the Gospels where **mikros** denotes the status of Christians in the world. While the incident in Matthew 18:6-10 was sparked by an encounter with children, its primary application was to members of the Christian community. They were considered, like the apostles before them (Matthew 10:42), "little"; that is, people of no significance in the eyes of the world. J. Schniewind comments that "the little ones are the lowly in the broadest sense, the poor, uneducated, the socially inferior" (Michel, "mikros," Kittel, 4:653, note 22). It is these special members of the body of Christ that Jesus went to great lengths to protect with His strict admonitions in Luke 17:2 and Matthew 18:6,7. The emphasis is heavily placed on the protection of the testimony and position of the "little" ones. (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

**NT** uses of **mikros** - least(4), less(1), little(13), little ones(6), little while(10), short(1), small(8), smaller(2), smallest(1). - Matt. 10:42; Matt. 11:11; Matt. 13:32; Matt. 18:6; Matt. 18:10; Matt. 18:14; Matt. 26:39; Matt. 26:73; Mk. 4:31; Mk. 9:42; Mk. 14:35; Mk. 14:70; Mk. 15:40; Lk. 7:28; Lk. 9:48; Lk. 12:32; Lk. 17:2; Lk. 19:3; Jn. 7:33; Jn. 12:35; Jn. 13:33; Jn. 14:19; Jn. 16:16; Jn. 16:17; Jn. 16:18; Jn. 16:19; Acts 8:10; Acts 26:22; 1 Co. 5:6; 2 Co. 11:1; 2 Co. 11:16; Gal. 5:9; Heb. 8:11; Heb. 10:37; Jas. 3:5; Rev. 3:8; Rev. 6:11; Rev. 11:18; Rev. 13:16; Rev. 19:5; Rev. 19:18; Rev. 20:3; Rev. 20:12

**Septuagint** uses of **Mikros** - Gen. 19:11; Gen. 19:20; Gen. 24:17; Gen. 24:43; Gen. 26:10; Gen. 30:30; Gen. 42:2; Gen. 42:32; Gen. 43:2; Gen. 44:25; Gen. 47:9; Exod. 17:4; Exod. 23:30; Num. 16:9; Num. 16:13; Num. 22:18; Deut. 1:17; Deut. 7:22; Deut. 25:13; Deut. 25:14; Jos. 22:17; Jos. 22:19; Jdg. 4:19; Jdg. 6:15; Ruth 2:7; 1 Sam. 2:19; 1 Sam. 5:9; 1 Sam. 9:21; 1 Sam. 15:17; 1 Sam. 16:11; 1 Sam. 20:2; 1 Sam. 20:35; 1 Sam. 22:15; 1 Sam. 25:36; 1 Sam. 30:2; 1 Sam. 30:19; 2 Sam. 7:19; 2 Sam. 9:12; 2 Sam. 12:3; 2 Sam. 12:8; 2 Sam. 17:20; 2 Sam. 24:25; 1 Ki. 2:20; 1 Ki. 3:7; 1 Ki. 8:64; 1 Ki. 11:17; 1 Ki. 17:13; 1 Ki. 18:44; 1 Ki. 22:31; 2 Ki. 2:23; 2 Ki. 4:10; 2 Ki. 5:2; 2 Ki. 5:14; 2 Ki. 23:2; 2 Ki. 25:26; 1 Chr. 12:14; 1 Chr. 25:8; 1 Chr. 26:13; 2 Chr. 10:10; 2 Chr. 12:7; 2 Chr. 18:30; 2 Chr. 21:17; 2 Chr. 22:1; 2 Chr. 31:15; 2 Chr. 34:30; 2 Chr. 36:18; Ezr. 9:8; Est. 1:1; Est. 10:3; Job 2:9; Job 3:19; Job 10:20; Job 36:2; Ps. 42:6; Ps. 73:2; Ps. 104:25; Ps. 115:13; Prov. 6:10; Prov. 15:16; Prov. 20:10; Eccl. 9:14; Cant. 2:15; Cant. 3:4; Cant. 8:8; Isa. 7:13; Isa. 9:14; Isa. 10:25; Isa. 11:6; Isa. 18:5; Isa. 22:5; Isa. 22:24; Isa. 26:16; Isa. 26:20; Isa. 28:10; Isa. 28:13; Isa. 28:25; Isa. 29:17; Isa. 30:14; Isa. 33:4; Isa. 33:19; Isa. 54:7; Isa. 54:8; Isa. 63:18; Jer. 6:13; Jer. 31:34; Jer. 42:1; Jer. 42:8; Jer. 44:12; Jer. 49:15; Jer. 51:33; Lam. 4:18; Ezek. 8:17; Ezek. 11:16; Ezek. 16:20; Ezek. 16:47; Ezek. 17:6; Ezek. 43:14; Ezek. 46:22; Dan. 7:8; Dan. 11:34; Hos. 1:4; Hos. 8:10; Amos 6:11; Amos 8:5; Jon. 3:5; Zech. 4:10. **Gilbrant** says "Hebrew term most frequently translated by mikros is qātān, meaning "small" in a variety of ways: of a person's stature (Genesis 19:11), of amount (Numbers 22:18), of size (Deuteronomy 25:13); of importance (1 Chronicles 25:8; 26:13), of age (Jeremiah 6:13)."

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**Alan Carr** - Zech 4:10 says, "For who hath despised the day of small things?" God can take someone who seems insignificant and make something great out of them! He can take a little red-headed boy nobody wanted on their team and make him a great leader of men. He did that with Winston Churchill. He can take a backward, stuttering man and use him to bring the Law of God to humanity, He did that with Moses. He can take an awkward, shy shoe salesman and use him to shake the world for Jesus. He did that with D. L. Moody. What could He do with your life? (See his excellent [Sermon](#))

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**THE PROBLEM OF THE MUSTARD SEED** - As alluded to above Luke does not emphasize the small size of the mustard seed as does Mt 13:31-32+ ("this is smaller than all other seeds"), and so opponents of the **inerrancy** and **infallibility of the Scripture**, take Jesus' statement on the size of the mustard seed as CLEARLY ERRONEOUS. They act as if Jesus was giving a botany lesson! It is amazing the lengths to which godless men will go to in their futile attempts to obliterate all evidence of God from our world (really "His world" for He created it!) Given that attack below is an excerpt from an article that addresses this issue of seed size.

"In this article the author seeks to demonstrate exegetically and botanically that our Lord Jesus Christ was not merely using the language of accommodation or even proverbial language, necessarily, when he referred to the mustard seed as the "least" of all seeds. The author appeals to the language of the text, the context, and to expert testimony in the field of botany to show that the mustard seed was indeed the smallest garden-variety seed known to man in Bible times."

John Sproule quotes botanist Dr. L. H. Shinnors regarding the "size" of the Mustard seed writing that "The mustard seed would indeed have been the smallest of those likely to have been noticed by the people at the time of Christ. The principal field crops (such as barley, wheat, lentils, beans) have much larger seeds, as do

vetches and other plants which might have been present as weeds (the biblical tares) among grain.... There are various weeds and wild flowers belonging to the mustard, amaranth, pigweed, and chickweed families with seeds as small or smaller than mustard itself, but they would not have been particularly known or noticed by the inhabitants....The only modern crop plant of importance with smaller seeds than mustard is tobacco, but this plant is of American origin and was not grown in the Old World until the 16th century and later (Read the entire article - ["The Problem of the Mustard Seed." Grace Theological Journal Spring 1980](#)) (See also William Thomson's 19th century comment in the classic "[The Land and the Book](#)")

**MacArthur adds this note regarding the mustard seed problem** - Dr. L. H. Shinnars, director of the herbarium at Southern Methodist University in Dallas and lecturer at the Smithsonian Institution, stated in a conversation that "the mustard seed would indeed have been the smallest of those to have been noticed by the people at the time of Christ. The principal field crops (barley, wheat, lentils, and beans) have much larger seeds, as do other plants which might have been present as weeds and so forth. There are various weeds and wild flowers belonging to the mustard, amaranth, pigweed, or chickweed families with seeds that are as small as or smaller than mustard; but they would not have been known or noticed by the inhabitants. They are wild and they certainly would not have been planted as a crop.... The only modern crop plant in existence with smaller seeds than mustard is tobacco, and this plant of American origin was not grown in the old world until the sixteenth century or later." (MNTC-Mt)

**J D Jones** on the **Parable of the Mustard Seed** - THIS, like the Parable of The Seed Growing Secretly is a parable of encouragement and good hope. There had been in the Parable of the Sower, as I have already pointed out, a great deal to discourage and depress. It seemed to suggest that of the seed sown in men's hearts, three parts would be lost. For it records three cases of failure for one of success. And, according to Matthew's account, the parable of the Sower had been followed by a more discouraging parable still, viz., the parable of the Tares. In addition to the perversity of the human heart, our Lord told His disciples that they had to reckon with an adversary who was just as tireless sowing the seeds of noxious weeds, as they were in sowing the good seed of the Kingdom. Between the parable of the Sower and the parable of the Tares I can well believe the disciples were sorely discouraged and depressed. They may have wondered whether it was worth while to sow the seed of the Kingdom at all. And so our Lord followed up those two parables about the difficulties and discouragements of Christian work, with these two about the encouragements and glorious results of it. First, the parable of the fruit-bearing earth, and the seed growing secretly. And secondly, this parable of the mustard seed, which from tiny beginnings developed and grew until it became greater than all the herbs in the garden, and almost attained to the dimensions of a tree.

The broad lesson of the parable is simple and obvious enough. It is that, as Dr Hamilton puts it, of "a little germ and a large result, a small commencement and a conspicuous growth, an obscure and tiny granule followed by a vigorous vegetation, the least of all seeds becoming the greatest of all herbs." It was meant to teach the disciples not to despise the day of small things. The Kingdom of God, as they now saw it, was so unlike their anticipations, and so insignificant in its appearance; there was such a difference between their Master—a humble carpenter from Nazareth—and the conquering Prince of their dreams, that they may well have been filled with gloomy anticipations. It may have been the "mustard seed" appearance of the Kingdom that made Judas turn traitor. So this parable was spoken to correct any doubts in their minds, and to give them the assurance of a mighty future, in spite of the small and obscure beginnings.

**Mark 4:32 yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR can NEST UNDER ITS SHADE."**

NET Mark 4:32 when it is sown, it grows up, becomes the greatest of all garden plants, and grows large branches so that the wild birds can nest in its shade."

GNT Mark 4:32 καὶ τὰν σπάρων, ἀναβαίνει καὶ γίνεται μεζώντων τῶν λαχρῶν καὶ ποιεῖ κλάδους μεγάλους, ὅστε ὄνασθαι πτηνῶν ὑπὸ τῆς σκιάς αὐτοῦ.

NLT Mark 4:32 but it becomes the largest of all garden plants; it grows long branches, and birds can make nests in its shade."

KJV Mark 4:32 But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

ESV Mark 4:32 yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

NIV Mark 4:32 Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big



branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade."

ASV Mark 4:32 yet when it is sown, groweth up, and becometh greater than all the herbs, and putteth out great branches; so that the birds of the heaven can lodge under the shadow thereof.

CSB Mark 4:32 And when sown, it comes up and grows taller than all the vegetables, and produces large branches, so that the birds of the sky can nest in its shade."

NKJ Mark 4:32 "but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade."

NRS Mark 4:32 yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

YLT Mark 4:32 and whenever it may be sown, it cometh up, and doth become greater than any of the herbs, and doth make great branches, so that under its shade the fowls of the heaven are able to rest.'

NAB Mark 4:32 But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the sky can dwell in its shade."

NJB Mark 4:32 Yet once it is sown it grows into the biggest shrub of them all and puts out big branches so that the birds of the air can shelter in its shade.'

GWN Mark 4:32 However, when planted, it comes up and becomes taller than all the garden plants. It grows such large branches that birds can nest in its shade."

BBE Mark 4:32 But when it is planted, it comes up, and becomes taller than all the plants, and puts out great branches, so that the birds of heaven are able to take rest in its shade.

- **and becomes:** Pr 4:18 Isa 11:9
- **forms large branches:** Ps 80:9-11 Eze 31:3-10 Da 4:10-14,20-22
- **can NEST UNDER ITS SHADE:** Ps 91:1 Song 2:3 Isa 32:2 La 4:20
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

A LARGE MUSTARD PLANT

## KINGDOM OF GOD BEGINS SMALL, ENDS LARGE

**Yet** - Contrast between small size of seed (**mikros**) and large size of the subsequent plant (**megas**). Although it might not look like it to His disciples at the moment, this parable shows that God is in sovereign control of history and the Kingdom of God will be **consummated** in the future, **when the harvest has come** (Mk 4:29). Mark will later describe the consummation...

AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken.  
Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory. (Mk 13:25-26)

**When it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches-** **Grows up** ([anabaino](#)) is in the [present tense](#) which speaks of continual ("unstoppable") growth. Critics have argued that Jesus was exaggerating regarding the size of the mustard plant, but as noted it has been well-documented that some mustard plants grew as tall as 15 feet high! Imagine a plant up to 10-15 feet tall and 6 feet wide, all the result of this one tiny seed! Now that is one powerful seed! The point is that the growth to which Jesus refers is not natural, but unnatural, yea, even **supernatural**! So just as the mustard plant surpasses the other garden plants in size, so too will the **Kingdom of God** surpass the size of all earthly kingdoms of men ([see note](#) on prophecy in Daniel 2). Note the adjective **all** which emphasizes the fact that this "plant", this Kingdom, will be the greatest. The subsequent size was out of proportion to the smallness of the seed. Mt 13:32+ and Lk 13:19+ both refer to the grown mustard plant as a **"tree."**

Who has despised the day of small things? - Zech 4:10

**MacArthur** explains that "The point of this parable is that viewed from an external, visible perspective, the eventually large size of the **kingdom** was not perceivable at the start...at this point there were only a small number of people who followed Jesus. The **kingdom** was obscure; it was not distinguished by any majesty, power, or public display. Those things will mark its [consummation](#), not its beginning. Most of the Jewish people were unaware of it (Luke 17:20–21+), since its present form was not Messiah's earthly reign, but the sphere of salvation where God reigns in the hearts of His people. The Lord's illustration is also a powerful prophecy. The **kingdom** will steadily grow until its [consummation](#), which will be amazingly out of proportion to its beginning. That will happen

when the Lord Jesus Christ returns in glory (Rev 19:11–15<sup>±</sup>) and “the **kingdom of the world** [becomes] the **kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ**; and He will reign forever and ever” (Rev 11:15<sup>±</sup>). (MNTC-Luke)

**Garden plants** (3001)(**lachanon** from **lachaino** = to dig, **till**) means literally a plant **tilled** in the ground, a garden herb (Lk 11:42+), a vegetable (Ro 14:2<sup>±</sup>), an edible plant. Lachanon is used of herbs and vegetables cultivated in a field or garden, sold in the market, and prepared in the kitchen. Ro 14:2<sup>±</sup> refers to one who is a vegetarian for religious reasons. Uses only 4x - garden herb(1), garden plants(2), vegetables(1). - Matt. 13:32+; Mk. 4:32+; Lk. 11:42+; Ro 14:2<sup>±</sup>. The Septuagint uses lachanon to refer to the vegetables which God said Noah could eat with the meat of animals (Genesis 9:3). All uses in Septuagint - Gen. 9:3; 1 Ki. 21:2; Ps. 37:2; Prov. 15:17.

**Vincent on large branches** - One of the Talmudists describes the mustard-plant as a tree, of which the wood was sufficient to cover a potter's shed. Another says that he was wont to climb into it as men climb into a fig-tree. Professor Hackett says that on the plain of Akka, toward Carmel, he found a collection of mustard-plants from six to nine feet high, with branches from each side of a trunk an inch or more in thickness. Dr. Thomson relates that near the bank of the Jordan he found a mustard-tree more than twelve feet high.

**So that** ([hoste](#)) - This introduces a purpose clause.

**THE BIRDS OF THE AIR can NEST UNDER ITS SHADE** - **Nest** (kataskenoo) is in the [present tense](#) and literally could be read "are continually tenting down" or "are continually pitching their tents."

**THOUGHT** - the parable of the mustard seed in which little becomes much, is an encouragement all those who feel obscure and small but who can still do much for the Lord. Just lay hold of the truth of Eph 2:10+. Good works are waiting for you dear believer! Do not waste your time! Do not waste your life! Instead [Redeem the Time](#). Do not have a pity party thinking God couldn't use me for anything of eternal significance! Wrong! A thousand times wrong!!!

## MEANING OF THE BIRDS?

The mustard seed parable and specifically the meaning of the birds is open to the danger of allegorical interpretation. **Roy Zuck** writes that "**Allegorizing** is searching for a **hidden or secret meaning** underlying but remote from and unrelated in reality to **the more obvious meaning** of a text. In other words the literal reading is a sort of code, which needs to be deciphered to determine the more significant and hidden meaning. In this approach the literal is superficial, the allegorical is the true meaning." In summary, using [allegorical interpretation](#), makes it possible to "find" all manner of meanings beyond the plain sense of the text.

That said, there are three common interpretations of the **birds**:

1. The fact that they can nest on the plant emphasizes its substantial size/growth
2. Represent Gentiles/nations who come into and contribute to the growth of the Kingdom of God
3. Represent evil forces that come into the Kingdom of God, infiltrating the Church

**#1** - The fact that birds can rest in a mustard plant would indicate it was a large plant. That is the simplest interpretation.

**#2** - Other commentators (e.g., John MacArthur) interpret the **birds** as representative of "nations" or Gentiles. In the interpretation of the **birds** as nations or Gentiles, the birds would represent believers who by grace through faith come into the Kingdom of God. There is support for this interpretation in at least two ways:

(1) Gentiles coming into the Kingdom of God contribute to the growth of that Kingdom. In the book of Acts the spread of the Kingdom of God from "Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:8<sup>±</sup>), a spread which began primarily with Jewish believers but soon included Gentile believers as the Gospel spread throughout the Roman Empire.

(2) There are OT passages that equate **birds** with **Gentiles**. For example Ezekiel writes "On the high mountain of Israel I will plant it, that it may bring forth boughs and bear fruit and become a stately cedar. And **birds** of every kind will nest under it; they will nest in the shade of its branches." (Ezekiel 17:23)

**#3** - Some commentators say the **birds** are "representatives of Satan" (**#3** above) ([Ironsides](#)) based on Mk 4:15<sup>±</sup>, and thus they place great weight on interpreting the figure of birds in the same way it was interpreted in the parable of the soils. However there is nothing in the context of the mustard seed parable which dogmatically supports this interpretation.

I favor **#1** as most obvious but can see how **#2** is a reasonable interpretation. While **#3** is true of the church over the last 2000 years,

that interpretation is less appealing as it would not be very encouraging to Jesus' disciples. And why would Jesus intend this interpretation in the parable of the mustard seed, when He clearly presents the truth in the parable of the tares?

In the final analysis, you will have to make your own decision whether you think Jesus used the picture of **birds** to picture Gentiles. Either interpretation does not detract from the main point of the parable which is that of a small beginning of the Kingdom of God consummating in the large Kingdom of God. Jesus does not tell us when the "time" of growth ends but it is fair to say that the Kingdom growth will not be seen as largest of all until the King of that Kingdom returns at the **Second Coming**. (See [note](#))

**Barclay** writes that "it was a common sight to see such mustard bushes or trees surrounded with a cloud of birds, for the birds love the little black seeds of the tree, and settle on the tree to eat them." (DSB-MT)

**Walter Leifeld** writes that "**Birds** are specifically mentioned in each version of the parable (Mt 13:32; Mk 4:32, Lk 13:19) and **may** therefore **be** significant in symbolizing Gentile nations. Plummer (p. 345) cites Ezekiel 17:23; 31:6 as OT evidence for this." (EBC)

**William Lane** takes a "middle road" interpretation of the **birds** (as does James Edwards in Pillar NTC-Mk) - The reference to the **birds** of the air which find shelter in the branches of the mustard shrub may have a deeper significance, but it seems more probable that they are part of the picture of the surprising character of the end when considered from the beginning.....This parable is concerned with the enigmatic present manifestation of the Kingdom as embodied in Jesus' person. Its appearance may be characterized by weakness and apparent insignificance—but remember the mustard seed. The day will come when the **Kingdom of God** will surpass in glory the mightiest kingdoms of the earth, for it is the consequence of God's sovereign action. The **mustard seed** is the word of God proclaimed by Christ. This word possesses the power which one day will make all things new. When the glory of that manifestation breaks forth before men they will be as startled as the man who considers the tiny mustard seed and the mighty shrub (ED: cf Rev 1:7+). (NICNT-Mk)

I tend to agree with **Bruce Barton** (James Brooks tends to agree in NAC-Mark. as does Robert Stein in BECNT-Mk) who writes that "Jesus' mention of **birds** of the air was probably meant to add color to his parable or to describe the size of this shrub, but probably did not have any **allegorical meaning**. However, some commentators say that the **birds** represent the Gentiles becoming part of God's kingdom (see prophecies such as Ezekiel 17:22–24; 31:6). For the disciples, and for us, this parable meant that size or relative power does not indicate final results. The disciples needed to understand that while their mission might at times seem unattainable, God's kingdom would take root and grow across the world and through the years. This would be no political coup; the kingdom would grow slowly but surely in people's hearts, making a difference in people's lives and preparing them for life to come in God's eternal kingdom." (LAC)

**Robert Stein** - Some see in "**the birds of heaven**" (τ πετειν το ο ρανο , ta peteina tou ouranou) an allegorical reference to the inclusion of the gentiles in the kingdom of God (cf. Ezek. 17:23; 31:6; Dan. 4:12, 21; Jeremias 1972: 147; Hooker 1991: 136). No clear allusion to these OT texts is made in the parable, however, and the reference to the **birds**, like the reference to the large branches, makes perfectly good sense as an example of the greatness of the final product without allegorizing it. (NAC-Mark)

**R T France** - 'Great oaks from little acorns grow'. Those who witnessed the initial proclamation of the **kingdom of God** must not despise small beginnings (cf Zech 4:10), nor should they be impatient for the full majesty of God's kingdom to be revealed (cf. perhaps the question of John the Baptist in Mt. 11:3)....The two parables of Mk 4:26–32 thus both warn against underestimating the significance of the proclamation of the **kingdom of God**, however unimpressive its initial impact may seem. What has begun in the Galilean ministry of Jesus will, by the power of God, one day prove to be of ultimate significance. If for the time being its power is hidden, it is not for that reason any less certain, and its growth will be spectacular. (NIGTC)

**W A Criswell** - The parable of the mustard seed illustrates the unexpected and previously undisclosed nature of the coming of God's kingly reign. The kingdom has come (Lk 17:21+), but, like a mustard seed, it begins as something small and humble; it does not come in the expected form of a glorious manifestation that would usher in the age to come. Only gradually does the kingdom develop, and then from so small an inception. (Believer's Study Bible)

**Adam Clarke** "Both these parables (MUSTARD AND LEAVEN) are prophetic, and were intended to show, principally, how, from very small beginnings, the Gospel of Christ should pervade all the nations of the world, and fill them with righteousness and true holiness." Of course this will not be consummated until Christ returns for only then the prophecy be fulfilled that "the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea." (Hab 2:14+)

Jesus does not explain the meaning of this parable, but clearly it reflects the growth of the **Kingdom of God** which one day will surpass the kingdoms of men. In fact Daniel tells us that the kingdoms of men will be totally demolished when Jesus returns as King of kings and Lord of Lords (Rev 19:11-21+). For example, Daniel prophesies...

"You (DANIEL DESCRIBING TO NEBUCHADNEZZAR THE DETAILS OF HIS DREAM) continued looking until a **Stone** (CHRIST) was cut out without hands (SUPERNATURAL ORIGIN ~ VIRGIN BIRTH), and it struck the

statue (REPRESENTING ALL THE KINGDOMS OF MEN OPPOSED TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD) on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. 35 "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time (IN A MOMENT, THE MOMENT JESUS RETURNS TO TRIUMPH OVER ALL HIS ENEMIES) and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found (GONE FOREVER - GREECE, ROME, ETC. ALL THE GREAT BUT PREDOMINANTLY GODLESS CIVILIZATIONS AND THEIR UNGODLY INFLUENCES). But the **Stone** (CHRIST) that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth (COMPARE THIS WITH JESUS' DESCRIPTION OF THE MUSTARD SEED BECOMING "A TREE"). (Da 2:34-35<sup>+</sup>)

"In the days of those kings (WHAT DAYS? THE TOE STAGE JUST DESCRIBED IN CONTEXT ~ TEN KINGDOMS IN A LOOSE CONFEDERACY IN THE END TIMES - Da 2:42<sup>+</sup>, cf Da 7:24<sup>+</sup>) the God of heaven will set up a kingdom (cf MUSTARD PLANT!) which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. 45 "Inasmuch as you saw that a STONE (CHRIST) was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future (THIS PROPHECY IS YET TO BE FULFILLED! BUT IT WILL BE WHEN CHRIST RETURNS! WHY? BECAUSE IT "IS TRUE!"); so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy." (Da 2:44-45<sup>+</sup>)

**Bruce Barton** - Jesus' point was that just as a tiny seed can grow into the greatest of all shrubs, so God's kingdom can begin with a few people who truly believe and grow into such greatness that, upon Christ's second coming, it will overpower the entire earth and rule supremely forever. (LAC)

**Walter Liefeld** - The main point of the parable is that the kingdom of God (v. 30) is like what happens to the mustard seed. It has insignificant and weak beginnings, but a day will come when it will be great and powerful. (EBC)

**R C H Lenski** interprets the parable as follows - We think of the little Babe in Bethlehem, of the small following of Jesus when his work seemed to end with his death, and then of the phenomenal development during all the years since that time. In a despised corner of the world, from a carpenter's home, came a teacher who gathered a handful of ordinary disciples and then fell into the hands of his enemies and died a wretched malefactor's death. This was no tower of Babel, nothing big in the eyes of the world. Yet this was the kingdom that was to encircle the world and that is to shine in glory forever. (ISMG)

**Bible.org** interpretation - With this parable, Jesus was telling His listeners that their way was not God's way at all. God's way was meek. The Savior, Jesus, came as a newborn baby. He grew up as a carpenter's son. He quietly stepped onto the scene. He spoke out to small groups of people, and then more and more people came to listen. He had a small group of followers at first. Without much warning, the kingdom began to grow as people put their trust in Jesus. After Jesus' death and resurrection, a handful of disciples were left to spread the truth of God's kingdom. They were like that tiny seed. In the huge population of the entire world, they were like a little speck. But just like that mustard seed, they were full of hidden power. They had God's Holy Spirit in them. As the disciples traveled and taught, more and more people believed. The worldwide kingdom grew and grew. Just like the mustard plant produces more seeds for planting, the disciples made more disciples. The disciples' disciples made disciples. Just like the mustard plant grows tall and wide, the kingdom of God spread in every direction. God's kingdom continues to grow today. The truth of the kingdom will be preached in ALL nations (Matthew 24:14).

How wide will the Kingdom of God grow? John writes

And they \*sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men **from every tribe and tongue and people and nation**. (Rev 5:9<sup>+</sup>)

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, **from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues**, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands. (Rev 7:9<sup>+</sup>)

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**Hughes** notes that "These growth parables...**have been subject to over interpretation**. This was especially true in the nineteenth century when it was commonly taught that the gospel would keep spreading until the world was Christianized and the kingdom was ushered in. For example, toward the end of that century Sidney Gulick wrote a book entitled The Growth of the Kingdom of God. The book's argument was that Christianity is inexorably spreading and will ultimately take over the world—so why not convert now?...Those who imagine that the kingdom can be brought in by the preaching of the gospel neglect the teaching of the mystery parables of Matthew 13, such as "the sower" (Mt 13:3–23) and "the weeds" (Mt 13:24–30), which demonstrate that the church and its rule will be neither universal nor perfect. What really put an end to such un-Biblical (though noble) dreams were the great wars—

and sins—of the so-called “Christian nations.”...The Biblical realism in these two parables does not teach triumphalism (the view that one religion will displace all others), but rather the effective growth of the church and the authentic transforming power of Christ’s Gospel. (PTW-Lk)

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The greatest works of God often have exceedingly small beginnings. We must never despise a ministry as being too small, for there is no way to know what God may yet do with it (Haggai 2:1-9).

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**J.C. Ryle** - In spite of all the predictions of Voltaire and Payne, in spite of foes without and treachery within, the visible Church progresses, - the mustard plant still grows!

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**ILLUSTRATION OF SMALL THINGS WITH LARGE RESULTS** - Western music is commonly composed of only twelve notes—the seven basic notes and their five sharps/flats. Every symphony, hymn, love song, oratorio, and other piece of music is made up of various combinations and octaves of those same few notes. Similarly, every poem, essay, novel, letter, and other piece of English literature is composed of combinations of the same twenty-six letters. Lord Kelvin once suspended a large piece of metal from a cord in his laboratory. He then proceeded to wad up small pieces of paper into balls about the size of a pea and systematically throw them at the metal weight. At first the almost imperceptible impact of paper hitting metal seemed to have no effect. But eventually the steel weight was swaying rhythmically back and forth due to the cumulative force patiently applied against it. In an immeasurably more dramatic and important way, God would demonstrate through the church how a handful of believers, totally weak and inept in themselves, would in His power turn the world upside down. The kingdom of heaven would grow and prosper in spite of Satan’s opposition and would ultimately permeate and influence the whole world in Jesus’ name. (MacArthur)

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Dr. Ralph Winter of the U.S. Center for World Mission has shown that in 1430 A.D., the total number of Bible-believing Christians proportionate to the total world population was only one percent. But by 1993, that number had progressively increased to ten percent. He says that the kingdom of Christ is currently expanding at a rate of over three times the rate of world population growth (“Mission Frontiers,” May/June, 1994, p. 5)

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**ILLUSTRATION** - When [Matthew Henry](#) was a child he received much impression from a sermon on the parable of the “mustard-seed.” On returning home, he said to his child sister, “I think I have received a grain of grace.” It was the seed of the Commentary “cast upon the waters.”

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**ILLUSTRATION - Small Beginnings** - When Laura Price, a roaring twenties flapper, converted to Christianity one summer, she had no idea what she was getting herself into. She simply gave herself to Jesus, and her lifestyle turned around. A few years later she was married to Carl Woll and en route to Kenya as one of the first Gospel Furthering Fellowship missionaries. She spent the bulk of her adult life living in Kenya, singing, ministering, and sharing the love of Jesus for African people in Swahili. **Big things have small beginnings.** The parable of the mustard seed is a parable of big things with small beginnings. What the seed is and what it becomes do not resemble each other. The seed is buried, hidden, and apparently inconsequential; but it grows into a tree. As in the parallel parable of the yeast, nothing appears to be happening, but in hidden places roots delve and bread expands. These parables illustrate the spiritual principle of slow and hidden growth.

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**ILLUSTRATION** - We heard a presentation on Thursday by Dr. Henry Cloud where he told a story from his own life. He was facing having to write his doctoral thesis, something that seemed totally overwhelming to him. He couldn’t fathom being able to put together a project so huge. But he felt God speaking to him through the scripture that says, “Consider the ant”. He wasn’t sure what that was all about, but he went out and bought an ant farm. After setting it up, he watched the ants. They actually didn’t do much at all. An ant would take a grain of sand and walk it over to the side of the ant farm, then go take another grain and move it to the other side of the farm. It seemed pretty pointless. He went away for a couple of days and when he came back he was amazed. The ant farm had been transformed into tunnels, mounds, and cities. He realized that all the ants had done was to move one grain of sand at a time. When it came to writing his doctoral thesis, he realized that all he needed to do was just do one little thing at a time, a grain at a time. Be faithful in the little things. Move that grain. Plant seeds. Water seeds. You don’t know what might happen as a result. ([Rich Cathers](#))

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**ILLUSTRATION** - Within forty years of the Resurrection, there were churches in every major city of the Roman Empire. Within two and a half centuries, the entire Roman Empire was Christianized, not by a sword like Islam did it, but by the grace of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. Today we see the last remaining 6000 people groups on earth which have been unengaged with gospel contact being prayed for, strategically chosen, and engaged with the Good News. ([Gene Brooks](#))

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**Question: "What is the meaning of the Parable of the Mustard Seed?"**

**Answer:** As with all parables, the purpose of the Parable of the Mustard Seed is to teach a concept or “big idea” using various narrative elements or details that are common, easily recognized, and usually representational of something else. While the elements themselves do have importance, an overemphasis on the details or literal focus on an element usually leads to interpretive errors and missing the main point of the parable.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed is a short one: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches” (Matthew 13:31–32).

One of the possible practical reasons that [Jesus used parables](#) such as this is that, by depicting concepts in word pictures, the message is not readily lost to changes in word usage, technology, cultural context, or the passage of time. Literal, detailed narratives are more susceptible to becoming archaic or obsolescent. Two thousand years later, the imagery is still vivid. We can still understand the concept of a growing seed. Jesus’ parables are brilliant in their simplicity. This storytelling approach also promotes practicing principles rather than inflexible adherence to laws.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed is contained in all three of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 13:31–32; Mark 4:30–32; Luke 13:18–19). In this parable, Jesus predicts the amazing growth of the [kingdom of heaven](#). The mustard seed is quite small, but it grows into a large shrub—up to ten feet in height—and Jesus says this is a picture of kingdom growth. The point of the Parable of the Mustard Seed is that something big and blessed—the kingdom of God—had humble beginnings. How significant could the short ministry of Christ be? He had but a handful of followers, He was a man of no rank and without means, and He lived in what everyone considered a backwater region of the world. The life and death of Christ did not catch the world’s attention any more than a mustard seed would lying on the ground by the road. But this was a work of God. What seemed inconsequential at first grew into a movement of worldwide influence, and no one could stop it (see Acts 5:38–39). The influence of the kingdom in this world would be such that everyone associated with it would find a benefit—pictured as the birds perched on the branches of the mature mustard plant.

Elsewhere in Scripture, the kingdom of God is also pictured as a tree. A passage in Ezekiel, for example, parallels the Parable of the Mustard Seed in many ways. In this prophecy, the Lord God promises to plant a shoot “on a high and lofty mountain” (Ezekiel 17:22). This small sprig “will produce branches and bear fruit and become a splendid cedar. Birds of every kind will nest in it; they will find shelter in the shade of its branches” (Ezekiel 17:23). This messianic prophecy foretells the growth of Christ’s kingdom from very small beginnings to a sizable, sheltering place.

Some have wondered why, in the Parable of the Mustard Seed, Jesus calls the mustard seed the “smallest” of seeds and the mature mustard plant the “largest” of plants in the garden, when there were smaller seeds and larger plants. The answer is that Jesus is using rhetorical hyperbole—an exaggeration to make a point. He is not speaking botanically but proverbially. Jesus’ emphasis is on the change of size—from small to large—and the surprising nature of the growth.

The history of the church has shown Jesus’ Parable of the Mustard Seed to be true. The church has experienced an explosive rate of growth through the centuries. It is found worldwide and is a source of sustenance and shelter for all who seek its blessing. In spite of persecution and repeated attempts to stamp it out, the church has flourished. And it’s only a small picture of the ultimate manifestation of the kingdom of God, when [Jesus returns](#) to earth to rule and reign from Zion. ([Gotquestions](#))

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The Order of the Mustard Seed founded by Count Zinzendorf had three guiding principles, namely:

1. Be kind to all people.
2. Seek their welfare.
3. Win them to Christ.

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**Grant Osborne** - The growth of the kingdom is under God’s control. One of the problems of modern ministry (and a sign of the secularization of the church) is the feeling that the church almost belongs to the senior pastor. People often speak of “Pastor So-and-So’s church,” and both the responsibility and the glory belong to the pastor. A friend of mine was told by a publisher that he would be published only if he was the pastor of a megachurch or was a television personality. Quality has been replaced by fame, and the glory all too seldom goes to the only one who deserves it, God. Throughout Scripture God chose the weak and the outcast through whom to bring greatness. It was not the great king Saul but a small shepherd boy, David, who defeated Goliath and the Philistines. The Twelve were a band of societal misfits. As Paul says, “I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses,” because God’s “power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). We need not worry about our inadequacies. We simply do our best and rely

entirely on God, for he superintends our work and makes of us more than we can be in ourselves. We are part of God's kingdom work, and the progress and greatness of his kingdom and of our ministry are under his sovereign control. (Teach the Text Commentary Series – Mark)

### Mark 4:33 With many such parables He was speaking the word to them, so far as they were able to hear it;

NET Mark 4:33 So with many parables like these, he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear.

GNT Mark 4:33 Κα τοια ταις παραβολα ς πολλα ς λ λει α το ς τ ν λ γον καθ ς ὀ ναντο κο ει ν·

NLT Mark 4:33 Jesus used many similar stories and illustrations to teach the people as much as they could understand.

KJV Mark 4:33 And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.

ESV Mark 4:33 With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it.

NIV Mark 4:33 With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand.

ASV Mark 4:33 And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it;

CSB Mark 4:33 He would speak the word to them with many parables like these, as they were able to understand.

NKJ Mark 4:33 And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it.

NRS Mark 4:33 With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it;

YLT Mark 4:33 And with many such similes he was speaking to them the word, as they were able to hear,

NAB Mark 4:33 With many such parables he spoke the word to them as they were able to understand it.

NJB Mark 4:33 Using many parables like these, he spoke the word to them, so far as they were capable of understanding it.

GWN Mark 4:33 Jesus spoke God's word to them using many illustrations like these. In this way people could understand what he taught.

BBE Mark 4:33 And with a number of such stories he gave them his teaching, as they were able to take it:

- **With many such parables:** Mt 13:34,35
- **so far as they were able to hear it:** John 16:12 1Co 3:1,2 Heb 5:11-14
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## JESUS SUMMARIZES THE PARABLES

**Bock** - The entire collection of parables is then concluded by a summary in Mark 4:33–34 (“By means of many such parables he was speaking the word to them”), which forms an **inclusio** with Mark 4:2+ (“And he was teaching them many things in parables”), indicating the unity of Mark 4:1–34.

**Stein** adds that “By this **inclusio** Mark reveals that the parables in Mark 4:3–32 are a collection of Jesus’ parables and not a chronological description of His parabolic teaching on a particular day.” (NAC-Mk)

**With many such parables He was speaking the word to them** (cf last part of phrase identical to Mk 2:2+) - **With many such parables** is instrumental, i.e., “by means of many such parables” is the idea. In other words as Stein says “the parables were not an end in themselves. They were rather a means to an end. Their end was teaching the “word.”” (BECNT-Mk) There are only about 39 parables recorded in the synoptic Gospels, but undoubtedly Jesus spoke many others that are not recorded (cf. Jn 20:30,31). As Mark explains in the next verse, Jesus was now speaking to the crowds not just **many such parables** but only in parables. **Them** refers to the Jewish crowds, “**those who are outside**” (Mk 4:11+), those who did not have everything explained (Mk 4:34).

As **James Edwards** says “Parables were the public persona of Jesus the teacher. By means of graphic images from everyday life, Jesus teased, tantalized, and tested his audiences, inviting them to an insider experience of the kingdom and of fellowship with himself.” (PNTC-Mk)

**Parables** (3850) see above on [parabole](#)

**So far as they were able to hear it - So far as** conveys the sense "to the degree that" or "just as." NLT = "to teach the people as much as they could understand." This is the thirteenth time in Mark 4 that we see an emphasis on hearing which is clearly a [key word/idea](#) in this chapter (Mk 4:3, twice in Mk 4:9, twice in Mk 4:12, Mk 4:15, 16, 18, 20, twice in Mk 4:23, Mk 4:24, Mk 4:33). The point of this statement by Jesus is that the parables would either conceal or reveal, enlighten or obscure, depending on one's ability to hear or perhaps better on their willingness to truly hear (cf Jn 8:47). And recall also that the word is not really heard unless it is obeyed (cf Lk 8:21+).

**A T Robertson** - Jesus used parables now largely, but there was a limit even to the use of them to these men. He gave them the mystery of the kingdom in this veiled parabolic form which was the only feasible form at this stage (See [note](#)). But even so they did not understand what they heard.

**Stein** adds on **So far as they were able** that Jesus "taught in a manner and on a level to match his hearers' ability, so that they could understand everything. Or it can mean "to the degree that" or as far as they could understand it (cf. 1 Cor. 3:1). The second, more restrictive sense is favored by Mk 4:34, in which the necessity of Jesus's explaining the parables to the disciples is described. It is also favored by the earlier references to the inability of those outside to "hear" (cf. Mk 4:9, 10-12, 23-25). However, this verse also indicates that some understanding of the meaning of the parables was available to those "outside." (BECNT-Mk)

In John Jesus spoke to His disciples declaring "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear [bastazo](#) them now." (Jn 16:12)

They "heard" Jesus' words but did not comprehend the hidden meaning of the parables. Matthew amplifies the meaning declaring "This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: "I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN PARABLES; I WILL UTTER THINGS HIDDEN SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD." (Mt 13:35+) Earlier in Mk 4:11-12+ Jesus had informed His disciples "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but 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." On the other hand those who truly heard would gain some understanding which would enable them to have greater understanding (see Mk 4:24, 25+).

We need to remember that most of the Jewish crowds heard but did not understand, for after His crucifixion and resurrection we have a record of a only a small number of true believers. Luke records "At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of **about one hundred and twenty persons** was there together." (Acts 1:15+). Later Paul records "After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep." (1 Cor 15:6) Assuming this 500+ were believers, it seems to be reasonable to conclude that only a very small percent of the nation of Israel believed in the Messiah while He was alive and prior to Pentecost. After Pentecost more than 8,000 are recorded (some estimate at many as 10,000 in Jerusalem) as believing in Jesus in response to the preaching of Peter (Acts 2:41+, Acts 4:4+). One has to believe that many of those who believed at that time had heard "the seed of the Word" from Jesus and/or His disciples before His crucifixion. God's Spirit used Peter's inspired proclamation to bring forth fruit from the seeds what had been sown but had until then remained dormant. I will admit that this conclusion is somewhat [suppositional](#) but it certainly seems reasonable.

**Able** (could) (1410)([dunamai](#)) conveys the basic meaning of that which has the inherent ability to do something or accomplish some end. Thus **dunamai** means to be able to, to be capable of, to be strong enough to do or to have power to do something.

Note that Jesus' words **so far as they were able to hear** referred to the majority of the unbelieving Jewish crowd, who did not have (spiritual) ears (or softened hearts) to hear and understand what Jesus was saying. A similar principle is seen in believers as described by Paul and the writer of Hebrews...

1 Corinthians 3:1; 2 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able,

Hebrews 5:11-14+ Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

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### **Inductive Bible Study - Analysis of Mark 4:33-34 by Irving Jensen (Mark - Do it Yourself)**

Compare each of the two groups suggested by these phrases:



- (1) "able to hear it"
- (2) "explaining everything"

Summary Interpretation of Mark 4:21-34 - The bright and fruitful aspects of God's Word and kingdom are taught by this passage, including:

1. The ultimate purpose of His Word is to reveal and enlighten.
2. God keeps giving to those who respond to what He has already given.
3. The very life and work of God's kingdom is one big miracle.
4. The kingdom of God began small; it has grown to super size.
5. God wants all people—saved and unsaved—to learn the truth of His Word.

**Mark 4:34 and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.**

NET Mark 4:34 He did not speak to them without a parable. But privately he explained everything to his own disciples.

GNT Mark 4:34 χωρ ς δ παραβολ ς ο κ λ λει α το ς, κατ δ αν δ το ς δ ο ι ς μαθητα ς π λυεν π ντα.

NLT Mark 4:34 In fact, in his public ministry he never taught without using parables; but afterward, when he was alone with his disciples, he explained everything to them.

KJV Mark 4:34 But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

ESV Mark 4:34 He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.

NIV Mark 4:34 He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

ASV Mark 4:34 and without a parable spake he not unto them: but privately to his own disciples he expounded all things.

CSB Mark 4:34 And He did not speak to them without a parable. Privately, however, He would explain everything to His own disciples.

NKJ Mark 4:34 But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.

NRS Mark 4:34 he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

YLT Mark 4:34 and without a simile he was not speaking to them, and by themselves, to his disciples he was expounding all.

NAB Mark 4:34 Without parables he did not speak to them, but to his own disciples he explained everything in private.

NJB Mark 4:34 He would not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything to his disciples when they were by themselves.

GWN Mark 4:34 He did not speak to them without using an illustration. But when he was alone with his disciples, he explained everything to them.

BBE Mark 4:34 And without a story he said nothing to them: but privately to his disciples he made all things clear.

- **but He was explaining everything privately** Mk 4:10 7:17-23 Mt 13:36-43 15:15-20 Lu 8:9,10 24:27,44-46
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**And He did not speak to them without a parable** - This describes the general way which Jesus taught. Of course He also

taught without parables (cf Mk 1:15; Mk 3:28; Mk 6:10,11; Mk 8:34–38; Mk 9:33–50; Mk 10:18,19, 24–31, 42–45; Mk 12:13–44; Mk 13:5–37; etc). This section recalls Jesus' words in Mark 4:10-11<sup>±</sup> where He had declared to His own disciples "to you has been given the mystery of the Kingdom of God but those outside get everything in parables." See [B B Warfield's explanation](#) of why He now spoke only in parables. **Them** refers to the crowds of Jews who had been attracted to Jesus by His miracles, but were not as much attracted by His Word about the Kingdom of God (eg., see His introductory teaching in Mk 1:15+, Mt 4:17+), even though they recognized He was clearly speaking with authority (cf Mt 7:29<sup>±</sup>). And so because they rejected His plain teaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, He had now begun to speak to them in parables.

It is worth noting that at the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7 Jesus presented what was essentially a parable or at least certainly a simple story but in that situation He gave them a clear explanation, because it was a solemn warning (after one of the most frightening declarations of judgment in the entire Bible in Mt 7:21<sup>±</sup>, Mt 7:22-23<sup>±</sup>) and He did not conceal this truth from the people which was an act of His grace (undeserved favor) and mercy! Here is His "parabolic" warning:

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and **acts on them**, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 "And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. 26 "Everyone who hears these words of Mine and **does not act on them**, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 "The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall." (Mt 7:24-27<sup>±</sup>) (**COULD JESUS HAVE BEEN ANY CLEARER? AND YET MOST JEWS REFUSED TO ACT ON HIS WORDS!**)

**Parable** ([3850](#)) see above on [parabole](#)

**But** - This is an important term of contrast, which differentiates Jesus' method of teaching the crowds versus teaching His disciples. His disciples, while not always understanding everything He said, received (welcomed) His teaching, while the Jewish masses did not.

**James Edwards** writes that "Those who are unable to hear find parables opaque. Hearing determines whether one is an insider or an outsider. It is the all-important first step that leads to fellowship with Jesus, where fuller understanding becomes possible...."Only in association with Jesus can one learn to understand the language about God. (Schweizer)" (PNTC-Mk)

**He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples** (cf Mk 4:10<sup>±</sup>) - **Was explaining** is in the [imperfect tense](#) picturing Jesus **explaining** one parable after another. The practical application of course is that only His disciples today are able to understand the deeper truths in the Bible (cf Jn 14:21, Col 1:9-10<sup>±</sup> = "increasing in the knowledge of God"). But even disciples can have a measure of spiritual deafness if they come with unconfessed sin. One is reminded of the words of David...

Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place? **4He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood And has not sworn deceitfully.** 5 He shall receive a blessing from the LORD And righteousness from the God of his salvation. (Ps 24:3-5)

**THOUGHT** - This is an interesting passage because Mark recorded no explanation of the parables in Mark 4:26-33. In light of this statement Jesus must have explained the meaning to His disciples. But since Mark has no record, not surprisingly there are a number of interpretations as discussed above. Parables can be "dangerous" in the sense that they prompt us to use our imagination (even our "sanctified imagination" as saints) and we can easily be led down an interpretative path that Jesus did not intend. In my humble opinion, this is why it is so dangerous to interpret eschatological passages allegorically rather than literally (see the [The Rise of Allegorical Interpretation](#)).

**Explaining** ([1956](#))(**epiluo** from **epi** = upon, used to intensify + **luo** = to loose, unbind, untie) means literally to "loose upon," to release, to set free, to loose, and figuratively was used to clarify the parables (only use Mk 4:34+), to explain or interpret them. In the only other NT use in Acts 19:39<sup>±</sup> it meant resolving, deciding or putting an end to a dispute ("it **shall be settled** in the lawful assembly.")

**Privately** is the idiom **kata + idios**. **Idios** means one's own and thus private.

This idiom is used 16x in the NT, most often in the synoptic Gospels -- Mt. 14:13 = "by Himself"; Mt. 14:23 = "by Himself"; Mt. 17:1 = "by themselves"; Mt 17:19 = "privately"; Mt 20:17 = "by themselves"; Mt. 24:3 = "privately"; Mk. 4:34; Mk. 6:31 = "by Himself"; Mk. 6:32 = "by themselves"; Mk. 7:33 = "by Himself"; Mk. 9:2 = "by themselves"; Mk. 9:28 = "privately"; Mk. 13:3 = "privately"; Lk. 9:10 = "by Himself"; Lk. 10:23 = "privately"; Acts 23:19 = "privately"; Gal. 2:2 = "in private"

**Stein** adds that "The need to explain everything **privately**" (kat' idian; cf. Mk 6:31–32; 7:33; 9:2, 28; 13:3) to the disciples reveals at

the same time both their privileged position (Mk 4:11–12) and their lack of understanding (Mk 6:52; 8:17; cf. 4:40). Those “outside” can understand something of the meaning of the parables (Mk 4:33b), but that knowledge is only partial. To the disciples, however, Jesus explained “everything” (πάντα, panta). (Ibid)

### Mark 4:35 On that day, when evening came, He said to them, “Let us go over to the other side.”

NET Mark 4:35 On that day, when evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's go across to the other side of the lake."

GNT Mark 4:35 Κα λ γει α το ς ν κε ν τ μ ρ ψ ας γε νο μ νης, Δι λθω με ν ε ς τ π ραν.

NLT Mark 4:35 As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross to the other side of the lake."

KJV Mark 4:35 And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

ESV Mark 4:35 On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side."

NIV Mark 4:35 That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."

ASV Mark 4:35 And on that day, when even was come, he saith unto them, Let us go over unto the other side.

CSB Mark 4:35 On that day, when evening had come, He told them, "Let's cross over to the other side of the sea."

NKJ Mark 4:35 On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side."

NRS Mark 4:35 On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side."

YLT Mark 4:35 And he saith to them on that day, evening having come, 'We may pass over to the other side;'

NAB Mark 4:35 On that day, as evening drew on, he said to them, "Let us cross to the other side."

NJB Mark 4:35 With the coming of evening that same day, he said to them, 'Let us cross over to the other side.'

GWN Mark 4:35 That evening, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross to the other side."

BBE Mark 4:35 And on that day, when the evening had come, he said to them, Let us go over to the other side.

- **On that day** Mt 8:23 Lu 8:22
- **Let us go over to the other side** Mk 5:21 6:45 8:13 Mt 8:18 14:22 Joh 6:1,17,25
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Parallel Passages:

Matthew 8:23+ When He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him.

Luke 8:22+ Now on one of those days Jesus and His disciples got into a boat, and He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." So they launched out.

Capernaum on Left, Sea of Galilee on Right  
Click to Enlarge for Labels

## STEPPING IN THE BOAT WITH JESUS

**THOUGHT** - As we will soon see, abiding in Jesus, does not mean we will not experience storms like the rest of the world. The difference however is that abiding in Jesus means He is abiding in us (now and forever) and so when we are going through the storm, He is there with us (and He is NOT asleep!). So if you have not yet "stepped into the boat with Jesus," perhaps today might be the day that you make the conscious choice by grace through faith to get into the boat, the only boat that provides an eternal refuge from eternal destruction.

**SETTING** Jesus has finished teaching the parables to the multitudes at the seaside. When evening comes, He and His disciples cross the sea in boats to the eastern shore for a ministry there.

**On that day** - KJV says "And the same day." Matthew and Luke do not give us specific chronological information. Presumably this connects with the events beginning in Mk 3:20 "And He came home, and the crowd \*gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal." This was a busy day for Jesus, Who was fully Man and must have been fully exhausted!

**Wuest** - What a **day** it had been, the blasphemous accusation, the visit of the mother and brothers to take Him home, the leaving of the crowded house for the seaside, then in the house again, and now out of the house for the open sea. The designation of the time is of especial note, for Mark does not usually call attention to this. Our Lord and His disciples were on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, and a trip over to the eastern shore would be a delightful and refreshing change for the weary Lord Jesus. This was His only way to escape the crowds.

**When evening came** - Mark gives a second chronological marker. So which **evening** because the Jews had two "evenings." So this could have been the first (mid-afternoon to sundown) or the second evening (sundown to dark). Most likely the reference is to sundown.

**He said to them** - Jesus is addressing His 12 disciples. Clearly this was larger boat to hold all 13 men. Jesus initiates the trip into the storm. Indeed, God sometimes takes us into storms not to discipline us but to disciple us, not to break us, but to make us better, more like His Son. God knew how "hot" to turn up the "thermostat" to create a viable test of the faith of these men, many of whom were seasoned fishermen. Likewise, God knows the best means to test His children, turning up the thermostat not to destroy us but to increase our faith and our their heart. Are you in a furnace of affliction? Then remember the words of Paul promising that...

"No temptation (TEST - [peirasmos](#)) has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and **God is faithful**, Who will not allow you to be tempted (TESTED - [peirazo](#)) beyond what you are able, but with the temptation (TEST - [peirasmos](#)) will provide the way (NOT "A" WAY BUT "THE" WAY - KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN FOR THIS DIVINE "ESCAPE HATCH") of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it (NOT TOTALLY ESCAPE IT BUT PERSEVERE THROUGH THE TRIAL). (1 Cor 10:13±)

**Let us go over to the other side**- Did Jesus know there was going to be a "pop test" for the 12 disciples? The text does not say, but I think He did know, for there were other times in the Gospels where we see Him exercise omniscience.

**Hiebert** - The aorist verb **pass over** carries a note of urgency. The verb is commonly used of a journey by land, but here of crossing a body of water. The "other side" was the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, which, in contrast to the western shore, had no large cities along the shore of the lake. The obvious purpose of the withdrawal was to get away from the pressure of the crowds after an exhausting day. (Ibid)

**Brian Bill** - While the Sea of Galilee is mentioned 53 times in the Gospels and is the setting or backdrop for many of the messages and miracles of Jesus, hardly any focus is on "the other side." That's primarily because that side of the lake was where the Gentiles lived and Jewish people avoided that area at all cost. They didn't want to hang out with pagan people and it was commonly believed that the devil himself had his dwelling there. The "other side" was unsettling and uncertain so they'd rather stay away. Likewise, we're called to follow Jesus' plan even when it doesn't make sense. Incidentally, this is not a suggestion but a command of Christ according to Matthew 8:18+: "...He gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake." Just as Jesus called His first followers to go with Him to the other side, so too each of us must go where He goes, even if we're uncomfortable with people who are different from us. The disciples don't hesitate. If that's where Jesus wants to go then that's where they'll go....The Sea of Galilee is really a lake but is called a sea because it has a lot of the same characteristics. It is 13 miles long and 8 miles wide and is the lowest fresh water lake in the world. This sea is known for its severe storms as cold wind whips down from snow-capped Mount Hermon and combines with the warm lake air causing explosive thunderstorms and gale-force winds. It was not uncommon for the waves to reach a height of 10-12 feet and sometimes up to 20 feet. One commentator writes: "The Sea was known to swallow entire ships and gulp down people. It was a common superstition for people to view the water as the abyss, where demons lurked in the deep. This sea was considered the manifestation of the realm of death. Besides that, the lake was thought to be where mysterious sea creatures, known as leviathan, lived. Given these superstitions, it's no wonder that many lived with some aquaphobia." ([Sermon](#))

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Sammy Burgess summarizes this story (from sermon on Luke 8 parallel passage)

- (1) **The Teaching That is Excellent** (ED: refers to previous parables)
- (2) **The Test That Is Experienced**
- (3) **The Trust That Is Expected**

[He's the Master of the Sea Luke 8:22-26](#)

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**Brian Bell** - St. Patrick was neither Irish nor Roman Catholic. Born in Britain. Carried off by pirates at age 16. He was forced to work as a slave in Ireland. After 6 years, during which he experienced a conversion, he then escaped & returned to Britain & his family. Later, he had a night vision in which he received a call to evangelize Ireland. St. Patrick ended up becoming the greatest single force in the Christianization of Ireland. Way to Go Pat! Makes me want to go Green. I would say getting yanked from your homeland as a junior in H.S. & live as a slave till your 22 would have been a pretty tough Life Storm to ride out. But he did so, by experiencing the presence of Jesus! ([Sermon](#)) (See also [Who was Saint Patrick and why do we celebrate St. Patrick's Day?](#))

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**No Worries** - Read: Mark 4:35–5:1 | Let us go over to the other side. Mark 4:35

A comfortable plane ride was about to get bumpy. The voice of the captain interrupted in-flight beverage service and asked passengers to make sure their seatbelts were fastened. Soon the plane began to roll and pitch like a ship on a wind-whipped ocean. While the rest of the passengers were doing their best to deal with the turbulence, a little girl sat through it all reading her book. After the plane landed, she was asked why she had been able to be so calm. She responded, "My daddy is the pilot and he's taking me home."

Though Jesus' disciples were seasoned fishermen, they were terrified the day a storm threatened to swamp their boat. They were following Jesus' instructions. Why was this happening? (Mark 4:35-38). He was with them but He was asleep at the stern of the craft. They learned that day that it is not true that when we do as our Lord says there will be no storms in our lives. Yet because He was with them, they also learned that storms don't stop us from getting to where our Lord wants us to go (5:1).

Storms don't stop us from getting to where our Lord wants us to go.

Whether the storm we encounter today is the result of a tragic accident, a loss of employment, or some other trial, we can be confident that all is not lost. Our Pilot can handle the storm. He will get us home.

What storms are you encountering today? Perhaps you have lost a loved one or are facing a serious illness. Perhaps you are having difficulty finding a job. Ask the Lord to strengthen your faith and take you safely through the storm to the other side.

We don't need to fear the storm with Jesus as our anchor.

INSIGHT: Jesus' calming of the storm is a remarkable witness to the power of our Creator over nature, for He spoke directly to the storm threatening the ship He and His disciples were in. He rebuked the wind and waves and said, "Quiet! Be still!" (4:39). The Greek word used here for "still" denotes the muzzling of a hostile animal. When we are overcome with worries and concerns, we can trust that our powerful Creator will still our fears. By C. P. Hia ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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**Mark 4:35-41 - "What Manner of Man!"** - FULL of truth for us today is the Gospel account of our Lord stilling the tempest (Matt. 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25). Matthew tells us (8:18) that when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave orders to depart unto the other side of the sea. There is a time to mix with and minister to the crowd, and there is also a time to leave the crowd. Some of us, in our zeal to serve, stay with the crowd when we need to get away for rest and renewed strength.

Mark says the disciples took the Lord "even as He was" in the ship. Tired from the busy day, He soon fell asleep. The storm must have been terrific, for these disciples were seasoned fishermen for the most part, used to the waves, and yet they were alarmed. But no matter how fierce the tempest, they had seen our Lord perform His miracles, had witnessed His power over nature, and they should not have given way to panic. How typical of human nature! We believe in a Christ who works wonders. We believe, theoretically, in His supernatural power, but when the actual crisis arises, we are terrified. No wonder that He asks, "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" This incident has been misinterpreted again and again. We have heard it applied in this way: Christ asleep in the boat is Christ in the believer, dormant, not called into action; but when the crisis arises, we may call upon Him and be delivered. But this is erroneous. If the disciples had more faith they would not have awakened our Lord, they would have let Him sleep. It was fear and not faith that led them to arouse Him. Besides, Christ is not supposed to be a dormant guest in our hearts, to be aroused only in emergency. He abides in us, and if we trusted as we ought we would rest in peace in any storm because, although at times He may seem to be asleep, we are sure of the fact of His presence—and that is enough.

We have grown accustomed to hearing this familiar story, but if we valued it aright we would cry out as did these disciples: "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" Here He manifested His power over wind and wave, for all things are subject to Him by whom and for whom all things were made.

Mark also adds the significant little note: "And there were also with him other little ships." We are not alone upon life's sea. Other lives share in our blessing; and if the Lord is with us, His benefits to us reach out and indirectly bless others. All the little ships profited from our Lord's presence in one ship. The ship that carries Jesus liveth not unto itself. Even lives in which He does not dwell

personally are benefitted by His presence in our lives.

Is the Lord in your boat? At times He may seem asleep. He may answer you not a word. He may tarry as He did in Lazarus' sickness. But rest assured that if He be present, all things shall work together for good. Do not awaken Him in panic; rest upon His word, "Where is your faith?" (Vance Havner)

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**Mark 4:35–5:1 The Storms of Life** - You may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith . . . may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 1 Peter 1:6-7

In the book of Mark we read about a terrible storm. The disciples were with Jesus on a boat crossing the Sea of Galilee. When a "furious squall came up," the disciples—among them some seasoned fishermen—were afraid for their lives (Mark 4:37-38). Did God not care? Weren't they handpicked by Jesus and closest to Him? Weren't they obeying Jesus who told them to "go over to the other side"? (v. 35). Why, then, were they going through such a turbulent time?

No one is exempt from the storms of life. But just as the disciples who initially feared the storm later came to revere Christ more, so the storms we face can bring us to a deeper knowledge of God. "Who is this," the disciples pondered, "even the wind and the waves obey him!" (v. 41). Through our trials we can learn that no storm is big enough to prevent God from accomplishing His will (5:1).

While we may not understand why God allows trials to enter our lives, we thank Him that through them we can come to know who He is. We live to serve Him because He has preserved our lives. By Albert Lee

Lord, I know I don't need to fear the storms of life around me. Help me to be calm because I stand secure in You.

The storms of life prove the strength of our anchor.

INSIGHT: In Mark 4:35–5:43 the gospel writer tells of four miracles to prove that Jesus is "the Messiah, the Son of God" and therefore has absolute authority over the forces of this physical world (4:35-41), over the powers of the spiritual world (5:1-20), over physical illnesses (5:24-34), and over death (5:35-43). These miracles were designed to answer the question, "Who is this?" (4:41). The first miracle was Jesus calming the storm on Galilee. Because the Sea of Galilee is in a basin about 700 feet below sea level and is surrounded by mountains, sudden and violent storms are common (v. 37). That Jesus was tired and soundly asleep showed that He was fully human (v. 38); that the storm instantly obeyed Him showed He was divine (v. 39). Sim Kay Tee ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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**Mark 4:35-41 Facing Hardships** - Even when believers follow Christ's bidding, they may face hardships. For example, Jesus' disciples were doing God's will when they took Him across the lake, for he had commanded them to do so. Yet they were buffeted by a dreadful tempest, and they seemed to be in danger of drowning. A storm - and Christ on board! It seems a contradiction. Wouldn't His presence ensure a peaceful journey? Not at all! Life frequently becomes more difficult after a person has accepted Christ as Savior and Lord. The Christian encounters the devil's opposition. But a storm - and Christ asleep! That even deepens the perplexity! Our Lord's silence, the frustrating delays, the mysteries of his dealings - these are too profound for us to understand. Yet we can be certain that His purpose in testing our faith is to strengthen it. God will surely fulfill his plan for us through our struggles, and His deliverance will lead us to praise Him.

Needless fears beset the disciples because they did not trust Jesus words. If they had just thought for a moment, they would have remembered that he had said, "Let us pass over unto the other side." He didn't say, "Let us go to the middle of the lake and be drowned." They should have been saying to the raging waves, "You can do us no harm, for Christ the mighty Savior is on board!" - Our Daily Bread ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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**Mark 4:36 Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him.**

Wuest - And having dismissed the crowd, they take Him under their care just as He was, in the boat, and there were other boats with Him.

NET Mark 4:36 So after leaving the crowd, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat, and other boats were with him.

GNT Mark 4:36 καὶ φέρουσιν αὐτὸν ὡς ἦν ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ, καὶ ἄλλα πλοῖα ἦσαν μετ' αὐτοῦ.

NLT Mark 4:36 So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind (although other boats followed).

KJV Mark 4:36 And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.

ESV Mark 4:36 And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him.

NIV Mark 4:36 Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him.

ASV Mark 4:36 And leaving the multitude, they take him with them, even as he was, in the boat. And other boats were with him.

CSB Mark 4:36 So they left the crowd and took Him along since He was already in the boat. And other boats were with Him.

NKJ Mark 4:36 Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him.

NRS Mark 4:36 And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him.

YLT Mark 4:36 and having let away the multitude, they take him up as he was in the boat, and other little boats also were with him.

NAB Mark 4:36 Leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat just as he was. And other boats were with him.

NJB Mark 4:36 And leaving the crowd behind they took him, just as he was, in the boat; and there were other boats with him.

GWN Mark 4:36 Leaving the crowd, they took Jesus along in a boat just as he was. Other boats were with him.

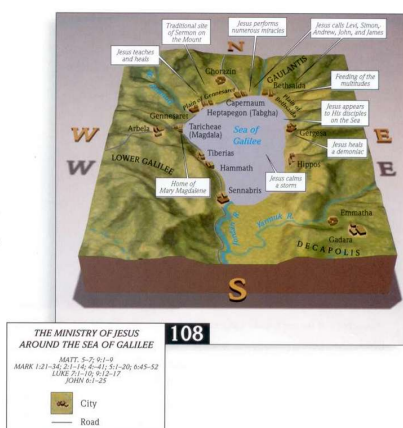
BBE Mark 4:36 And going away from the people, they took him with them, as he was, in the boat. And other boats were with him.

- Mk 4:1, 3:9
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Parallel Passages -

Matthew 8:23+ When He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. (Note: This is after a discussion on the "Cost of Discipleship" in Mt 8:18-22+ that is not recorded in Mark's Gospel)

Luke 8:22+ Now on one of those days Jesus and His disciples got into a boat, and He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." So they launched out.



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**Hiebert** helps us with the context noting that "Four separate withdrawals from Galilee by Jesus and His disciples marked the latter

part of the great Galilean ministry. Prompted by His desire for relief from the pressure of the crowds, Jesus' **first** withdrawal was of short duration and was followed by further aggressive work in Galilee (Mk 4:35–6:29). The **second** withdrawal, an effort to get some time alone with His disciples for rest and discussion, also was brief; and His return marked further ministry and controversy (Mk 6:30–7:23). During the **third** withdrawal, of considerable duration, Jesus deliberately took His disciples out of Galilee in order to be able to devote time to their special training (Mk 7:24–8:13). Immediate opposition from the Pharisees upon His return prompted the **fourth** withdrawal, marking the termination of His public ministry in Galilee (Mk 8:14–9:50). This first withdrawal and return were marked by a series of miracles which demonstrated the lordship of Jesus in different areas (Mk 4:35–5:43). The further ministry in Galilee was marked by rejection, intensified work, and growing agitation (Mk 6:1–29). ([Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary](#))

Note that this Storm Story is the first of 4 stories that demonstrate Jesus' power and authority:

- Jesus power and authority over nature (Mark 4:35-41).
- Jesus power and authority over demons (Mark 5:1-20).
- Jesus power and authority over sickness (Mark 5:25-34).
- Jesus power and authority over death (Mark 5:21-24, 35-43).

Note that in Mt 8:18 " Now when Jesus saw a crowd around Him, **He gave orders to depart to the other side of the sea**" As they were preparing to cross the Sea of Galilee, Matthew records a conversation on the "Cost of Discipleship" in Mt 8:18-22+ which is not recorded by Mark.

**Daniel Akin** writes that "God orchestrates an event in the lives of the disciples to increase their faith in the One they should already trust. Why? Because He is God and "with God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:37+)." ([Sermon](#))

**Leaving the crowd** - "having dismissed the crowd." (Wuest).

**Leaving (863)**([aphiemi](#) from **apo** = prefix speaks of separation, putting some distance between + **hiemi** = put in motion, send) conveys the basic idea of an action which causes separation. **Aphiemi** conveys the basic idea of an action which causes separation and refers to total detachment or total separation from a previous location. It is also means to forgive or of letting go of the obligation one "owes" us or we "owe" God. (as in Mt 6:12+).

**They took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was** - "The disciples took the exhausted Lord Jesus under their care just as He was, in the boat." (Wuest) Note that 12 disciples of Jesus plus Jesus means this was a big boat! In 1986, a boat dating from Jesus' time was discovered in the mud near the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. It is 26.5 feet long, 7.5 feet wide, and 4.5 feet deep, with an elevated stern. It could hold up to fifteen people. ([See picture of Sea of Galilee Boat](#)).

**They took...along (3880)**([paralambano](#) from **para** = beside + **lambano** = appropriate, receive) means to receive from another, to receive alongside or in the present context meaning to take to oneself into close association. The same idea is used where the angel says to Joseph, "**Take** the young child and His mother, and flee into Egypt" (Mt. 2:13+), that is, "**Take** the young child and His mother **under your protection and care.**" To take with one in order to carry away as in Jesus' allusion to the Rapture in John 14:3 where the taking also conveys a sense close fellowship and agreement associated with the receiving to Himself.

**And other boats were with Him** - This detail is not given by either Matthew or Luke. What happened to these boats? Mark does not tell us but only says "They came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes." (Mk 5:1+). Note that storms hit the boat with believers and the boats that may have had non-believers. That is the nature of storms, especially "storms" like the Covid19 Virus Storm of 2020 which wreaked havoc on the entire world.

**Vance Havner** wrote that "It was a mountain preacher who followed a strange outline in his sermon on the text, "And there were also with him other little ships" (Mark 4:36). The main **ship**, he declared, is **Lordship**. If that ship leads, all the other **ships** will fall in line: Church membership, **Worship**, **Stewardship**, **Discipleship**, **Fellowship**."

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**Brian Bell** - Crisis = [see below - from Greek [krisis](#) "decisive moment"] Crisis is a situation or period in which things are very uncertain, difficult, or painful. Crisis is a critical moment: a time when something very important for the future happens or is decided. Crisis is a good thing...it helps people change! God knows that, and lovingly provides those times of crisis for us. They can come in countless forms: disaster; catastrophe; emergency; calamity; predicament; job loss; spouse loss; child loss; etc. Remember Issac Newton First Law of Motion, "Everything continues in a state of rest unless it is compelled to change by forces impressed upon it." No one is willing to do real Change until real Crisis comes! Some people will change when they see the light; others change only when they feel the heat! Just as we vaccinate our children w/the very disease we don't want them to get, to build up their immune



system; So Christ builds our Spiritual Immune System w/ Slide#13c storms, waves, wind, trials! Jesus can be trusted in the storms of life. You can sail with Him right into a sea of tribulation. With Him you'll never suffer the shipwreck of your soul. It's like soaring like a kite. You have to run right into/against the wind...to make it go up,up,up!

**crisis** (n.) early 15c., crise, crisis, "decisive point in the progress of a disease," also "vitaly important or decisive state of things, point at which change must come, for better or worse," from Latinized form of Greek [krisis](#) "turning point in a disease, that change which indicates recovery or death" (used as such by Hippocrates and Galen), literally "judgment, result of a trial, selection," from krinein "to separate, decide, judge," from PIE root \*krei- "to sieve," thus "discriminate, distinguish." Transferred non-medical sense is 1620s in English.

[WIKIPEDIA](#) - The Chinese word for "crisis" (simplified Chinese: 危机; traditional Chinese: 危機; pinyin: wēijī (Mainland), wéijī (Taiwan)[1]) is frequently invoked in Western motivational speaking as being composed of two Chinese characters signifying "danger" and "opportunity" respectively. While the original meaning of wēijī is "danger at a point of juncture," and many linguists and native Chinese speakers highlight the errors in its Western reinterpretation, the term's "danger-plus-opportunity" meaning has been so widely used by politicians, businesspeople, and in popular culture that its alternative etymology has been picked up all over the world, including by some native Chinese speakers.

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## In The Same Boat

When He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. —Matthew 8:23

Today's Scripture & Insight: Matthew 8:23-27

When the cruise ship pulled into port, the passengers got off as quickly as possible. They had spent the last few days enduring an outbreak of a virus, and hundreds of people had been sickened. One passenger, interviewed as he disembarked, said: "Well, I don't mean to complain so much. I mean I know everybody was in the same boat." His seemingly unintentional pun made the reporter smile.

In Matthew 8, we read about another trip on the water (vv.23-27). Jesus got into the boat and the disciples followed Him (v.23). Then a terrible storm arose, and Jesus' disciples feared for their lives. They awakened a sleeping Jesus, who they assumed was unaware of the crisis.

While Jesus was literally in the same boat as His followers, He was unconcerned about the weather. As the all-powerful Creator, He had no fear of a storm. "He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm" (v.26).

But we are not all-powerful, and we are oh-so-prone to fear. So what are we to do when the storms of life rage around us? Whether they quickly blow over or last for a long time, we can be confident in this: We are in the same boat with the One whom even the winds and the sea obey. By: Cindy Hess Kasper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Heavenly Father, this life is full of uncertainty. But You have promised us Your unfailing presence. May we see You today—especially when we are tempted to panic or to do things in our own strength.

No danger can come so near the Christian that God is not nearer.

**Mark 4:37 And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up.**

Wuest - And there arises a great windstorm of hurricane proportions, and the waves kept on beating into the boat, so that already it was being filled.

NET Mark 4:37 Now a great windstorm developed and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was nearly swamped.

GNT Mark 4:37 κα γ νεται λα λαση μεγ λη ν μου κα τ κ ματα π βαλλεν ε ς τ πλο ον, στε δη γεμ ζεσθαι τ πλο ον.

NLT Mark 4:37 But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water.

KJV Mark 4:37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

ESV Mark 4:37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling.

NIV Mark 4:37 A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.

ASV Mark 4:37 And there ariseth a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the boat, insomuch that the boat was now filling.

CSB Mark 4:37 A fierce windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking over the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped.

NKJ Mark 4:37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling.

NRS Mark 4:37 A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped.

YLT Mark 4:37 And there cometh a great storm of wind, and the waves were beating on the boat, so that it is now being filled,

NAB Mark 4:37 A violent squall came up and waves were breaking over the boat, so that it was already filling up.

NJB Mark 4:37 Then it began to blow a great gale and the waves were breaking into the boat so that it was almost swamped.

GWN Mark 4:37 A violent windstorm came up. The waves were breaking into the boat so that it was quickly filling up.

BBE Mark 4:37 And a great storm of wind came up, and the waves came into the boat, so that the boat was now becoming full.

- **there arose** : Mt 8:23,24 Lu 8:22,23
- **a fierce gale of wind**: Job 1:12,19 Ps 107:23-31 Jon 1:4 Ac 27:14-20,41 2Co 11:25
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Parallel Passages:

Mt 8:24+ And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep.

Luke 8:23+ But as they were sailing along He fell asleep; and a fierce gale of wind descended on the lake, and they began to be swamped and to be in danger.



God is In Control

## SEVERE SQUALL BRINGS DIRE STRAITS

**In dire straits** means in a very bad, bleak, grim or difficult situation, a very serious, bad circumstance. A **squall** is a sudden strong wind or brief turbulent storm. Do you remember when you were in school and had been taught for several weeks about history or geometry, etc? What followed the teaching time? You always had a test to see if you had learned the lessons taught. We see a similar situation with the disciples who had been taught several parables and now it was "examination time."

**Brian Bell** adds that "After a long day of teaching...time for some practical tests to see what they've learned! This storm was part of the day's curriculum. [Storm theology 101] The journey of this boat is a picture of the journey of life. Jesus can You be trusted in the storms of life? Many think that storms only come when they've disobeyed God. Jonah ended up in a storm because of

his disobedience; The disciples got into a storm because of their obedience. ([Sermon](#))

### **Better to go through the storm with Christ than to have smooth sailing without Him.**

**And there arose a fierce ([megas](#)) gale of wind** - "The Sea of Galilee is located in a depression some 700 ft (200 m) below sea level and is surrounded by hills. Frequently a rush of wind and the right mix of temperatures can cause a storm to come suddenly on the lake. Storms on the Sea of Galilee were known for their suddenness and violence." (NET) God is in control (Play [Twila Paris' song](#)) and here in His perfect [providence](#) and sovereignty either allowed or sent this storm. Either way He is able to use storms (and trials in our life) for our good and His glory. He is the God of Romans 8:28 and ever able to cause all things to work together for good to those who love Him (His disciples) and are called according to His purpose.

**Hiebert** - These storms often swept down on the sea through the deep gaps in the highlands surrounding the lake. The deep ravines served as gigantic funnels to draw the wind down upon the waters. For a boat to capsize in such a storm meant sure death. (Ibid)

**Wuest** - Vincent quotes a Mr. Macgregor: "On the Sea of Galilee the wind has a singular force and suddenness; and this is no doubt because that sea is so deep in the world that the sun rarefies the air in it enormously, and the wind speeding swiftly above a long and level plateau, gathers much force as it sweeps through flat deserts, until suddenly it meets this huge gap in the way, and it tumbles down here irresistible." **Robertson** suggests that the storm fell suddenly from Mount Hermon down into the Jordan Valley and hit the Sea of Galilee violently at its depth of 682 feet below the Mediterranean Sea. He explains that the hot air at this depth draws the storm down with sudden power. Luke says (Lk 8:23), "there came down a storm on the lake." Matthew describes it as a seismos, a violent upheaval like an earthquake (Mt 8:24). These sudden storms continue to this day.

**THOUGHT** - "When serious trials hit, I often hear people say, "The Lord didn't *cause* this trial; He only *allowed* it." Somehow they think that they are getting God off the hook. Sometimes they will even say, "Satan, not God, caused this tragedy." They think that by blaming Satan or by saying that God only allowed it, they preserve His love. But they do so at the expense of His sovereignty. But the Bible clearly affirms that God is both loving and sovereign. You will not derive any comfort in trials by denying God's sovereignty. True, God may use Satan to bring trials, as He did in the case of Job." (Cole) God clearly states, "I am the Lord, and there is no other, the One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all these" (Is 45:6-7). You will find comfort in trials only if you affirm both God's absolute sovereignty and His unfailing love. Isaiah 45:6-7 adds "That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun That there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other, The One forming light and creating darkness, **Causing well-being and creating calamity**; I am the LORD who does all these."

**Gale** ([2978](#))([lailaps](#)) refers to a whirlwind, a tempestuous wind, a squall or a violent wind. **Wuest** says **lailaps** "never refers to a single gust, nor a steadily blowing wind, however violent, but to a storm breaking forth from black thunder-clouds in furious gusts, with floods of rain, and throwing everything topsy-turvy. According to Aristotle, it is a whirlwind revolving from below upwards. It is used in the LXX of the whirlwind out of which God answered Job." **Vincent** says **lailaps** is "Distinctively a furious storm or hurricane." **Thayer** explains "It is never a single gust, nor a steadily blowing wind, however violent, but a storm breaking forth from black thunder-clouds in furious gusts, with floods of rain, and throwing everything topsy-turvy. According to Aristotle, it is `a whirlwind revolving from below upward." Used 3x - Mk. 4:37; Lk. 8:23; 2 Pet. 2:17 **Septuagint** - Job 21:18; Job 38:1 = "Then the LORD answered Job out of the **whirlwind** (Lxx = **lailaps**) and said"; Jer. 25:32. Luke uses a different word in Acts 27:14+ to describe "a violent wind, called [Euraquilo](#)" a name meaning literally "north wind-east wind" a treacherous wind in which to sail. **Robertson** says that "Luke's "came down" ([katabaino](#)) shows that the storm fell suddenly from Mount Hermon down into the Jordan Valley and smote the [Sea of Galilee](#) violently at its depth of 682 feet below the Mediterranean Sea. The hot air at this depth draws the storm down with sudden power. These sudden storms continue to this day on the Sea of Galilee."

**And the waves were breaking over the boat** - **Breaking in** is [epiballo](#) in the vivid [imperfect tense](#) picturing one huge wave after another "throwing themselves into the boat," slamming against the boat and throwing water over the side and into the hull. Matthew 8:24+ vividly says "the boat was being covered with the waves."

**Breaking over** ([1911](#))([epiballo](#) from **epi** = upon + **ballo** = throw) means to cast over or throw upon. In this passage **epiballo** is in the active sense (intransitive) describing waves beating, splashing, hurling or dashing against the boat.

**Akin** - We should not be surprised by surprises in our lives. They are divinely ordained moments whereby God is working in the everyday circumstances of our lives to reveal who He is, who we are, and who we need! Trials and tribulation, difficulties and

desperate moments are often the times when God does His greatest work in our lives. By bringing us to the end of ourselves we are driven to Him and Him alone as Savior and rescuer. If He does not act we will not be saved. Would you really want it any other way? Faith says a resounding no! ([Sermon](#))

**So much that the boat was already filling up** - Mark does not say they were bailing water out of the boat, but it did not matter as the amount of water was too much and the boat was about to be sunk by the weight of the water. One can only imagine the hearts pounding in the experienced fishermen among the disciples. Luke 8:23+ has **they began to be swamped and to be in danger (kinduneuo)** where the verb **swamped (sumpleroo)** means to filled completely. **Filling up** is in the [present tense](#), vividly picturing the process of the boat being inundated by the waves crashing over the side, so that water began to accumulate dangerously.

**Filling up (1072)(gemizo)** means filling a vessel with a solid object. To "put something into an object to the extent of its capacity (the procedure of filling)" (BDAG). To fill an object with something (Jn 2:7). Passive voice, be filled, become full (Mk 4:37)

**Gilbrant** - In classical Greek this verb was used by Aeschylus (early Fifth Century B.C.) and carried the meaning of "loading," or "lading" or "freighting." The -izō suffix conveys the sense of the act of loading, or making something full. An object or vessel is literally filled with a physical substance. Thucydides (7.53) reported ships filled with fagots and pinewood while Xenophon (Historia Graece 6.2.25) recorded the loading of transports with slaves and captured property. Gemizō carries the meaning of a material object being placed on a ship, in a vessel, etc. Plēroō (3997), in comparison, can mean "to fill" and also "to fulfill a duty, perform a task, bring to completion." (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

**Liddell Scott** - to fill full of, to load or freight with, a cargo of a ship, c. gen., Thuc., etc.; charging the urns with ashes, Aesch.:Pass. to be laden or freighted

**NT** uses - fill(1), filled(7), filling(1). - Mk. 4:37; Mk. 15:36 = "Someone ran and **filled** a sponge with sour wine"; Lk. 14:23 = "so that my house may be **filled**."; Lk. 15:16 = "he would have gladly **filled** his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating"; Jn. 2:7 = "**Fill** the waterpots with water." ; Jn. 6:13 = "So they gathered them up, and **filled** twelve baskets with fragments"; Rev. 8:5 = " the angel took the censer and **filled** it with the fire of the altar"; Rev. 15:8 = "the temple was **filled** with smoke from the glory of God" Used only once in Septuagint - Ge 45:17 = "Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: **load** your beasts and go to the land of Canaan."

Whether the wrath of the storm-tossed sea,  
Or demons, or men, or whatever it be,  
No water can swallow the ship where lies  
The Master of ocean and earth and skies.  
—Baker

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**ILLUSTRATION - The Perfect Storm** - Back in October of 1991, a storm stronger than any in recorded history hit the coast of Gloucester, Massachusetts. The storm was officially known as "The Halloween nor'easter of 1991." It has become known as "[THE PERFECT STORM](#)" - inspiring the book and movie with the same title. It is called "The Perfect Storm" because it was 3 storms combined into one. Hurricane Grace that was beginning to die out in the Atlantic, energy coming across from the Great Lakes, and an old frontal system that was around the New England area. Sebastian Junger in his book "The Perfect Storm" wrote, "A mature hurricane is by far the most powerful event on Earth. The combined nuclear arsenals of the United States and the former Soviet Union don't contain enough energy to keep a hurricane going for one day." In the case of "The Perfect Storm", when these 3 elements combined, it regenerated the hurricane creating an almost apocalyptic situation in the Atlantic Ocean. Boats encountered waves of 100 ft; the equivalent of a 10-story building. Winds blasted over the ocean at more than 100 mph. Waves 30 and 40 feet high battered the New England Coast, destroying 200 homes, and property damage totaling \$500 million. Nine people died, including the 6-man crew of a 'sword-fish boat' named the Andrea Gail from Gloucester, Massachusetts.

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**Brian Bill** - Don't miss the point that Jesus sent them into the boat, knowing that a storm was coming. In order to get to the other side they had to go through a storm. Don't think that just because you're going through some choppy seas that you're somehow being punished or that you're being disobedient. No doubt God does send some storms to get our attention like he did with Jonah in Jonah 1:4: "But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up." Other times storms come because of our obedience.

My guess is that you're in one of three places today.

### 1. You are in a storm right now.

## 2. You are coming out of a storm.

## 3. You're about to head into one.

And when storms come, they are often:

- **Sudden.** They come in a split second, seemingly out of nowhere. All it takes is one phone call, a doctor visit, an accident, a job loss or a relational rupture.
- **Severe.** The disciples think they are going to drown and some of you feel like you're going under right now. This had to be some storm. We know at least four of the disciples were fishermen and they're freaking out. John MacArthur points out that "it's a dark day when sailors call on a carpenter to get them out of the storm."
- **Surprising.** I'm often surprised when a storm hits but I shouldn't be because 1 Peter 4:12 says: "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you."

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### The Perfect Storm

Read: Mark 4:35-41 | They feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!" —Mark 4:41

In his book *The Perfect Storm*, author Sebastian Junger reports astonishing facts about the power of a hurricane: "A mature hurricane is by far the most powerful event on earth; the combined nuclear arsenals of the United States and the former Soviet Union don't contain enough energy to keep a hurricane going for one day. A typical hurricane . . . could provide all the electric power needed by the United States for three or four years."

Seafarers encounter diverse weather conditions. But those who experience a severe storm have one emotion in common—fear. Mark 4:35-41 records a gale that threatened the boat carrying Jesus and His disciples on the Sea of Galilee. In a panic, the disciples awakened Jesus. He calmly rebuked the wind and sea by saying, "Peace, be still!" (literally "hush") as if He were quieting an agitated child (v.39). Immediately, the gale stopped and the water became inexplicably placid. The disciples asked, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!" (v.41).

Do you feel as if your life's circumstances are a mighty storm? Look to the God-man Jesus Christ, who has authority over heaven and earth. He will give you the strength to survive the storm until He ultimately calms it. By Dennis Fisher ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Our loving God is always near,  
Forever by our side;  
He'll bring us comfort in our fear  
And peace that will abide.  
—Sper

**When we trust the power of God, His peace keeps us from panic.**

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**ILLUSTRATION** - One of the most awful experiences of my life occurred when I was in the Coast Guard. Sixty mile-per-hour gale-force winds were churning up 20-30 foot seas and we had to rescue a man and his daughter whose sailboat was dead in the water somewhere beyond Catalina Island. Our 82-foot cutter would roll until the screws came out of the water and green water came over the above-deck porthole. I would think, "We're going over this time!" Then, we would roll the other direction. Sometimes we would crash head on into a gigantic wave and the whole boat would shudder as if it was going to come apart at the seams. I tried to calm my fears by thinking, "You never read about the Coast Guard losing any boats in storms, so maybe we won't go down." I was so seasick that when I wasn't afraid that we would die, I wished that I could. It took us nine hours from the time we left Long Beach until we had the sailboat safely in Avalon harbor. Storms aren't fun, either at sea or in real life. Yet we learn lessons through storms that we never would learn if life were always calm. The Christian faith is not just to get us to heaven when we die. It teaches us how to live in the here and now, especially when life gets stormy. Lu 8:22-25 relates the miracle of Jesus calming the storm at sea as the first of a series of miracles that culminate in Peter's confession (Lu 9:20). These miracles have much to teach us (as they taught the disciples) about who Jesus is and what that means to us in the trials of life. This miracle shows us that ...Since Jesus is Lord over all, we must trust Him in the storms of life. ([Luke 8:22-25 What to do When Life Gets Stormy](#) - Steven Cole)

**Mark 4:38 Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not**

Wuest - And He Himself was in the stern of the boat, sleeping on the steersman's leather cushion. And they arouse Him from sleep and say to Him, O, Teacher, is it not a concern to you that we are perishing?

NET Mark 4:38 But he was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. They woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care that we are about to die?"

GNT Mark 4:38 κα α τ ς ν ν τ π ρ μ ν π τ προσκεφ λαιον καθε δων. κα γε ρουσι ν α τ ν κα λ γουσι ν α τ , Διδ σκαλε, ο μ λει σοι τι πολλ μεθα;

NLT Mark 4:38 Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?"

KJV Mark 4:38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

ESV Mark 4:38 But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"

NIV Mark 4:38 Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

ASV Mark 4:38 And he himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion: and they awake him, and say unto him, Teacher, carest thou not that we perish?

CSB Mark 4:38 But He was in the stern, sleeping on the cushion. So they woke Him up and said to Him, "Teacher! Don't you care that we're going to die?"

NKJ Mark 4:38 But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"

NRS Mark 4:38 But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"

YLT Mark 4:38 and he himself was upon the stern, upon the pillow sleeping, and they wake him up, and say to him, 'Teacher, art thou not caring that we perish?'

NAB Mark 4:38 Jesus was in the stern, asleep on a cushion. They woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"

NJB Mark 4:38 But he was in the stern, his head on the cushion, asleep.

GWN Mark 4:38 But he was sleeping on a cushion in the back of the boat. So they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to die?"

BBE Mark 4:38 And he himself was in the back of the boat, sleeping on the cushion: and they, awaking him, said, Master, is it nothing to you that we are in danger of destruction?

- **in the stern:** Joh 4:6 Heb 2:17 4:15
- **and they woke Him:** 1Ki 18:27-29 Job 8:5,6 Ps 44:23,24 Isa 51:9,10 Mt 8:25 Lu 8:24
- **do You not care:** Ps 10:1,2 22:1,2 77:7-10 Isa 40:27,28 49:14-16 54:6-8 63:15 Isa 64:12 La 3:8 1Pe 5:7
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Parallel Passages:

Mt 8:24+ And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep. 25 And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing!"

Luke 8:23+ But as they were sailing along He fell asleep; and a fierce gale of wind descended on the lake, and they began to be swamped and to be in danger. 24 They came to Jesus and woke Him up, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And He got up and rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm.

## PEACE IN THE MIDST OF THE STORM

*Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion* - Literally "He" (NAS adds "Jesus") where "he is emphatic, marking the contrast between Jesus a Carpenter and the anxious crew of experienced fishermen! The **stern** is the hindmost part of the boat, a fact noted only by Mark. This is the only incident in the Bible that mentions Jesus **asleep**, and what a time to fall asleep! Notice that Jesus didn't keep them from the storm, but He went through the storm with them and He does the same with us today! While Jesus is fully Man (He became hungry - Mt 4:2, He became angry - Mk 3:5, He cried - Jn 11:35, He died), He was also fully convinced that He must die on a **Cross** not on a **cruise**. Jesus the Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6+) was at perfect peace. He was the model of peace. He was the Source of peace. And later He would be able to offer His peace to His disciples (and to us) in His [upper room discourse](#)...

"**Peace** I leave with you; My **peace** I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. (Jn 14:27)

"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have **peace**. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." (Jn 16:33)

**THOUGHT** - Have you ever been in a trial or "storm" and felt like Jesus was "asleep?" If so you can identify with the disciples. But just as in their dire situation, Jesus is with you and not just with you but able to calm the storm. Sometimes Jesus let's us go to the "end of our rope" that we might come to realize that He is ultimately the One we need. And that even means should we have to die, because as I have been telling people in the Covid19 pandemic death is not the worst thing that can happen to me, but the best thing for then I will be forever in the presence of my Savior and King. (cf 2 Cor 5:8+) Hebrews 13:5-6+ says Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?" Paul writes "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Ro 8:38-39+) And remember Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who obeyed the Lord and found themselves in a storm of a different sort, thrown into Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace. Daniel records "Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he said to his high officials, "Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?" They replied to the king, "Certainly, O king." He said, "Look! I see **four** men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!" (Daniel 3:24-25+). The fourth Man was (in my opinion) Jesus would walked through the fiery furnace with those faithful men. So next time you are in a storm, remember that Jesus us there. (cf Paul's last words - 2 Ti 4:16-18+).

**No danger can come so near the Christian that God is not nearer.**

**Asleep** (2518) ([katheudo](#) from *katá* = an intensive + *heúō* = to sleep) means literally to sleep, fall asleep or be fast asleep, and is chiefly used of natural sleep. With reference to death *katheudo* is found in the Lord's remark concerning Jairus' daughter, Matt. 9:24; Mark 5:39; Luke 8:52.

Lottie Moon said, "We are immortal until our work on earth is finished." Jesus knew He had a work to complete on the cross. He was confident in His Father's promise to see Him finish His work. (Akin)

**Ryle** applies this to Jesus' Humanity - We see, firstly, in these verses, that our Lord Jesus Christ was really man as well as God. We read that as he sailed over the Lake of Gennesaret in a ship with his disciples, "he fell asleep." Sleep, we must be all aware, is one of the conditions of our natural constitution as human beings. Angels and spirits require neither food nor refreshment. But flesh and blood, to keep up a healthy existence, must eat, and drink, and sleep. If the Lord Jesus could be weary, and need rest, He must have had two natures in one person—a human nature as well as a divine. The truth now before us is full of deep consolation and encouragement for all true Christians. The one Mediator, in Whom we are bid to trust, has been Himself "partaker of flesh and blood." The mighty High Priest, Who is living for us at God's right hand, has had personal experience of all the sinless infirmities of the body. He has Himself hungered, and thirsted, and suffered pain. He has Himself endured weariness, and sought rest in sleep.— Let us pour out our hearts before Him with freedom, and tell Him our least troubles without reserve. He who made atonement for us on the Cross is One Who "can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

(Heb. 4:15+) To be weary of working for God is sinful, but to be wearied and worn in doing God's work is no sin at all. Jesus himself was weary, and Jesus slept.

- [How can Jesus be both God and man at the same time?](#)
- [Is Jesus God? Did Jesus ever claim to be God?](#)
- [Is the deity of Christ biblical?](#)
- [Is Jesus God in the flesh? Why is it important that Jesus is God in the flesh?](#)
- [Are God and Jesus the same person?](#)

Thou art the Lord who slept upon the pillow,  
Thou art the Lord who soothed the furious sea,  
What matter beating wind and tossing billow,  
If only we are in the boat with Thee?  
—Amy Carmichael

**Jensen** - Jesus was asleep on the cushion during the severe storm because He was extremely tired. What does this teach about His nature?

**A T Robertson** - Mark also mentions the cushion or bolster and the stern of the boat (en tēi prumnēi). Matthew 8:24 notes that Jesus was sleeping (ekatheuden), Luke that he fell **asleep** (aphupnōsen, ingressive aorist indicative). He was worn out from the toil of this day. (Word Pictures in the New Testament)

**Wuest** on the **stern** and **cushion** - The hinder part," from [prumna](#), the stern or back of the ship, the opposite end to the bow or front. The pillow, from [proskephalaion](#), literally, "that towards which one puts the head," was no soft luxurious cushion, but either the leathern cushion of the steersman, or the low bench at the stern on which the steersman sometimes sits, and the captain rests his head to sleep. Luke says of our Lord, "He fell asleep." The ingressive aorist is used, speaking of entrance into a new condition. The Lord Jesus was worn out from the toil of the day. (Wuest Word Studies)

**Storms often expose how we are not trusting in the Lord.**

-- Steven Cole

## S.O.S. SAVE US SAVIOR!

Matthew 8:25+ has their great cry "**Save** us, Lord; we are perishing!"

**And they woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"**- Of the three synoptic accounts, only Mark has "**do You not care?**" about which **Robertson** says "It was a rebuke to Jesus for sleeping in such a storm." Notice the "**we**" in this statement implying that Jesus too will perish! One can fault their faith, but to Whom did they come when the storm came? Matthew, Mark and Luke have "**Lord** ([kurios](#) - Mt 8:25+)," "**Teacher**" ([didaskalos](#) - Mk 4:38+, Hebrew equivalent of "Rabbi"-[rhabbi](#)) and "**Master**," ([epistates](#) - Lk 8:24a+) respectively. Bill adds that "Some skeptics have pointed out that there's a conflict between Matthew, Mark and Luke because they each report this incident slightly differently. For example, Mark has the disciples crying out, "Teacher!" Matthew uses "Lord!" and Luke has them saying, "Master, Master!" This is not a conflict at all. We all do the same when we're in trouble and cry out every name we can think of: "Teacher, Lord, Master, Master...please help me!" ([Sermon](#))

Only Matthew 8:25+ records their specific request "**Save** ([sozo](#)) us, Lord; we are perishing!" where **Save** is an [aorist imperative](#), their plaintive plea to Jesus to do this quickly because the boat was being swamped with water! **Perishing** is in the [present tense](#) so that they are saying we are in the process of perishing. In other words the disciples described themselves are already "going under!"

The storm on the sea whipped up a storm of doubt within them that threatened to drown them all.

**Hiebert** on **do You not care** - Their cry, as given in Mark, implies a feeling of resentment at Jesus' apparent indifference to their peril....It was a cry of distrust, but one often matched by believers today in difficult circumstances when they feel that the Lord has forsaken them. Gutzke remarks, "How common this is with all of us: we know God can and we are inclined to be pathetically petulant when He doesn't take action we can see. In this instance the disciples forgot they had not asked before." (The Gospel of Mark: An Expository Commentary)

**Spurgeon** said "God is too wise to err, too good to be unkind; leave off doubting Him, and begin to trust Him, for in so doing, you will put a crown on His head"

**Hendriksen** paraphrases it as "**Do we mean so little to you? With death staring us in the face, how can you sleep? Don't you**



*care whether we're all swallowed up by the angry deep?"* Nevertheless, before we judge these men too harshly, the following facts must be borne in mind: *a.* They were thoroughly frightened: in such a situation even normally loyal and courageous people will at times say things which they later regret; and *b.* their bitterness is not unmixed with a measure of trust. If that were not true, they—some of them being experienced sailors—would not now have turned to a "carpenter" for help. To be sure, their faith was far from perfect, but even "little faith" is faith, and holds out hope for purification and enlargement. (Ibid)

We see a similar emotion in the Psalms...

Psalms 44:23 **Arouse Yourself**, why do You sleep, O Lord? **Awake, do not reject** us forever.

Psalms 10:1 **Why do You stand afar off**, O LORD? **Why do You hide Yourself** in times of trouble?

**Wuest** - They were rebuking the Lord Jesus for sleeping in the storm. What a picture of the humanity of God the Son. The noise of the storm, the violent pitching of the boat, and the sting of the cold water as it came beating into the boat, did not awake Him. The Teacher was so exhausted, that the need of His body for rest overcame the demands of outside impressions on His senses. From this, one can form some estimate of the tremendous drain on our Lord's physical and nerve force by His ministry.

**THOUGHT** - Of course Jesus cared for these disciples for His Church (Eph 4) would be "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone." (Eph 2:20<sup>+</sup>). So of course He cared what happened to them. And that also applies to you dear reader for you have great purpose in His plan of redemption, whoever and wherever you are, for you "are His workmanship (His "masterpiece" = [poiema](#)), created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that (you) would walk in them." (Eph 2:10<sup>+</sup>).

**Howard Hendricks** emphasizes how severe this storm must have been for "This was not a group of seminary professors scared spitless that the boat was going down. It was a group of professional fishermen. They had lived on this lake and seen storms before. You see, in the Galilee region, prevailing winds come from the west, down valleys that act as funnels. The lake is 690 feet below sea level, so there are tremendous downdrafts. The phenomenon exists to this day. In fact, the last time I was visiting the Sea of Galilee, I watched a violent storm come up in less than ten minutes. So these men had experienced storms all of their lives but never anything like this." (Living by the Book)

**Wuest** - Someone has said, "Jesus did not say, 'Let us go down to the sea and be drowned,' but, 'Let us pass over to the other side.'"

**Woke** (1453)([egeiro](#)) means to rise (stand up) from a sitting or lying position (Mt 8:26, 9:5), to awaken from sleep (Mt 8:25), figuratively to "awaken" from death (rise up) Figuratively [egeiro](#) is used in Ro 4:24<sup>+</sup>, [egeiro](#) to describe bringing Jesus back from the dead, causing Him to rise from the dead. The idea of wake up from death is conveyed by [egeiro](#) because sleep was used as metaphor of death for believers (1 Cor 11:30 - but there is no such thing as [soul sleep](#)).

**Teacher** (1320)([didaskalos](#) from [didasko](#) = teach cp [didaskalia](#)) is one who provides instruction or systematically imparts truth. The **teacher** teaches in such a way as to shape will of one being taught by content of what is taught. Someone has said that "The great teacher is the one who turns our ears into eyes so that we can see the truth." Henry Brooks adds that "A (Bible) teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." Uses in Matthew - Matt. 8:19; Matt. 9:11; Matt. 10:24; Matt. 10:25; Matt. 12:38; Matt. 17:24; Matt. 19:16; Matt. 22:16; Matt. 22:24; Matt. 22:36; Matt. 23:8; Matt. 26:18. Mark has **Teacher** ([didaskalos](#)) twelve times, **rabbi** ([rhabbi](#)) three times; Matthew has **Teacher** nine, **rabbi** twice; Luke has **Teacher** thirteen times, **rabbi**, none.

**Care** (3199)([melo](#)) means to concern oneself, to be of interest to. The idea contained in the verb is that of [solicitude](#) for another's welfare. To focus one's care or attention on someone or something; to assume a feeling of responsibility for someone or something. All 10 NT uses - Matt. 22:16; Mk. 4:38; Mk. 12:14; Lk. 10:40+; Jn. 10:13; Jn. 12:6; Acts 18:17+; 1 Co. 7:21; 1 Co. 9:9; 1 Pet. 5:7<sup>+</sup> = "casting all your anxiety on Him (THIS IS WHAT THE 12 SHOULD HAVE DONE), (WHY?) because He **cares** ([present tense](#)) for you" where **casting** ([epirrhpto](#)) means literally to propel something off or away in this case casting anxiety or fear of dying out of your mind and upon the powerful shoulders of Jesus because He does care, even when He is asleep!

**We are perishing** (622)([apollumi](#) from [apo](#) = away from or wholly + [olethros](#) = state of utter ruin) means to destroy utterly but not to cause one to cease to exist. **Apollumi** has the basic meaning of describing that which is ruined and is no longer usable for its intended purpose. If the disciples drowned they would certainly no longer be of use as Jesus' disciples. **Apollumi** is used to describe Jesus purpose for coming to earth "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which **was lost** ([apollumi](#))." (Luke 19:10+) **Apollumi** speaks of

rewards "And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose ([apollumi](#)) his reward." (Matt. 10:42+) Jesus paradoxically declaring that "He who has found his life will **lose** ([apollumi](#)) it, and he who has **lost** ([apollumi](#)) his life for My sake will find it." (Mt 10:39+) **Apollumi** speaks of eternal punishment Jesus declaring '**Do not fear** those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to **destroy** ([apollumi](#)) both soul and body in hell." (Mt 10:28+). In one of the most famous verses in the Bible John writes "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish ([apollumi](#)), but have eternal life." (John 3:16). All uses in Mark - Mk. 1:24; Mk. 2:22; Mk. 3:6; Mk. 4:38; Mk. 8:35; Mk. 9:22; Mk. 9:41; Mk. 11:18; Mk. 12:9;

Make Jesus your anchor, your rudder, your lighthouse, your life-boat, and even your harbor  
-- Brian Bell

**Brian Bill** - Friend, don't confuse God's silence with a lack of compassion because He cares deeply for you. 1 Peter 5:7: "Casting all your anxieties on Him because He cares for you." Commentator **Matthew Henry** says that the ship that has Christ in it, though it may be tossed, cannot sink. Here's something that may be helpful. Whenever you're sinking under a sea of stress and anxiety, remember this phrase: **Don't despair, Christ is there!** It is only in the storm that we understand who Jesus really is. We learn most about Christ when we are in crisis. Storms weren't sent to destroy you, but to develop you. Since Jesus is who He says is, then we have nothing to fear. His plans for us may be puzzling and they often include problems but they come with His presence and a demonstration of His power.

### [When the storms of life surround me,](#)

And the world seems dark and cold,  
When the rain beats down upon me,  
And the lightning stabs my soul,  
I cry out to my Savior,  
"Lord, help me, lest I die!  
Do You care not that the billows  
Push my boat toward the shoal?"

When the raging winds and tempest,  
And the noxious clouds of sin,  
Whirl around me like an army,  
And my faith is wearing thin,  
In a whispering distant thunder,  
Comes a voice like morning calm:  
"Fear not, I am with you ever,  
Till the world shall see its end.

"I command the winds of heaven,  
And the lightning does My will,  
I who walked upon the waters,  
And who bid the storm be still.  
I seek not your destruction,  
But to strengthen and make pure;  
Keep your faith in Me, believing  
I My promises fulfill."

He is greater than the thunder,  
He is mightier than the storm;  
He extends His hand to lift me,  
And protect my soul from harm.  
He will see me safe to harbor,  
To the [haven of my rest](#),  
Sheltered by the [Rock of Ages](#),  
Held in His almighty arm.

### **(1) They had His promise they were going to the other side! [Promise]**

- To the other side, He didn't say, "to the middle of the lake to be drowned!"
- His commandments are His enablements!
- He didn't promise an easy trip, but He did guarantee arrival at their destination.
- And so w/salvation.

### **(2) Jesus was with them! [Presence]**

(a) Is Jesus' presence in your life enough?

- In Ex.3 God's presence wasn't enough for Moses, he needed the dramatic & spectacular. [rt after burning bush & promise "I will certainly be with you" 3:12]
- In Ex.33 God's presence was all that mattered to him. Context: After God was so mad w/golden calf event, He finally said, "Depart & go up from here...& I'll send My Angel before you(33:1,2). Moses said, "If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here." (33:15)

(b) They already had seen His power demonstrated in His miracles, they should have had complete confidence He could handle this situation.

(c) They hadn't realized He is Master of every situation...Have you?

- Even...Bankruptcy, disease, tragedy, enslaved w/addiction, your fortunes lost in the stock market, a marriage lost to infidelity, one of your kids went prodigal on you.
- Every situation? - A financial storm? A business storm? A professional storm? A college storm? A household storm? A marriage storm? A medical storm?

(d) Again, His goal is to strengthen you...not shipwreck you!

### **(3) Jesus was perfectly at peace! [Peace]**

David said, I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; For You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety. Ps.4:8

Prayer: He displays His power in the whirlwind and the storm. The billowing clouds are the dust beneath his feet. Nahum 1:3b

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### **Lord, Don't You Care?**

Read: Mark 4:35-41

He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" —Mark 4:39

Two of the most telling questions in the New Testament were asked of Jesus by people who loved Him deeply. When a fierce storm threatened to sink their boat in the Sea of Galilee, His disciples asked, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" (Mk. 4:38). On another occasion, as a relaxed Mary listened to Jesus, a tense Martha came from the kitchen and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?" (Lk. 10:40).

Both questions were asked by people who had seen the power of Jesus and expected Him to step in and relieve their anxiety. When it seemed that the Lord was ignoring their situation, an element of exasperation was added: "Don't You care?"

The Scripture does not give us the tone of Jesus' voice, but I suspect that His replies were gentle and caring. "Why are you so fearful?" (Mk. 4:40). "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things" (Lk. 10:41).

When we're feeling alone or overwhelmed by our circumstances, we often cry out, "Lord, don't You care?" But when Jesus calms our storm and speaks our name, we realize that we have much more to learn about His compassion for us, and we long to trust Him with all of our cares. By David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I love to dwell upon the thought  
That Jesus cares for me;  
It matters not what life may bring—  
He loves me tenderly.  
—Adams

Jesus cares!

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We've all asked Him...  
Aren't you concerned?  
Don't you know?  
If you were only here earlier?  
Don't you care?...  
Of course He does!

It is much easier to trust God when the sun is shining, than to trust Him when the storm is raging around us. He does care if you spiritually drown! Don't be hasty to think He doesn't care...even when your sinking and He seems to be asleep in the stern.

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**Ray Pritchard - "Don't you care if we drown?" (Mark 4:38) It seemed like a good idea at the time.**

After a long day of ministry, Jesus told his disciples to get into a boat so they could go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. It was no big deal, especially with seasoned sailors like Andrew and Peter and James and John on board. A quick trip across the lake, a leisurely nighttime sail, and before morning they would be on the other side.

It didn't exactly work out that way.

The key to understanding this story lies in one important question: Whose idea was it to get in the boat in the first place?

Jesus told them to get in the boat, knowing that the storm was coming. He knew what was about to happen, he didn't try to stop it, he got into the boat with them, and then he went to sleep. Suddenly a great storm arose, the wind rushing down across the mountains and through the Arbel, whipping up the waves and causing them to come crashing into the boat. As the water entered, the disciples furiously tried to bail it out but the water rushed in faster than they could bail it out. The little fishing boat bobbed like a cork as wave after wave crashed into it. Nothing could be more terrifying than to be on a boat in the blackness of night as it takes on water and slowly begins to sink.

Finally, the disciples woke Jesus up, asking him a question that to us may seem impertinent, but it is one we have all asked in moments of desperation: "Don't you care if we drown?"

- Lord Jesus, don't you care that my child is sick?
- Lord Jesus, don't you care that my marriage is falling apart?
- Lord Jesus, don't you care that my friends have deserted me?
- Lord Jesus, don't you care that I have no money?
- Lord Jesus, don't you care that I feel so alone?
- Lord Jesus, don't you care that I want to give up?
- Lord Jesus, don't you care that my husband has died?
- Lord Jesus, don't you care that I lost my job?

We have all asked that question in a million ways a million times. We never question the Lord's compassion when things are going well. But God's compassion is not measured by our circumstances nor is his kindness limited to our understanding. God cares just as much when the tempest is raging as when the seas are calm and the sun is shining. His mercy is not limited to the sunlight or to the stillness of the waves.

When he awoke, Jesus spoke three words: "Peace, be still!" Eugene Peterson offers this colorful paraphrase:

"Awake now, he told the wind to pipe down and said to the sea, 'Quiet! Settle down!'"

Here is good news for today. The storms of life that buffet us do not happen by chance. Our Father sends them because he intends to teach us things we couldn't learn any other way. When we read this story, we tend to focus on the miracle, but the real message comes in verse 41: "Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?"

Take heart and do not despair. Christ is Lord over all the storms of life. He sends the storms, and he rides the waves with you. The Master of the sea is by your side. When the time has come, he will say, "Peace, be still!" and the storm will run out of breath, and the sea will become like glass. Eventually the day will break and the sun will shine again.

We thank you, Master of the Wind and Waves, that you control the storms of life. Nothing can touch us without your permission. Increase our faith so that we will trust you when the waves threaten to overwhelm us. Amen

# LIFE'S STORMS

Steven Cole

## (1) Storms hit suddenly and without warning.

When we lived in California, we woke up to a news station. Sometimes their morning traffic report would mention a fatal accident and I would think, "That guy left home this morning to go to work, never thinking that he had just minutes to live. His family perhaps said a perfunctory good-bye, never imagining that they would never talk to him again." Life's storms are like that: Right now everything is smooth sailing. In a matter of hours, without warning, you're in the middle of a crisis. Such a storm not only tests and develops your character; it reveals it. Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission, was talking to a young missionary who was about to start work in China. "Look at this," he said. He pounded his fist on the table. The tea cups jumped, and the tea spilled. While the startled young man was wondering what was going on, Taylor said, "When you begin your work, you will be buffeted in numerous ways. The trials will be like blows. Remember, these blows will bring out only what is in you." So the time to develop resources to face the sudden storms that inevitably will strike is before they hit. If you don't spend time with the Lord in the calm of life, you won't know how to trust Him in the storms.

## (2) Storms hit believers.

This storm hit those with Christ in their boat as well as those without Christ in their boat. Mk 4:36 records that other boats were with them. If this were a fairy tale, we might read that when the storm arose, the other boats were swamped, but the boat with Christ in it sailed as smooth as glass. The fact is, Christians are not magically exempted from the storms of life. Just because you're in Jesus' boat doesn't mean that it's going to be smooth sailing. Christians are not exempt from trials. Some think, "Yes, that's true. But I'm *serv*ing Christ." They think that being committed earns them special protection from storms. But observe:

## (3) Storms hit obedient believers who are serving Christ

In fact, this storm did not hit the disciples because they had been disobedient but, rather, because they had been obedient! Jesus said, "Let's go over to the other side" (Lu 8:22). These men, who had committed their lives to serve Christ, obeyed. And He led them straight into a storm! And in the same way, obediently serving Christ may place you smack-dab in the middle of storms you would have avoided if you had stayed on the shore. I have often found that the most severe times of testing have come right after I have taken a new step of obedience. Just after Marla and I returned to Dallas so that I could complete my seminary training, we were mugged at gunpoint and I had to get four stitches in my hand. While my hand was still bandaged, I slipped in the mud and cut my other hand on a thermos I was carrying. We also encountered several other trials around the same time. Shortly after we moved to California to begin in the pastorate, our six-month-old daughter, Christa, had to be hospitalized with a congenital hip problem that meant being in a body cast for two months and wearing a leg brace for several years. The very day we decided to move to Flagstaff, we learned about a major problem with our house that entailed months of difficulties. Shortly after I began here I had to deal with some major problems in the church that resulted in a lot of turmoil. The point is, being obedient to the Lord does not exempt you from storms; it often leads you right into storms! Not only did the Lord lead the disciples into this storm. ([What to do When Life Gets Stormy](#))

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## Perception Or Reality?

Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing? —Mark 4:38

Today's Scripture & Insight: Mark 4:35-41

We often hear it said, "Perception is reality." That idea for Americans may have dawned on September 26, 1960—the date of the first televised debate between two presidential candidates. In front of the cameras, John Kennedy appeared composed; Richard Nixon appeared nervous. The perception was that Kennedy would be a stronger leader. The debate not only turned that election, but it also changed the way politics is done in the US. Politics by perception became the rule of the day.

Sometimes perception is reality. But not always—especially our perceptions about God. When Jesus and His disciples were

crossing the Sea of Galilee in a small fishing vessel, a sudden storm threatened to sink the boat. With Jesus asleep and the disciples on the verge of panic, they began to stir Him, asking, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" (Mark 4:38).

Their question sounds similar to questions I've asked. At times I perceive God's apparent inactivity as a lack of care. But His care for me goes well beyond what I can see or measure. Our God is deeply concerned for what concerns us. He urges us to place all our care upon Him, "for He cares for [us]" (1 Peter 5:7). That is true reality. By: Bill Crowder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O yes, He cares; I know He cares!  
His heart is touched with my grief;  
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,  
I know my Savior cares.  
—Graeff

Even when we don't sense God's presence, His loving care is all around us.

**Mark 4:39 And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Hush, be still.' And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.**

Wuest - And having arisen, He rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, Be getting calm; hush up and stay that way. And the wind ceased its raging, and there was a great calm.

NET Mark 4:39 So he got up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Be quiet! Calm down!" Then the wind stopped, and it was dead calm.

GNT Mark 4:39 κα̅ διεγερθε̅ς ρ̅ε̅τ̅ μ̅η̅σεν̅ τ̅ ν̅ μ̅ κα̅ ε̅πεν̅ τ̅ θα̅λ̅σ̅σ̅, Σ̅ι̅ π̅α̅, π̅ε̅φ̅ μ̅ω̅σο̅. κα̅ κ̅ πα̅σεν̅ νε̅μος κα̅ γ̅ νε̅το̅ γ̅α̅λ̅ ν̅η̅ μ̅ε̅γ̅ λ̅η̅.

NLT Mark 4:39 When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the water, "Silence! Be still!" Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm.

KJV Mark 4:39 And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

ESV Mark 4:39 And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

NIV Mark 4:39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

ASV Mark 4:39 And he awoke, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

CSB Mark 4:39 He got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Silence! Be still!" The wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

NKJ Mark 4:39 Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.

NRS Mark 4:39 He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm.

YLT Mark 4:39 And having waked up, he rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace, be stilled;' and the wind did lull, and there was a great calm:

NAB Mark 4:39 He woke up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Quiet! Be still!" The wind ceased and there was great calm.

NJB Mark 4:39 They woke him and said to him, 'Master, do you not care? We are lost!' And he woke up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Quiet now! Be calm!' And the wind dropped, and there followed a great calm.

GWN Mark 4:39 Then he got up, ordered the wind to stop, and said to the sea, "Be still, absolutely still!" The wind stopped blowing, and the sea became very calm.

BBE Mark 4:39 And he came out of his sleep, and gave strong orders to the wind, and said to the sea, Peace, be at rest. And the wind went down, and there was a great calm.

- **He got up:** Ex 14:16,22,28,29 Job 38:11 Ps 29:10 93:3,4 104:7-9 107:29 Ps 148:8 Pr 8:29 Jer 5:22
- **rebuked:** M k 9:25 Na 1:4 Lu 4:39
- **the wind:** Ps 89:9 La 3:31
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Parallel Passages:

Mt 8:26+ He \*said to them, "Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm.

Luke 8:24+ They came to Jesus and woke Him up, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And He got up and rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm.

## THE CREATOR COMMANDS CREATION TO CEASE ROARING

Watch the dramatization of [Jesus Calming the Tempest](#).

**And He got up** - The verb [diegeiro](#) in the [aorist passive](#) is more literally rendered "having been thoroughly aroused." One gets the picture that the disciples had to shake Him several times to arouse Him, so deep was His sleep! Notice that Jesus does not answer with **words** the disciples' question about whether He cares, but He answers with **works**!

**And rebuked the wind and said to the sea "Hush, be still."** - Luke says Jesus **rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm**. Matthew tells us that first Jesus addressed the disciples **"Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?"** associating their fear with their faith. They are polar opposites, fear going hand in hand with unbelief. Faith in God and belief in His sovereign control over every storm situation should have been the "antidote" for the disciples, but that was not to be! As **Spurgeon** said Jesus "spoke to the men first, for they were the most difficult to deal with: wind and sea could be rebuked afterwards." So next He addressed **the wind** and then **the sea**. **Hush** is a command in [present imperative, passive voice](#), calling for the wind to "be being calm"! In the midst of the howling storm, all Jesus has to do is say "Be quiet". The verb **be still** ([phimoo](#)) is in the unusual perfect imperative a command which means "be muzzled and stay muzzled!" This is the same verb Jesus used in Mark 1:25+ when He rebuked the demon "saying, **"Be quiet** ([aorist imperative](#)) and **come out** ([aorist imperative](#)) of him!" The demon obeyed. The tempest obeyed. The sea obeyed and became completely calm. The incident reveals the humanity and the deity of the Lord Jesus. He slept in the stern of the boat; that's His **humanity**. He spoke and the sea was calm; that's His **deity**. It is interesting that in Ps 107:29 we read a passage that is almost prophetic - "He caused the **storm** to be **still**, So that the **waves** of the sea were **hushed**." -- this is the same sequence that occurred in the Synoptic accounts. Notice also this is a "double miracle" of stilling the wind above the sea, but also the current below the sea. What the Creator created, He controls!

This scene recalls the proverb "Who has ascended into heaven and descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has wrapped the waters in His garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name or His Son's name? Surely you know!" (Proverbs 30:4)

**God is behind the scenes and controls the scenes He is behind.**

**Ryle** - The [well-known story of King Canute](#), in vain attempting to stop the rising tide by his command, will naturally occur to any reader of English history. There is a striking contrast between the utter failure of Canute's attempt and the almighty power of Christ's words here recorded.

**Expositor's** - Observe the poetic parallelism in this verse: wind and sea separately addressed, and the corresponding effects separately specified: lulled wind, calmed sea. The evangelist realizes the dramatic situation ... Silence! hush! laconic, majestic, probably the very words."

**Hiebert** - The two elements producing the dangerous situation were directly addressed as though they were rational agents. A peremptory rebuke was given them, as though they had transgressed their legitimate bounds. **"Peace, be still"**—only Mark recorded the very words of the command. Peace, literally, **"Be silent,"** was addressed to the howling wind; **be still**, literally, "be muzzled" (cf. Mk 1:25), was an apt command to the raging waves. "The simplicity and brevity of his command to wind and waves express the assurance of one who is in control."

**The winds and the waves were synchronized into solemn silence.**

This was clear evidence that He was God, for only the Creator could exercise authority over the creation!

Ps 89:9 You rule the swelling of the sea; When its waves rise, You still them.

Ps 104:3 He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters; He makes the clouds His chariot; He walks upon the wings of the wind;

Ps 135:7 He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; Who makes lightnings for the rain, Who brings forth the wind from His treasures.

Ps 107:23-30 Those who go down to the sea in ships, Who do business on great waters; 24 They have seen the works of the LORD, And His wonders in the deep. 25 For He spoke and raised up a stormy wind, Which lifted up the waves of the sea. 26 They rose up to the heavens, they went down to the depths; Their soul melted away in their misery. 27 They reeled and staggered like a drunken man, And were at their wits' end. 28 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, And He brought them out of their distresses. 29 He caused the storm to be still, So that the waves of the sea were hushed. 30 Then they were glad because they were quiet, So He guided them to their desired haven.

**Got up** (1326)([diegeiro](#) from **dia** = through and verb used in previous verse = [egeiro](#) = awaken, rouse) in the active voice means to cause to wake up or to awaken (Mt 1:24+) and in the passive voice to become awake (Mk 4:39+). It is interesting that this same verb [diegeiro](#) is used figuratively in Jn 6:18 to describe the sea "began to be stirred up because a strong wind was blowing." And so in the present context, Jesus was **stirred awake** and quieted the **stirred up** sea.

**Rebuked** (2008)([epitimaō](#) from **epi** = upon + **timao** = to honor) means literally to put honor upon, then to mete out due measure and then to find fault with, to censure severely, this last sense of course being the meaning in this passage. This verb is used in all 3 synoptic accounts (Matt. 8:26+, Mk 4:39+ and Lk 8:24+). In a somewhat similar use in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#), [epitimaō](#) is used in Ps 106:9 "Thus He **rebuked** (Lxx - [epitimaō](#)) the Red Sea and it dried up, and He led them through the deeps, as through the wilderness." [Epitimaō](#) is used in God's addressing Satan in Zech 3:2 where "The LORD said to Satan 'The LORD **rebuke** (Lxx - [epitimaō](#)) you, Satan," and again in Jude 1:9+ "Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord **rebuke** ([epitimaō](#)) you!" However, these latter two uses in the rebuke of Satan should not be taken as evidence that Satan was the instigator of the storm of the wind and the waves in the present context. "In classical Greek the verb **epitimaō** can mean both "to honor" and "to censure or penalize." The positive and negative meanings are similar to those carried by the English word citation." (Gilbrant)

**Wind** (417)(**anemos**) as rapidly moving air or "a blowing atmospheric phenomenon." (BDAG) Figuratively, in Mt 24:31 and Mk 13:27 **anemos** is used in the expression "the four winds" which stands for the four directions of the wind or the four "quarters of the globe." In Rev 7:1+ four **winds** of the earth are a picture of the judgment which God will bring over the earth. **Anemos** can stand for a rapid shift or change, a symbol of instability as in Eph 4.14+ describing of believers who were being "tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every **wind** of doctrine." **Gilbrant** - **Anemos** included different kinds of winds such as gales, breezes, directional winds, and even the breath of a person blowing. The qualities of wind as invisible yet strong, effective but uncontainable, often made it a suitable metaphor."

**NT** - wind(20), winds(11). - Mt 7:25, 27+ = "winds blew and slammed against that house"; Matt. 8:26; Matt. 8:27; Matt. 11:7; Matt. 14:24; Matt. 14:30; Matt. 14:32; Matt. 24:31; Mk. 4:37; Mk. 4:39; Mk. 4:41; Mk. 6:48; Mk. 6:51; Mk. 13:27; Lk. 7:24; Lk. 8:23; Lk. 8:24; Lk. 8:25; Jn. 6:18; Acts 27:4; Acts 27:7; Acts 27:14; Acts 27:15; Eph. 4:14; Jas. 3:4; Jude 1:12; Rev. 6:13+; Rev. 7:1+

**Septuagint** - Ex 10:13; Ex 10:19; Exod. 14:21; 2 Sam. 22:11; 1 Chr. 9:24; Job 13:25; Job 15:30; Job 21:18; Job 28:25; Ps. 1:4; Ps. 18:10; Ps. 18:42; Ps. 35:5; Ps. 83:13; Ps. 104:3; Ps. 135:7; Prov. 8:27; Prov. 9:12; Prov. 11:29; Prov. 25:14; Prov. 25:23; Prov. 27:16; Prov. 30:4; Eccl. 5:16; Eccl. 11:4; Isa. 17:13; Isa. 41:16; Isa. 57:13; Isa. 64:6; Jer. 5:13; Jer. 13:24; Jer. 14:6; Jer. 18:14; Jer. 18:17; Jer. 22:22; Jer. 49:36; Jer. 51:1; Ezek. 5:10; Ezek. 5:12; Ezek. 12:14; Ezek. 17:10; Ezek. 17:21; Ezek. 19:12; Dan. 2:35; Dan. 4:17; Dan. 7:2; Dan. 8:8; Dan. 11:4; Hos. 13:15; Zech. 2:6; Zech. 6:5;

**Gilbrant on meanings in the Septuagint**- The Septuagint makes use of **anemos** as one of the equivalents to **ruach** (cf. **pneuma**). The east wind ushered in God's judgment of locusts upon the land of Egypt (Ex 10:13,19), and it was an east wind which drove the sea back and turned it into dry land



(Exodus 14:21). The "four winds" represent the four directions, north, south, east, and west (1 Chr 9:24; cf. Zech 6:5). Metaphorically the wind is a figure of judgment; its power separates the wheat from the chaff (Ps 1:4, 35:5; cf. Ezekiel who spoke of "scattering to the wind," 5:10,12; 12:14; 17:21). The power of the wind contrasts the helplessness of those subject to its force (e.g., 3 Kings 14:15, Septuagint; Job 13:25, Septuagint; Psalm 83:13). As a metaphor of the intangible and hence worthless, the wind is the inheritance of the one who brings trouble on his family (Proverbs 11:29; cf. Jeremiah 5:13 which laments the shallowness of the prophets). (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

**Hush** (KJV = Peace)(4623)(**siopao** from **siope** = silence) means to be silent, hold one's peace, hush, say nothing (Mt 26:63; Mk 3:4; 9:34; 14:61; Acts 18:9). To stop speaking or become quiet (Mt 20:31; Mk 10:48; Lk 18:39, 19:40) So here Jesus commands the wind (and waves) to "**Hush!**" or quieten down, becoming calm (Mk 4:39). In classic Greek it was a command to "be silent" (Iliad 23.568; *Odyssey* 17.513) Socrates before a jury. (Cf Plato before the popular assembly on Aegina, on trial for his life "did not say a single word.") Matt. 20:31; Matt. 26:63; Mk. 3:4; Mk. 4:39; Mk. 9:34; Mk. 10:48; Mk. 14:61; Lk. 1:20; Lk. 19:40; Acts 18:9

**Be Still** (5392)(**phimoo** from **phimos** = muzzle for animal's mouth) tie shut, as done to an animal to prevent its snatching up grain while treading on a threshing floor and so to muzzle him (1 Cor 9.9, 1 Ti 5:18); figuratively to stop the mouth in order to put to silence, to deprive of an argument (Mt 22:34, 1 Pe 2.15); passive - speechless, to have nothing to say, to be without an answer (Mt 22.12). Wuest - "used of muzzling an ox and of Jesus muzzling (silencing) the Pharisees." In this case the waves were commanded to have "say nothing" and to stay that way. Aristophanes, the Athenian dramatist (Fifth Century B.C.), used the word in his satiric comedies with the meaning "to make fast" Used once in **Septuagint** - Dt 25:4 "You shall not **muzzle** (Lxx = phimoo) the ox while he is threshing."

**NT** - muzzle(1), quiet(2), silence(1), silenced(1), speechless(1), still(1). - Matt. 22:12; Matt. 22:34; Mk. 1:25; Mk. 4:39; Lk. 4:35; 1 Tim. 5:18; 1 Pet. 2:15

## [God is in Control](#)

Twila Paris

This is no time for fear  
This is a time for faith and determination  
Don't lose the vision here  
Carried away by the motion  
Hold on to all that you hide in your heart  
There is one thing that has always been true  
It holds the world together

God is in control  
We believe that His children will not be forsaken  
God is in control  
We will choose to remember and never be shaken  
There is no power above or beside Him, we know  
God is in control

History marches on  
There is a bottom line drawn across the ages  
Culture can make its plan  
Oh, but the line never changes  
No matter how the deception may fly  
There is one thing that has always been true  
It will be true forever

He has never let you down  
Why start to worry now? (2x)  
He is still the Lord of all we see  
And He is still the loving Father  
Watching over you and me

To realize the worth of the anchor, we need to feel the stress of the storm.

That Jesus should be able to rebuke His creation should come as no surprise to us. Recall also that it was **Jesus Who spoke and created the universe with His Word!**

John 1:3+ **All things came into being through Him**, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Col 1:16+ **For by Him all things were created**, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—**all things have been created through Him** and for Him. 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Hebrews 1:2+ in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, **through Whom also He made the world.**

Hebrews 11:3+ By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by **the Word of God**, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

**Jensen** - Two miracles are involved in 4:39: the wind died down and the sea was stilled, both of them suddenly, at the same time. Normally, a troubled sea calms down gradually, a long time after the winds have ceased.

**And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm - Became perfectly calm** is literally "became great (megas) calm." The wind and the sea stopped suddenly and immediately in obedience to the Creator! **Hiebert** adds an interesting comment that "Such raging winds were known to die down suddenly, but the sudden dying down of the dashing waves was most extraordinary." (Ibid) "After preaching in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Pastor Fred Luter of New Orleans concluded his sermon with these words: "Always remember that when the storms show up, so does the Savior.'" (Bell)

No water can swallow the ship where lies  
The Master of ocean and earth and skies.

**Died down** (2869) (**kopazo** from **kopos** = labor, fatigue) means to abate, cease, stop. To cease raging, to cease from violence, to grow weary or tired. "Greek epigram = the long hard sailing that I've faced will soon abate" (BDAG). Liddell-Scott - to grow weary:

Used only 3x - Mt. 14:32 = "the wind **stopped**"; Mk. 4:39; Mk. 6:51 = "Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind **stopped**; and they were utterly astonished"

**Septuagint** - Ge 8:1; Ge 8:7; Ge 8:8; Ge 8:11; Nu 11:2; Nu 16:48; Nu 16:50; Jos. 14:15; Jdg. 15:7; Jdg. 20:28; Ru 1:18; 2 Sa 13:39; Est. 2:1; Est. 7:10; Ps. 49:8; Ps. 106:30; Jer. 14:21; Ezek. 43:10; Hos. 8:10; Amos 7:5; Jon. 1:11; Jon. 1:12;

**Gilbrant on uses in the Septuagint**- **Kopazō**, "get tired, grow weary" (see **kopos** - always carries the extended meaning "cease" in Biblical literature. The Septuagint uses it to mean "cease" (Amos 7:5, etc) or cease doing something like anointing kings, speaking, or going out (Ru 1:18; Hos 8:10, etc.). People cease from sin (Ezek 43:10), and the land ceases from war (Josh 14:15). Plagues cease (Nu 16:48, etc.), fire ceases (Nu 11:2), water ceases ("dries up," Ge 8:1, etc.), and the sea ceases ("becomes calm," Jonah 1:11,12). (Ibid)

**Calm** (1055) (**galene**) is a tranquility, quietness or stillness of the sea, "an unruffled surface on a body of water," (BDAG), or that which is calm and is used often to describe the weather. In NT it is used only to describe sea as calm - Mt 8:26, Mk 4:39, Lk 8:24. In Classic Greek it is used metaphorically to describe the spirit of serene calm, Aesch.; in calm, Soph.

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## **LORD OF ALL CREATION**

Lord of all creation  
Of water, earth, and sky  
The heavens are Your tabernacle  
Glory to the Lord on High  
  
God of wonders, beyond our galaxy  
You are holy, holy  
The universe declares Your majesty  
You are holy, holy

Lord of heaven and earth  
Lord of heaven and earth  
Early in the morning  
I will celebrate the light  
And as I stumble through the darkness  
I will call Your name by night

God of wonders, beyond out galaxy  
You are holy, holy  
The universe declares Your majesty  
You are holy, holy

Lord of heaven and earth  
Lord of heaven and earth  
Hallelujah to the Lord of heaven and earth  
Hallelujah to the Lord of heaven and earth  
Hallelujah to the Lord of heaven and earth  
God of wonders, beyond out galaxy  
You are holy, holy  
Precious Lord, reveal Your heart to me  
Father holy, holy  
The universe declares Your majesty  
You are holy, holy, holy, holy

Hallelujah to the Lord of heaven and earth  
Hallelujah to the Lord of heaven and earth  
Hallelujah to the Lord of heaven and earth  
Hallelujah to the Lord of heaven and earth  
Hallelujah to the Lord of heaven and earth  
Hallelujah to the Lord of heaven and earth  
Lord of heaven and earth  
Lord of heaven and earth

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Mark 4:37-39 - In Mark's account of the stilling of the tempest we read, "there arose a great storm of wind" (Mark 4:37). The disciples aroused the Lord from His sleep and we read, "And he arose." (v. 39). We are in the greatest storm of history, but He is master of the storm. When the storm arises, let us arise in His strength and bid the tempest subside. Like the disciples we panic, forgetting Who is in the boat with us! We are hearing aplenty about the storm these days, but little about the Saviour. "There arose a storm. . . and he arose."

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### **Peace, Be Still**

Read: Mark 4:35-41 He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" —Mark 4:39

My friend Elouise has a wonderful way of putting life into clever perspectives. Once when I asked her, "How are you today?" I expected the usual "fine" response. Instead, she said, "I've got to wake Him up!" When I asked what she meant, she kiddingly exclaimed, "Don't you know your Bible?!" Then she explained: "When the disciples faced trouble, they ran to wake up Jesus. I'm going to run to Him too!"

What do we do when we are stuck in a troubling situation with nowhere to run? Maybe, like the disciples who were stuck in a life-threatening storm, we run to Jesus (Mark 4:35-41). Sometimes, however, we may try to bail ourselves out of trouble by seeking revenge, slandering the one who has caused our problem, or just cowering fearfully in the corner as we sink into despair.

We need to learn from the disciples who fled to Jesus as their only hope. He may not bail us out immediately, but remembering that He is in our boat makes a difference! Thankfully, He is always with us in the storms of life, saying things like "Peace, be still!" (v.39). So, look for Him in your storm and let Him fill you with the peace that comes from knowing He is near. By Joe Stowell ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, teach us to run to You in the midst of trouble.  
Forgive us for trying to bail ourselves out, and lead

us to the peace of trusting Your wisdom and ultimate deliverance. Thank You that You will help us!

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**Make Jesus your first option when the storms of life threaten you.**

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**In The Storm**

Read: Mark 4:35-41 [Jesus] said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" —Mark 4:39

A storm was brewing—not just on the horizon but also in a friend's home. "When I was in Hong Kong," she shared, "the local meteorological service announced that there was a superstorm approaching. But more than the storm that was looming outside my window, there was a storm brewing at home. While my dad was in the hospital, family members were trying to balance their home and work responsibilities while also traveling to and from the hospital. They were so tired that patience was wearing thin, and the situation at home was tense."

Life can feel like a storm—tossing us around with winds of misfortune, grief, or stress. Where can we turn? When Jesus' disciples were caught in a great windstorm and wondered if He cared, they still knew where to turn. He demonstrated His power by calming the howling storm (Mark 4:38-39).

But often He does not calm the storm immediately. And, like the disciples, we may feel that He doesn't care. To calm our fears, we can cling to faith in who God is and what He can do. We can take shelter in Him (Ps. 91:1). We can find His help to relate to others with grace. We can rest in an all-powerful, all-wise, and all-loving God. He is with us in the storm and cradles us through the storm. By Poh Fang Chia ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Whether the wrath of the storm-tossed sea,  
Or demons or men, or whatever it be  
No waters can swallow the ship where lies  
The Master of the ocean, and earth, and skies.  
—Baker

One need not cry out very loudly; He is nearer to us than we think. —Brother Lawrence

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**Growing in the Wind**

Read: Mark 4:36–41 Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him! Mark 4:41

Imagine a world without wind. Lakes would be calm. Falling leaves wouldn't blow in the streets. But in still air, who would expect trees to suddenly fall over? That's what happened in a three-acre glass dome built in the Arizona desert. Trees growing inside a huge windless bubble called Biosphere 2 grew faster than normal until suddenly collapsing under their own weight. Project researchers eventually came up with an explanation. These trees needed wind stress to grow strong.

Jesus let His disciples experience gale-force winds to strengthen their faith (Mark 4:36–41). During a night crossing of familiar waters, a sudden storm proved too much even for these seasoned fishermen. Wind and waves were swamping their boat while an exhausted Jesus slept in the stern. In a panic they woke Him. Didn't it bother their Teacher that they were about to die? What was He thinking? Then they began to find out. Jesus told the wind and waves to be quiet—and asked His friends why they still had no faith in Him.

Help us remember anything that frightens us comes with an invitation to find the strength of knowing You.

If the wind had not blown, these disciples would never have asked, "Who is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!" (Mark 4:41).

Today, life in a protective bubble might sound good. But how strong would our faith be if we couldn't discover for ourselves His reassuring "be still" when the winds of circumstance howl? By Mart DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Father in heaven, please help us to remember that anything that frightens us comes with an invitation to find the strength of knowing and trusting You.

**God never sleeps.**

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## Christ In The Storm

Read: Mark 4:33-41 Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith? —Mark 4:40

At the age of 27, Rembrandt painted the seascape Christ in the Storm on the Sea of Galilee based on the story in Mark 4. With its distinctive contrast of light and shadow, Rembrandt's painting shows a small boat threatened with destruction in a furious storm. As the disciples struggle against the wind and waves, Jesus is undisturbed. The most unusual aspect, however, is the presence in the boat of a 13th disciple whom art experts say resembles Rembrandt himself.

Mark's gospel describes the disciples' vivid lesson about who Jesus is and what He can do. While they were frantically trying to save a sinking boat, Jesus was asleep. Didn't He care that they were all about to die? (v.38). After Jesus calmed the storm (v.39), He asked the penetrating question, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" (v.40). Then they were even more afraid, exclaiming to each other, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!" (v.41).

We could also put ourselves in this story and discover, just as Jesus' disciples did, that to each person who trusts in Jesus Christ, He reveals His presence, compassion, and control in every storm of life. By David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Be still, my heart; for faithful is thy Lord,  
And pure and true and tried His holy Word;  
Though stormy flood which rageth as the sea,  
His promises thy stepping-stones shall be.  
—Anon.

### God is a safe dwelling place in life's storms.

**INSIGHT:** Mark 4:35–5:43 records four miracles that answer the question, "Who can this be?" (Mark 4:41). These miracles demonstrated Jesus' absolute power over nature (Mark 4:35-41), the spiritual world (Mark 5:1-20), physical illnesses (Mark 5:21-34), and death (Mark 5:35-43). Each miracle shows Jesus as the omnipotent sovereign God. Yet in this passage, Mark provides one of the most amazing contrasts. Just before Jesus displayed the awesome powers of His deity, we are given a touching picture of His humanity: Jesus was so tired that even the violent tossing of the waves did not wake Him (Mark 4:38).

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## Calming The Storm

Read: Mark 4:35-41 - He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. —Mark 4:39

While Hurricane Katrina headed toward the coast of Mississippi, a retired pastor and his wife left their home and went to a shelter. Their daughter pleaded with them to go to Atlanta where she could take care of them, but the couple couldn't get any money to make the trip because the banks were closed. After the storm had passed, they returned to their home to get a few belongings, and were able to salvage only a few family photos floating in the water. Then, when the man was taking his father's photo out of its frame so it could dry, \$366 fell out—precisely the amount needed for two plane tickets to Atlanta. They learned they could trust Jesus for what they needed.

For the disciples, trusting Jesus in a storm was the curriculum for the day in the dramatic narrative of Mark 4:35-41. Jesus had instructed His disciples to cross to the other side of the Sea of Galilee and then He went to sleep in the boat. When a quick and violent storm blew in, the disciples dripped as much with fear and anxiety as water from the waves. They woke Jesus, saying, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" (v.38 niv). Jesus stood up and with three words, "Peace, be still!" He muzzled the storm.

We all experience storms—persecutions, financial troubles, illnesses, disappointments, loneliness—and Jesus does not always prevent them. But He has promised never to leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5). He will keep us calm in the storm. By Marvin Williams

Are you in a storm? What do you know about God's character that could help bring calm to your heart? [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

### In the storms of life, we can see the character of our God.

(Ed: And learn much about our character!)

**INSIGHT:** Mark 4:35–5:43 records four miracles that answer the question asked in 4:41: "Who can this be . . . ?" They demonstrate Jesus' absolute power over nature (4:35-41), the spiritual world (5:1-20), physical illnesses (5:21-34), and death (5:35-43). Each miracle shows Jesus as the Omnipotent Sovereign God. In Jewish minds the power to control the sea and the waves was exclusive

to God (Job 38:8-11; Ps. 65:5-7; Isa. 51:10; Nah. 1:3-5). It's interesting, however, that in today's passage Mark provides an amazing contrast. Just before Jesus displayed the awesome powers of His deity by calming the sea, we are given a touching picture of His frail humanity: Jesus was so tired that even the violent tossing of the waves did not wake Him (4:38).

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### **We learn the lesson of trust in the school of trial.**

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#### **The Unseen Keel - Luke 8:22-25**

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast. —Hebrews 6:19<sup>+</sup>

The president of Gordon College, R. Judson Carlberg, was driving along the ocean near his home in Massachusetts when he saw two stately 17th-century sailing ships. They were replicas that were built for a movie being filmed nearby. "The breeze was stiff," Carlberg reported, "straining the rigging and the crews. Yet each ship stayed the course and didn't capsize." He explained the secret of their stability. "Beneath the waterline each had a deep, heavy keel—a part you don't see." The keel was essential for keeping the vessel steady in rough weather.

What is it that holds us steady when fierce winds are blowing across life's sea? What keeps us from capsizing when we are under stress and tension? What enables us to sail on, despite the strain? It's the stabilizing keel of faith in our sovereign God. It's our unseen relationship with Christ. As He commanded the wind and the waves on the Sea of Galilee, He also controls the storms and squalls of life that threaten to sink us or drive us off course. Our faith in Christ is an "anchor of the soul" (Heb. 6:19) that can keep us from ultimate shipwreck.

Do you have that unseen keel of faith? By Vernon Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

We have an anchor that keeps the soul  
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll,  
Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,  
Grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love.  
—Owens

### **Faith in Christ will keep us steady in the stormy sea of change.**

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Mark 4:39 Breton fishermen on the coast of France have a brief prayer that humbly acknowledges God's control of nature and life: "God, Your sea is so great and my boat is so small." In recognizing that the sea belongs to God, the fishermen see God as the only source of safety for their boats. In calming the Sea of Galilee, Jesus taught the disciples not only about His power over nature but also about external and internal peace. The lesson about external peace was the easier of the two; He stopped the storm. Dealing with the storm inside the disciples was more difficult; fear had replaced the disciples' faith. Trust and tranquility are twins in the spiritual life. Perfect peace comes from complete trust (Isa 26:3). —D. J. De Haan

Better the storm with Christ,  
than smooth waters without Him  
Sometimes God calms the storm,  
sometimes He lets the storm rage and calms His child.

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### **Mark 4:40 And He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?"**

NET Mark 4:40 And he said to them, "Why are you cowardly? Do you still not have faith?"

GNT Mark 4:40 κα ε πεν α το ς, Τ δειλο στε; ο πω χετε π σπι;

NLT Mark 4:40 Then he asked them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

KJV Mark 4:40 And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

ESV Mark 4:40 He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?"

NIV Mark 4:40 He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

ASV Mark 4:40 And he said unto them, Why are ye fearful? have ye not yet faith?

CSB Mark 4:40 Then He said to them, "Why are you fearful? Do you still have no faith?"

NKJ Mark 4:40 But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"

NRS Mark 4:40 He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"

YLT Mark 4:40 and he said to them, 'Why are ye so fearful? how have ye not faith?'

NAB Mark 4:40 Then he asked them, "Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?"

NJB Mark 4:40 Then he said to them, 'Why are you so frightened? Have you still no faith?'

GWN Mark 4:40 He asked them, "Why are you such cowards? Don't you have any faith yet?"

BBE Mark 4:40 And he said to them, Why are you full of fear? have you still no faith?

- **Why are you afraid** : Ps 46:1-3 Isa 42:3 43:2 Mt 8:26 14:31 Lu 8:25 Joh 6:19,20
- **Do you still have no faith**: Mt 6:30 16:8
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Parallel Passages:

Matthew 8:26+ - He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm.

Luke 8:25+ And He said to them, "Where is your faith?" They were fearful and amazed, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?"

### REBUKE TO WIND THEN REBUKE TO THE DISCIPLES

There is a famous brand that reminds me of the reaction of the 12. It is a brand of tuna fish called [Chicken of the Sea](#). The "storm" is now in the boat! "It is one thing to be terrified by a storm on the sea. It is another thing to be terrified by God in your boat!" (Akin) As Brian Bell says here we have "The Lord High Admiral of the sea, right next to the Chicken of the sea!" So here we see the greater storm was not on the seas but in the souls of the disciples!

**Jensen** - Because the disciples had no faith for such miracles (4:40), the effect was fear and consternation. What had they not learned yet about Christ?

**And He said to them, "Why are you afraid?"** - We don't need to fear the storm with Jesus as our anchor but the 12 had not yet come to fully understand this truth. Compare a similar reaction by Jesus to the disciples in Mark 8:17-21+ ( "O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to Me!"); Mk 9:19+. Timidity (see deilos) was their frequent response - Mark 5:15, 33; Mk 6:50; Mk 9:32; Mk 10:32; Mk 11:18; Mk 16:8. Their lack of faith made them fearful in the crisis.

**Akin** - The presence of God is far more fearful and frightening than the most destructive forces of nature. One can take your life. The other can claim your soul. ...Interestingly, this is the first of 3 boat scenes in Mark's gospel. The other 2 are in Mk 6:45- 52 and Mk 8:14-21. Each is associated with a miracle. Each is a challenge to understand and settle the identity of Jesus. Each is adequate for them to draw the conclusion we must draw as well, "You are the Christ, the Son of God. The famous atheist [Bertrand Russell](#) (1872-1970) was asked what he would say to God if He discovered upon his death that God existed and he was wrong. His response was I will say, "Not enough evidence, God, not enough evidence." That excuse will not fly. 9 That answer will not save him. The evidence is in and it is overwhelming. The time to settle the issue is now." ([Sermon](#))

**Hiebert** - the double question, peculiar to Mark, rebuked their feeling and probed the cause. In the first question the term "fearful" renders an adjective basically denoting "cowardly, timid." It carries an implied rebuke for their timidity in the face of danger confronted. It was unworthy of them in view of what they had seen and heard in association with Him. The second question does not imply that they were devoid of all faith; "not yet" probes the amazing failure that they had not yet apprehended the true significance of the fact that the kingdom was present in the Person and work of Jesus. Their fear implied lack of faith in Him and His power.(Ibid)

**THOUGHT** - Faith must be tested before it can be trusted. It is one thing to learn a new spiritual truth, but quite something else to practice that truth in the everyday experiences of life....The disciples failed this test of faith because they did not lay hold of His word that He was going to the other side. It has well been said that faith is not believing in spite of circumstances; it is obeying in spite of feelings and consequences. The

disciples looked around and saw danger, and looked within and saw fear; but they failed to look up by faith and see God. Faith and fear cannot dwell together in the same heart. A woman said to D.L. Moody, "I have found a wonderful promise!" and she quoted Psalm 56:3, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee." "Let me give you a better one," said Moody; and he quoted Isaiah 12:2, "Behold God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid." (Warren Wiersbe - BEC)

**Steven Cole** - Not all fear is wrong, but Jesus rebuked the disciples because their fear was excessive. Some fear is useful because it leads us to take prudent caution for our safety. Sometimes fear makes us spring into immediate action to save our own lives or the life of a loved one who is in danger. But fear is excessive and wrong when it causes us to panic so that we are not thinking carefully in light of God's promises. If we're so focused on the problem that we cannot see God's control over it, then we're not trusting Him.

**Afraid** ([1169](#))(**deilos** from from **deidō** = to fear) means to be cowardly, timid, fearful (Mt 8:26; Mk 4:40); of persons showing fear in a shameful way coward (Rev 21:8+)

**Gilbrant** - In the classical Greek this word means "cowardly" or "fearful." There is often implied a note of contempt for the "timid" one. It is also used in a compassionate sense for those made miserable by their fear. **Deilos** is related to deos (1183B), "fear" or "alarm." The Septuagint and Koine Greek follow the classical usage. Jesus described the disciples as "fearful" (deilos) of the storm (Matthew 8:26; Mark 4:40). Perhaps He rebuked them by this word, but not without compassion. In Revelation 21:8+, however, the "fearful" are placed with the unbelieving and the wicked in the **lake of fire**. Given the contrast between faith and deilos in Matthew and Mark (cf. Luke 8:25 where faith is also at risk, but deilos is not mentioned) and its association with liars (i.e., those who deny Jesus) in Revelation 21:8, it is perhaps correct to see **deilos** as symptomatic of unbelief. (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

**Liddell-Scott**: I. of persons, cowardly, craven, II.; hence, vile, worthless, afraid of. . , Anth. 2. miserable, luckless, wretched, Hom.; with a compassionate sense, like Lat. miser, deiloi. brotoi, poor mortals! poor wretch! poor wretches! Id. II. of things, miserable, wretched, Hes., Soph.

NT - afraid(2), cowardly(1) - Matt. 8:26; Mk. 4:40; Rev. 21:8

Septuagint - Deut. 20:8; Jdg. 7:3; Jdg. 9:4; 2 Chr. 13:7;

**Do you still have no faith?** - The other two Gospels have "**You men of little faith**" (Mt 8:26+) and "**Where is your faith?**" (Lk 8:25+) The idea of **no faith** is do you not yet have faith? Clearly they had "some" faith but it was **little faith** (Mt 8:26+)

The **storm** couldn't disturb Him, but the **unbelief** of His disciples did!

- G. Campbell Morgan

**Corrie Ten Boom**, author of *The Hiding Place* and survivor of the German concentration camps, said that people often came up to her and said, "Corrie, my, what a great faith you have." She would smile and respond, "No, it's what a great God I have." Our faith in trials should point people toward our great God.

**Still...No** ([3768](#))(**houpo** from **ou** = not + **po** = yet) is an adverb of time not yet (Mt 24:6; Jn 2:4; 6:17; 8:20, 57; 1 Cor 3:2 ; Phil 3:13.; Heb 2:8; Rev 17:10, 12) In the phrase **oudeis houpo** = no one ever (Mk 11:2; Lk 23:53) **Gilbrant - Houpo** is an adverb of time used in negation and in questions. As an adverb of negation it is a strong negative (Moulton-Milligan), and in Homeric writings it is used to express the idea of "by no means" (Homeric Dictionary). Examples of the negation can be found in Matthew 24:6, "The end is **not yet**," and John 7:30, "His hour was **not yet** come." Matthew 15:17 \*Do you **not** understand) and Mt 16:9 (Do you **not yet** understand or remember ) exemplify the use of houpō in questions and in Mark 8:17 "Do you **not yet** see o?" (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

**NT** - 27x - still....no (1); ever(1), yet(24), yet...ever(1). Matt. 16:9; Matt. 24:6; Mk. 4:40; Mk. 8:17; Mk. 8:21; Mk. 11:2; Mk. 13:7; Lk. 23:53; Jn. 2:4; Jn. 3:24; Jn. 6:17; Jn. 7:6; Jn. 7:8; Jn. 7:30; Jn. 7:39; Jn. 8:20; Jn. 8:57; Jn. 11:30; Jn. 20:17; 1 Co. 3:2; 1 Co. 8:2; Phil. 3:13; Heb. 2:8; Heb. 12:4; 1 Jn. 3:2; Rev. 17:10; Rev. 17:12

**Septuagint** - Gen. 15:16; Gen. 18:12; Gen. 29:7; Eccl. 4:3; Isa. 7:17;

**Faith** ([4102](#))(**pistis**) is synonymous with trust or belief and is the conviction of the truth of anything, but in Scripture usually speaks of belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and joined with it. Pistis in Mark - Mk. 2:5; Mk. 4:40; Mk. 5:34; Mk. 10:52; Mk. 11:22;

**David Guzik** makes a great point that "They actually had many reasons to have faith, even great faith. (1) They had just seen Jesus do significant miracles, showing great power and authority. (2) They had seen an example of great faith with the centurion who



trusted Jesus to heal his servant.(3) They had Jesus with them in the boat. And, they saw Jesus sleep; His peace should have given them peace." (Enduring Word Commentary)

**Brian Bell** - Jesus didn't stop with the calming of the elements, for that wasn't their greatest danger, it was the unbelief of their hearts! Our greatest problems are *within* us not *around* us! The Master that day taught His disciples that the cure for fear is faith! Fear is looking at the storm; faith is looking at the Savior; Fear is looking at the circumstances; faith is looking at God!...Oswald Chambers said, "Beware of worshipping Jesus as the Son of God, and professing your faith in Him as the Savior of the world, while you blaspheme Him by the complete evidence in your daily life that He is powerless to do anything in and through you." ouch!

#### Related Resources:

1. [How To Handle Fear Part 1](#)
2. [How To Handle Fear Part 2](#)
3. [How To Handle Fear Part 3](#)
4. [How To Handle Fear Part 4](#)
5. [The Fear of the Lord](#)

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#### Brian Bell - Jesus gives three purposes behind the plans God has for us.

(1) **To deal with our fear.** After rebuking the storm, Jesus reproves the disciples by asking some questions in verse 40. Here's the first: "Why are you so afraid?" That word means "timid, to the point of giving up." He had already promised they were going to the other side. They had seen His power in other settings and He was present with them. What more did they need? Jesus asks you and me the same question: Why are you so afraid?

(2) **To grow our faith.** And here's His second question: "Have you still no faith?" This can be translated, "Do you not yet have faith?" Fear can fillet our faith; and faith can force out our fears. The biggest issue is not that Jesus stopped the storm but that He couldn't find their faith. It's ironic that it's only the wind and the waves that are obeying Him in this passage.

Before moving on, as the Master Teacher, don't miss that Jesus loved to ask questions. I listened to a Breakpoint Commentary this week in which John Stonestreet urges us to utilize questions when interacting with people about cultural issues. Here are some he suggested: What do you mean by that? How do you know that is true? Where did you get this information? How did you come to this conclusion? What if you're wrong?

(3) **To increase our awe.** One pastor has said that the only thing worse than having a storm outside your boat is to have the Lord Almighty inside your boat. After Jesus asks them two questions, the disciples are very unsettled and in turn ask a question in verse 41 - "And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the seas obey Him?'" Luke adds that they were afraid and "they marveled."

You've heard of the calm before the storm, right? This is the storm after the calm. The sea is at rest but the disciples are all churned up. You would think they would chill when the waves were still. The storm made them afraid but the power of Christ made them petrified. The word "fear" literally means, "They feared a great fear; to be stricken with awe and amazement in the presence of one greater than self." They had a combination of fear and reverence. With deity on full display, they are twice as terrified after the storm. If Jesus did that to the forces of nature, what would He do to them? ([Sermon](#))

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#### Life's Storm-Tossed Sea

Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. —1 Peter 5:7

Today's Scripture: Mark 4:35-41

Emilie, wife of 19th-century Ger man pastor Christoph Blumhardt, envied his ability to pray for his parishioners and then effortlessly fall asleep. So one night she pleaded, "Tell me your secret!"

He answered, "Is God so powerless that my worrying would help the well-being of our parish?" Then he added, "There comes a moment each day when we must simply drop what weighs on us and hand it over to God."

One evening Jesus and His disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee. Weary after a long day of ministry, He fell asleep in the stern

of the boat. A fierce squall suddenly arose—so fierce that even the Lord’s fishermen-turned-disciples were terrified. But Jesus continued to sleep serenely until His frightened followers woke Him, crying out, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?” (Mark 4:38). You see, Jesus was in the habit of entrusting Himself to His heavenly Father. Having made that commitment, He could sleep through the turbulent squall.

When worries begin to gnaw at our mind, let’s surrender them to the Lord and not take them back again (1 Peter 5:7). That’s the secret of soul-serenity when we’re on life’s storm-tossed sea. By: Vernon Grounds ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Jesus knows the pain you feel,  
He can save and He can heal—  
Take your burden to the Lord  
And leave it there.  
—Tindley

Drop what weighs you down by giving it to God.

---

### **Risky Business**

He said to them, “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?” Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. —Matthew 8:26

Today’s Scripture: Matthew 8:23-27

Denis Boyles knew it would be challenging to interview a man on a roller coaster—especially when the interview took place during an attempt to set a world’s record for continuous riding. After several times around the track, Denis was so overcome with fear he could hardly talk.

Then the man showed him how to use his body and feet to lean into the loops, twists, and turns. Writing in AARP Magazine, Boyles explained how that took away the terror. It also taught him a lesson about risk and fear. The roller coaster felt risky though it was quite safe. But driving his car to the amusement park posed a far greater risk of injury. Risk and fear are easily confused.

As Jesus and His disciples crossed the Sea of Galilee, a storm came up and waves swept over their boat. Incredibly, Jesus was asleep. The disciples woke Him and said, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!” (Matt. 8:25). In a gentle rebuke, Jesus asked, “‘Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?’ Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm” (v.26).

Like the disciples, the more we learn about Jesus, the more we trust Him. Our greatest risk is failing to depend on Him when life seems out of control. By: David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

But we see Jesus! Oh, what peace!  
What balm for troubled heart!  
His very name brings rest and calm  
And bids the fears depart!  
—Adams

Keep your eyes on Jesus and you’ll soon lose sight of your fears.

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### **Thunderstorm Thoughts**

The God of peace will be with you. — Philippians 4:9

Today’s Scripture: Matthew 8:23-27

I laugh every time I hear the radio commercial that has a woman shouting to her friend in conversation. She’s trying to talk above the sounds of the thunderstorm in her own head. Ever since a storm damaged part of her home, that’s all she hears because her insurance company isn’t taking care of her claims.

I’ve heard thunderstorms in my head, and maybe you have too. It happens when a tragedy occurs—to us, to someone close to us, or to someone we hear about in the news. Our minds become a tempest of “what if” questions. We focus on all the possible bad outcomes. Our fear, worry, and trust in God fluctuate as we wait, we pray, we grieve, and we wonder what the Lord will do.

It's natural for us to be fearful in a storm (literal or figurative). The disciples had Jesus right there in the boat with them, yet they were afraid (Matt. 8:23-27). He used the calming of the storm as a lesson to show them who He was—a powerful God who also cares for them.

We wish that Jesus would always calm the storms of our life as He calmed the storm for the disciples that day. But we can find moments of peace when we're anchored to the truth that He's in the boat with us and He cares. By: Anne Cetas ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Fierce drives the storm, but wind and waves  
Within His hand are held,  
And trusting His omnipotence  
My fears are sweetly quelled.  
—Brown

To realize the worth of the anchor, we need to feel the stress of the storm.

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## **Terror Or Trust?**

Read: Mark 4:35-41

In God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me. —Psalm 56:4

A sudden squall swept down with almost hurricane force through the funnel-like ravines above the lake of Tiberias, 682 feet below sea level. Huge waves washed into the little boat, threatening to sink it.

Terrified, the disciples of Jesus wakened Him. How could He sleep through the shrieking winds and ship-tossing tempest? (Jesus was sleeping because He was exhausted after a day of strenuous ministry.) "Do You not care that we are perishing?" they shouted (Mk. 4:38).

Calmly Jesus arose and commanded the raging storm to cease. Then, amid the calm and the darkness, He asked two questions of His awe-stricken disciples: "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" (v.40).

As we voyage through the sea of life, terrifying gales may threaten to overwhelm us. Illness, loss, and danger may pummel us without relief. In our anxiety we may cry out to our seemingly indifferent Lord, "Don't You care about our problems?" And Christ, completely in control of every circumstance, gently and lovingly rebukes us for failing to exercise faith. He urges us to trust His almighty and all-wise sovereignty. When God is with us, we are safe for time and eternity. By Vernon Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Whether the wrath of the storm-tossed sea,  
Or demons, or men, or whatever it be,  
No water can swallow the ship where lies  
The Master of ocean and earth and skies.  
—Baker

Better to go through the storm with Christ than to have smooth sailing without Him.

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## **OUR FEARLESS CHAMPION**

Why are you fearful? —Matthew 8:26

Falling asleep was a challenging event during my childhood. No sooner had my parents turned the lights out than the crumpled clothes I had thrown on the chair would take on the form of a fiery dragon; and the thought of something living under my bed put me into a panic that made sleep impossible.

I've come to realise that the immobilising power of fear is not just a childhood experience. Fear keeps us from forgiving, making a stand for what's right, giving our resources to God's kingdom or saying no when all our friends are saying yes. Left to ourselves, we are up against a lot of fiery dragons in our lives.

In the story of the disciples in the storm-tossed boat, I'm struck by the fact that the only one who was not afraid was Jesus. He was not afraid of the storm, nor was He afraid of a crazy man in a graveyard or of the legion of demons that possessed him (Matt. 8:23-34).

In the face of fear, we need to hear Jesus ask, "Why are you fearful?" (v.26) and be reminded that He will never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5-6). There is nothing that He can't overcome and therefore nothing for Him to fear. So, next time you're haunted by your fears, remember that you can rely on Jesus, our fearless Champion! - Joe Stowell ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**IN TIMES OF FEAR, CALL OUT TO JESUS,  
OUR FEARLESS CHAMPION.**

**Mark 4:41 They became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"**

NET Mark 4:41 They were overwhelmed by fear and said to one another, "Who then is this? Even the wind and sea obey him!"

GNT Mark 4:41 κα φοβθησαν φ βον μ γαν κα λεγον πρ ς λλ λους, Τ ς ρα ο τ ς σπιν τι κα νεμος κα θ λασσα πακο ει α τ ;

NLT Mark 4:41 The disciples were absolutely terrified. "Who is this man?" they asked each other. "Even the wind and waves obey him!"

KJV Mark 4:41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

ESV Mark 4:41 And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

NIV Mark 4:41 They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

ASV Mark 4:41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

CSB Mark 4:41 And they were terrified and asked one another, "Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey Him!"

NKJ Mark 4:41 And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"

NRS Mark 4:41 And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

YLT Mark 4:41 and they feared a great fear, and said one to another, 'Who, then, is this, that even the wind and the sea do obey him?'

NAB Mark 4:41 They were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this whom even wind and sea obey?"

NJB Mark 4:41 They were overcome with awe and said to one another, 'Who can this be? Even the wind and the sea obey him.'

GWN Mark 4:41 They were overcome with fear and asked each other, "Who is this man? Even the wind and the sea obey him!"

BBE Mark 4:41 And their fear was great, and they said one to another, Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea do his orders?

- **They became very much afraid:** Mk 5:33 1Sa 12:18-20,24 Ps 89:7 Jon 1:9,10,15,16 Mal 2:5 Heb 12:28 Rev 15:4
- **Who then is this:** Mk 7:37 Job 38:11 Mt 8:27 14:32 Lu 4:36 8:25
- [Mark 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Parallel Passages:**

Matthew 8:27+ - The men were amazed, and said, "What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the

sea obey Him?"

Luke 8:25+ And He said to them, "Where is your faith?" They were fearful and amazed, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?"

## FROM FEAR OF STORMS TO FEAR OF THE SAVIOR

**NET** - This section in Mark (4:35–5:43) contains four miracles: (1) the calming of the storm; (2) the exorcism of the demon-possessed man; (3) the giving of life to Jairus' daughter; (4) the healing of the woman hemorrhaging for twelve years. All these miracles demonstrate Jesus' right to proclaim the kingdom message and his sovereign authority over forces, directly or indirectly, hostile to the kingdom. The last three may have been brought together to show that Jesus had power over all defilement, since contact with graves, blood, or a corpse was regarded under Jewish law as causing a state of ritual uncleanness.

**They became very much afraid and said to one another** - First they were afraid of the sudden wind and now they were afraid because there suddenly was no wind! But these were different types of fear. This fear would seem to be more of a reverential awe of Jesus, a reaction to His supernatural power (which I find fascinating as they had seen numerous instances of His supernatural power before). Luke 8:25+ adds that they were **amazed** ([thaumazo](#)), astonished, filled with wonder and awe. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge." (Pr 1:7). "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." (Pr 9:10).

**THOUGHT** - Did you notice a key word in this story of the storm-tossed ship? It is the adjective **megas** - (1) "**fierce** (megas) gale of wind" (Mk 4:37) (2) "it became **perfectly** (megas) calm" (Mk 4:39) and (3) "they became **very much** (megas) afraid" (Mk 4:41). They were filled with "**great** fear" after the **great** windstorm was replaced with **great** calm! Had there never been a great storm that supernaturally was made into a great calm, they would not have had a great (reverential) fear. And so we see another reason why God sometimes allows us to go through great storms that we might be able to declare like the psalmist "More than the sounds of many waters, than the mighty breakers of the sea, the LORD on high is mighty." (Psalm 93:4) Indeed, He is. Amen!

They were afraid before the storm and now they were afraid after the storm! They were suddenly conscious that they were in the presence of the One Who had miraculously stilled the storm. And so they reacted much like Isaiah in Isa 6:5+ "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" or like Peter in Luke 5:8+ who when he "saw that (the catch of fish as a result of Jesus' direction), he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!"

**Brian Bell** adds that "R.C. Sproul says that it was His awesome otherness that made them uncomfortable. That's exactly what Peter said on another occasion when Jesus filled their nets with so many fish that the boat began to sink: "When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' feet and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!' (Luke 5:8). The woman who was healed by touching Jesus' garment had a similar response in Mark 5:33: "But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth." Here's the deal. Unholy sinners are not comfortable in the presence of the holy Savior." Andrew Robinson, the worship pastor at Wildwood Church in East Moline, sang at the last Second Winders event. He said something I had not thought of before. The Apostle John, who enjoyed a very close relationship with Jesus, was later exiled to the island of Patmos. The resurrected Jesus appeared to him and we read about his response in Revelation 1:17: "When I saw Him, I fell at his feet as though dead..." I wonder if we've overemphasized Jesus being our friend at the expense of losing our fear of Him? A reverential awe of God will keep us from being afraid during adversity. ([Sermon](#))

**Guzik** observes that "In the span of a few moments, the disciples saw both the complete humanity of Jesus (in His tired sleep) and the fullness of His deity. They saw Jesus for who He is: truly man and truly God." (Ibid)

**Became afraid** ([5399](#))([phobeo](#) from [phobos](#) = fear source of our English "phobia") means to be in an apprehensive state that can range from mild uneasiness to stark terror as when one is frightened, terrified or alarmed. In ancient Greek the word phobos came from the word **phobomai** meaning to flee, or to be startled. Thus phobos meant flight or terror, and was connected with fear of the unknown, fear of the future, and fear of authorities.

**Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?**- Notice that they are not addressing this question to Jesus, but were speaking about their feeling of awe among themselves. These same men had witnessed multiple miracles of healing and exorcisms and yet still had questions. "In hushed tones, they pondered Jesus' true identity. They realized that they did not yet really know Him." (Hiebert) **Brooks** adds that "In Mark the mystery of who Jesus is continues until his death and resurrection and even beyond." (NAC-Mk) The creation is personified as obeying its Creator! Clearly the implication is that Jesus is the Lord over Creation. One can picture this little band of disciples buzzing over this miracle. And remember Judas Iscariot witnessed this and yet

refused to believe in Jesus! Miracles of Jesus have never saved anyone! Only faith in Jesus saved then and now and forever. Amen

**THOUGHT** - It is notable that the disciples still choose to follow Jesus even though they did not truly know Who He was. Today we know Who He is and sadly too often don't follow Him as we should in spite of all the proof! Flesh dies hard. Flesh needs to be put to death EVERY DAY! We desperately need the Spirit's power EVERY DAY! Gal 5:16-17+ needs to be tattooed on our forehead, or better yet ON OUR HEART!

**Obey** (5219)(**hupakouo** from **hupó** = agency or means, under, assumes the need for submission + **akoúo** physical hearing and apprehension of something with the mind - akouo gives us our English *acoustics* - the science of design which helps one hear) literally means "under the hearing" or to listen under, listening with attentiveness and then responding positively to what is heard -- to obey what is heard.

### **Master, the tempest is raging!**

The billows are tossing high!  
The sky is o'ershadowed with blackness,  
No shelter or help is nigh;  
Carest Thou not that we perish?  
How canst Thou lie asleep,  
When each moment so madly is threatening  
A grave in the angry deep?

Refrain

The winds and the waves shall obey Thy will,  
Peace, be still!  
Whether the wrath of the storm tossed sea,  
Or demons or men, or whatever it be  
No waters can swallow the ship where lies  
The Master of ocean, and earth, and skies;  
They all shall sweetly obey Thy will,  
Peace, be still! Peace, be still!  
They all shall sweetly obey Thy will,  
Peace, peace, be still!

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**Hiebert** - This nature miracle, so contrary to ordinary human experience, has been the object of much skeptical scoffing. Unquestionably the disciples accepted the conclusion on the spot that the wind and waves had miraculously responded to the command of Jesus. The Gospel writers obviously intended their account to be understood literally. Men's evaluation of the credibility of the account will be determined by their attitude toward the supernatural. No one who accepts the scriptural portrait of the supernatural nature of Jesus Christ will have much difficulty in accepting this picture of His authority over the material creation. Rawlinson aptly remarks, "The broad truth of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation once assumed, no wise person will proceed rashly to draw the limits between what is and what is not possible." (Ibid)

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### **Brian Bell - Life Lessons from Mark 4:35-41 -**

Let's lift out some life lessons from this passage.

#### **1. Christ cares for you and can help in your crisis.**

The disciples accused Christ of not caring. Let's not make that same mistake. This incident reveals both the humanity and the deity of the Lord Jesus. He fell asleep in the stern of the boat; that's His humanity. He spoke and the storm and the sea were completely calm; that's His deity. He understands what we're going through because He is fully man and He can do something about it because He's fully God.

Hebrews 4:15-16: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Isaiah 43:2: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you."

#### **2. Christ is in complete control of everything.**

We don't know what's coming but Jesus does. He's great and He's good and He is wise. What do you need to trust Him with right now? Chuck Swindoll writes, "Anything under God's control is never out of control." Can you trust Jesus in the most threatening of circumstances? Every crisis we go through is really an opportunity to get to know Him better. His sleeping days are over.

Psalm 121:3-4: "He will not let your foot slip - he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep."

I came across a quote from Francis Chan a week ago that is quite powerful: **'Can you worship a God who isn't obligated to explain His actions to you? Could it be your arrogance that makes you think God owes you an explanation?'**

### **3. We all must go through storms to get to the other side.**

It's easy to faithfully worship in fair weather but a lot harder when the hurricanes of life hit. We're not promised an easy trip but we are guaranteed arrival at our destination. Remember this - the only way to the other side is through the storms. Settle this right now so you're not surprised when the storms come.

In early Christian art, the church is often depicted as a boat driven upon a perilous sea. Jesus told the disciples to go to other side in verse 35 and in 5:1 we read, "They came to the other side."

### **4. If you're going through a storm you better have Jesus in your boat.**

Go back and look at verse 36: "And other boats were with Him." But only one of them had Jesus in it. Is He in your boat? Is the Lord in your life? Since Jesus can still the winds and the waves He can clobber your addictions, put your marriage back together and lead you into the future! Jesus said, "Let us go over." He didn't say, "Let us go under."

It was about a year after my friend Tim drowned that I was saved. God used that storm to bring me to salvation. How about you?

### **5. Make sure that Jesus is steering your ship.**

Are you allowing Jesus to be commander of your boat? It's very interesting to read in verse 38 that Jesus was "asleep on the cushion." The use of the definite article "the" shows us that it was a specific cushion. This cushion was reserved for the captain of the ship. Jesus is in the spot of the steersman. Is He steering your life? Have you given Him control...of everything?

If you have not been saved and you're not allowing Jesus to steer your life, you are headed into a huge storm on the Day of Judgment.

### **6. Grow in your awe of Christ.**

Settle the fact that life is not about you. Later on, in Matthew 14, the disciples are on the water again and the boat was getting "beaten by the waves." Jesus comes to them on the water and they become terrified. Peter then walks on the water. I want you to see what happens next in verse 32: "And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased." I'm sure this reminded them of what happened during the storm several months earlier. Only this time they don't wonder what kind of man Jesus is. Now they get it. Listen to verse 33: "And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'"

### **7. Jesus won't always calm the storm but He will calm you.**

The Apostle Paul went through a terrible storm in Acts 27 that the Lord did not calm. Listen. Paul had great faith and he had a shipwreck; the disciples had little faith and the Lord stilled the sea. It all has to do with His sovereign will.

He may not still the storm that you're in right now but He can still you. He may not always change your circumstances but if you surrender to Him, He will change you in your circumstances.

**Warren Wiersbe** puts it like this:

"The greatest danger was not the wind or the waves, it was the unbelief in their hearts. Our greatest problems are within us, not around us."

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## **Storms on the Horizon**

What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him! Matthew 8:27-

Today's Scripture & Insight: Matthew 8:23-28





Lord of heaven and earth

Early in the morning

I will celebrate the light

And as I stumble through the darkness

I will call your name by night

God of wonders beyond our galaxy

You are holy, holy

The universe declares your majesty

You are holy, holy

Lord of heaven and earth

Lord of heaven and earth

Hallelujahs to the Lord of heaven and earth

Hallelujahs to the Lord of heaven and earth

God of wonders beyond our galaxy

You are holy, holy

Precious Lord reveal your heart to me

Father holy, holy

The universe declares your majesty

You are holy, holy, holy, holy

Hallelujahs to the Lord of heaven and earth

Hallelujahs to the Lord of heaven and earth

Hallelujahs to the Lord of heaven and earth

Hallelujahs to the Lord of heaven and earth

Halleluia