

“Follow Me”
A Study in Mark’s Gospel
Session 19 Mark 4:1-20

Introduction:

Truth: Attitude, not aptitude, determines the understanding and acceptance of truth.

Mark 4:1-20 (ESV)

Verse 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.”

Jesus used the Father’s laws of physics.

Verse 2a

“And he was teaching them many things in parables...”

- a. “parable”, a compound word
 - i. Para = along side
 - ii. Ballo = to throw or cast
 - iii. A parable is a story that is cast alongside a spiritual truth.
 - iv. “A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.”
 - v. Jesus seldom gave lectures on theology, but painted word pictures that forced contemplation and caused ever-increasing understanding or hid spiritual truth from the insincere.
 - vi. A parable is a **picture** that becomes a **mirror** that becomes a **window**. It is a picture that becomes a mirror in which we see ourselves and, if we continue to look, becomes a window through which we see God. (Credit Warren Weirsbe)
 - vii. Matthew 13:10-17 Jesus spoke in parables so that the sincere seeker would understand and the insincere seeker would remain in the dark.

- viii. Jesus spoke in parables so that those who wanted to understand would and those who didn't, wouldn't.
- ix. Verses 9-13, *“And he said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”¹⁰ And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables.¹¹ And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables,¹² so that “they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.¹³ And he said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?”*
- x. The ability to understand Scripture to include parables is an indicator of the quality of your heart (soil) and the abiding presence of the Spirit.
- xi. 1 Corinthians 2:12-14 (ESV)¹² *“Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”*

Verse 2b-8

“and in his teaching he said to them:³ “Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow.⁴ And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it.⁵ Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil.⁶ And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away.⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain.⁸ And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”

Truth: Our desire to know determines God willingness to reveal. How diligently do we search the Scriptures? Proverbs 18:15 says, *“An intelligent heart acquires knowledge and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.”*

Verses 14-20

“The sower sows the word. ¹⁵ And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. ¹⁶ And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. ¹⁷ And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. ¹⁸ And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, ¹⁹ but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. ²⁰ But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”

Elements of the Parable:

1. Sower
2. Seed
3. Soil
 - a. Hard Soil
 - b. Shallow Soil
 - c. Thorny Soil
 - d. Good Soil

Parable Explained:

1. **Sower** = Jesus and will be His disciples to include us
2. **Seed** = Word of God, the Gospel, the teachings of Jesus
3. **Soil** = Hearers of the Word
 - a. **Hard Soil** = People with a heart that resists the word and work of the Spirit.
 - i. Proverbs 4:23 *“Keep your heart with all vigilance for from it flows the springs of life.”*
 - ii. Life experiences can harden the heart.
 - iii. Satan snatches away the seed *“immediately”*.
 - b. **Shallow Soil** = Emotional hearers.
 - i. Tribulation = life challenges because of the Word
 - ii. Persecution = negative reaction from others because of the Word
 - iii. *“...immediately they fall away.”*
 - c. **Thorny or Cluttered Soil** = These are those who refuse to repent, remove and trust the Word.

- i. Three things make the word unproductive
 - 1. “*cares of the world*”, fear and worry
 - 2. “*deceitfulness of riches*”, passion for material things
 - 3. “*desires for other things*”, divided loyalties
 - 4. 1 John 2:16 (ESV) “*For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.*”
 - 5. These are those who want to walk the broad road and the narrow road at the same time.
- d. **Good Soil** = These are those who hear, understand, accept, hold it fast, persevere, have honest, good hearts and the result is fruit production. Mark 4:20, Luke 8:15, Matthew 13:23
 - i. The fruit is in direct proportion of the cultivation of the Word in you 30, 60, 100 fold.

Conclusion:

- 1. Soil must be prepared to be productive. (Children’s and Student Ministry)
- 2. Hard soil, but be plowed by prayer.
- 3. If parables are a picture that become a mirror in which to see yourself that become a window through which you see God, what do you see in the mirror and through the window?