

The Gospel of Mark

Lesson 7

Mark 4:1 – 34

Review

- Baptism and Temptation (Mark 1:1-13)
- Year long ministry in Judea (John 1:19-4:45)
 - First Miracle in Cana – Water to wine; Cleansing of Temple; Encounter with Nicodemus; Woman at the well in Samaria
- Galilean Ministry (1:14-7:23)
 - Summary of Jesus Teaching
 - Calling the first disciples as fishermen
 - Healing a demoniac in Capernaum
 - Healing Simon's mother-in-law
 - Healing many people
 - Preaching tour through Galilee
 - Healing a Leper during the preaching tour
 - Healing a Paralytic
 - The Calling of Matthew
 - Conflict over fasting and parables of cloth and wineskin
 - Conflict over Sabbath work
 - Conflict over Sabbath healing
 - Teaching and healing great multitudes
 - Choosing the twelve
 - Opposition of Jesus' family
 - Opposition of the Scribes – the unpardonable sin

Parables

- “An earthly story with a heavenly meaning.”
- A parable is a figure of speech in which a moral or spiritual truth is illustrated by an analogy drawn from everyday experiences. Ryrie Study Bible NASB Expanded Edition
- “Parable” is a transliteration of the Greek παραβολή, “comparison.” ...usually a parable is a short discourse that conveys spiritual truth by making a vivid comparison. The truth to be taught is compared to something in nature or a common-life experience. A parable usually expresses a single important truth, though occasionally a subordinate feature expands its total meaning. A parable draws its hearers to take part in a situation, evaluate it, and apply its truth to themselves. The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament
- A Parable is not an allegory – An allegory is story full of comparison in which every detail stands for something or means something.
- A Parable is not a fable – A fable is a fantastic tale, a fantasy with things like talking trees, and flying horses. One reason we trust the Bible as reliable is that, unlike other "holy books," it does not include fantasy.

1. The Two Houses	Matthew 7:24-27; (Luke 6:47-49)
2. The New Cloth and New Wineskins	Matthew 9:16-17
3. The Sower	Matthew 13:5-8; (Mark 4:3-8; Luke 8:5-8)
4. The Weeds	Matthew 13:24-30
5. The Mustard Seed	Matthew 13:31-32; (Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19)
6. The Yeast	Matthew 13:33; (Luke 13:20-21)
7. The Hidden Treasure	Matthew 13:44
8. The Pearl of Great Price	Matthew 13:45-46
9. The Fishing Net	Matthew 13:47-50
10. The Unforgiving Servant	Matthew 18:23-35
11. The Workers in the Vineyard	Matthew 20:1-16
12. The Two Sons	Matthew 21:28-32
13. The Wicked Vinegrowers	Matthew 21:33-46; (Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19)
14. The Wedding Banquet	Matthew 22:1-14
15. The Two Servants	Matthew 24:45-51; (Luke 12:42-48)
16. The 10 Virgins	Matthew 25:1-13
17. The Talents	Matthew 25:14-30
18. The Seed Growing Secretly	Mark 4:26-29
19. The Doorkeeper	Mark 13:34-37
20. The Rude Children	Luke 7:31-35
21. The Two Debtors	Luke 7:41-43
22. The Good Samaritan	Luke 10:25-37
23. The Friend at Midnight	Luke 11:5-8
24. The Rich Fool	Luke 12:16-21
25. The Barren Fig Tree	Luke 13:6-9
26. The Great Banquet	Luke 14:15-24
27. The Unfinished Tower and the King's Rash War	Luke 14:28-33
28. The Lost Sheep	Matthew 18:12-14; (Luke 15:4-7)
29. The Lost Coin	Luke 15:8-10
30. The Prodigal Son	Luke 15:11-32
31. The Shrewd Manager	Luke 16:1-9
32. The Servant's Reward	Luke 17:7-10
33. The Unjust Judge	Luke 18:1-8
34. The Pharisee and the Tax Collector	Luke 18:9-14
35. The Pounds	Luke 19:11-27

Parable of the Sower and Soils

¹He 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. ²And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teaching, ³“Listen to this! Behold, the sower went out to sow; ⁴as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up. 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. ⁶“And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. ⁷“Other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. 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.” ⁹And He was saying, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

- Similar to 3:7-9, the crowd was so large that this time Jesus actually got into the boat while the crowd stood on the shore. Jesus sat down either because this was a typical position for teaching or simply because the boat was rocking.
- Jesus was teaching them “many things in parables” – though only four are given by Mark.
- He who has ears to hear, let him hear. – Meaning “If you can understand it, then understand it.” If you have the spiritual capacity (relationship with the King) to understand this, then take it in and be changed by it.
- Only those who accept the King can understand the King and profit from His teaching and lordship. To all others His teaching is meaningless riddles. MacArthur's New Testament Commentary: Matthew 8-15

Purpose of Parables

¹⁰As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables. ¹¹And 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, ¹²so 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.”

- This explanation of the purpose of parables and the interpretation of the previous parable took place later than these four parables were taught. Not just the twelve were taught privately here but “His followers”.
- Mystery – Something previously hidden and unknown. ...of the kingdom of God – That Jesus had come to set up His kingdom in the hearts of people.
- Those who are outside – Those that are not saved-have a relationship with the King.
- Jesus quotes Isaiah 6:9-10 as an explanation of why He teaches the crowds in parables. One explanation of v12 is “He used this approach so that He could arouse the careless and instruct the concerned, and yet conceal the truth from His enemies who would use it against Him.” Wiersbes Expository Outlines on the New Testament
- John gave a progression of heart hardening in John 12:36-41.

³⁵So Jesus said to them, “For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. ³⁶“While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light.”

These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them. ³⁷But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet **they were not believing** in Him. ³⁸This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: “LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?” ³⁹For this reason **they could not believe**, for Isaiah said again, ⁴⁰“HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM.” ⁴¹These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him. John 12:35-41

- Many in the crowd had heard and seen wondrous things from Jesus, yet refused to believe in Him – “they were not believing”. These individuals had the opportunity to believe yet willfully rejected Jesus and continued in unbelief. After they had chosen to harden their own hearts, God then “judiciously hardened” their hearts so they “could not believe”.
- Jesus’ veiling the truth from unbelievers this way (through parables) was both an act of judgment and an act of mercy. It was “judgment because it kept them in the darkness that they loved, but it was “mercy” because they had already rejected the light, so any exposure to more truth would only increase their condemnation. MacArthur Study Bible Page 1416
- All men are either progressing or regressing spiritually. No person remains static in his relationship to God. The longer a person knows and is faithful to Christ, the more his Lord is faithful to reveal His truth and power. The longer a person rejects the knowledge of God he has, whether much or little, the less of God’s truth he will understand. Willful human rejection leads to divine judicial rejection. When a man says no to God, God says no to that person. God confirms men in their stubbornness, and binds them with their own chains of unbelief. MacArthur's New Testament Commentary: Matthew 8-15

Explanation of the Parable of the Sower and Soils

¹³And He said* to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables? ¹⁴“The sower sows the word. 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. 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; ¹⁷and 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. ¹⁸“And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, ¹⁹but 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. 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.”

- The parable of the seed and the sower has elements of allegory since many of the details stand for something. However, it still takes a common life experience and communicates a single truth – the heart’s response to the word.
- The farmer (sower) is sowing seed by broadcasting the seed onto the farmland. The farmland was plots of ground bordered by hard packed paths.
- There are four types of hearts that respond to the word: 1) the hardened, 2) the shallow, 3) the cluttered, and 4) the good.
- The Hardened Heart – Just like the well worn, hard packed, and sun baked trail would not let the sown seed into the soil to germinate, so this heart does not let the word in to effect change.
 - Satan uses false teachers, who promote spiritual lies and contradict God’s truth. He uses fear of what other people might think about a person’s becoming a Christian. Satan constantly uses pride to blind people to their sinful condition and need of salvation. He makes them believe they are not really so bad, or that, if they do need improvement, they can improve themselves. He uses doubt, prejudice, stubbornness, procrastination, love of the world, love of sin, and every combination of those ploys. MacArthur's New Testament Commentary: Matthew 8-15
- The Shallow Heart – Just like the rocky places which had a thin layer of good soil over hard bedrock, this heart is superficial with no depth. This heart makes an outward, superficial commitment to Christ, yet without saving faith. Because the word does not take root, when difficulties arise he abandons his emotional commitment. This person “goes out from us” which shows that “they were not really of us”.

¹⁹They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. 1 John 2:19

In contrast, for those with true saving faith, when affliction or persecution arise because of the word they rejoice knowing that the trial will make them more like Jesus.

²Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. James 1:2-4

- **The Cluttered Heart** – This heart looks cultivated and ready for planting, yet it is infested with weeds. Instead of growing and taking root, the word is choked by the “worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things” – it does not bear fruit.

¹⁵Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. ¹⁷The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. 1 John 2:15-17

- **The Good Heart** – From our perspective this heart accepts the word, the word grows deep, well established roots, and it yields a large crop. From God’s perspective, this heart has been properly prepared. It has been cultivated and broken. It has depth. And it has been sifted to have the weeds removed. The Spirit has prepared the heart to bring it to Jesus.

⁸“And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; John 16:8

The true believer will bear fruit.

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. John 15:5

The usual harvest was less than 10 fold. Therefore, when Jesus says, “**thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.**” He is saying that it will be a huge yield.

- God is looking for those that are humble, broken, and tremble at His word.

² “For My hand made all these things,
Thus all these things came into being,” declares the LORD.

“But to this one I will look,

To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word. Isa. 66:2

Parable of the Lamp

²¹And 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? ²²“For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has *anything* been secret, but that it would come to light. ²³“If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.” ²⁴And 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. 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.”

- The person and work of Jesus has been hidden, but will one day be completely revealed.
- The more effort one puts into applying the truth you have, the more truth one will be given.
- The more one applies the truth they have the more they will be given. If someone does not apply the truth they have then that will be taken away.

Parable of the Growing Seed

²⁶And He was saying, “The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; ²⁷and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he himself does not know. ²⁸“The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. ²⁹“But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

- This parable is unique to Mark. It pictures the gospel at work in a properly prepared heart (v20) leading to salvation.
- The word is sown with purpose in Spirit prepared hearts. The word will always accomplish the purpose for which it is sent forth.

¹¹ 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. Isa. 55:11

- The sower’s role is to sow the seed and harvest. The growth is not his responsibility and how it happens is a not understood. But growth does happen and when the time is ready he works to bring in the harvest.

Parable of the Mustard Seed

³⁰And He said, “How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it? 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, ³²yet 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.*”

- The mustard seed was the smallest seed sown in Palestine grown specifically for eating. It takes over 21,000 mustard seeds to weigh one ounce – that is 340,000 in one pound! The mustard seed could reach a height of 12-15 feet in weeks.
- Most commentaries view this parable as picturing the kingdom beginning as small and insignificant then one day becoming great, powerful, and worldwide in its scope.
- It seems possible since the other three parables are concerned with the kingdom and individuals that his one is as well. If so then this parable pictures a small seed which will grow to fill the empty heart.

Summary Statement on Parables

³³With many such parables He was speaking the word to them, so far as they were able to hear it; ³⁴and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.

- Mark makes it clear that there were many other parables that Jesus taught. Here He only gives a representative sample. On these occasions He only taught in parables to the general crowds, but would explain everything to His disciples privately.