Blog 28: The Parable and Kingdom of God

To Hear:

Mark 4:2 And He taught them many things by a parable. And He said to them in His teaching:

Mark 4:3 “Listen! (*same Greek word as for Hear in these verses*) Behold, a sower went out to sow.

Mark 4:4 And as he sowed, it happened that indeed some fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and ate it up.

Mark 4:5 And another fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth. And it sprang up at once, due to not having deepness of earth.

Mark 4:6 And when *the* sun rose, it was scorched. And because it had no root, it withered away.

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

Mark 4:8 And another fell on good ground and yielded fruit, going up and increasing. And one bore thirty, and one sixty, and one a hundredfold.”

Mark 4:9 And He said to them, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Mark 4:10 And when He was alone, they who were about Him, with the Twelve, asked Him concerning the parable.

Mark 4:11 And He said to them, “To you it is given to know the ***mystery of the kingdom of God***. But to those outside, all *these* things are *given* in parables

Mark 4:12 so 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 have forgiven them.”

Mark 4:13 And He said to them, “Do you not know this parable? And how then will you know all parables?

Mark 4:14 The sower sows the Word.

Mark 4:15 And these are those by the wayside, where the Word is sown. And when they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the Word that was sown in their hearts.

Mark 4:16 And these are those likewise being sown on stony places; who, when they hear the Word, immediately receive it with gladness.

Mark 4:17 But they have no root in themselves, but are temporary. Afterward when affliction or persecution arises for the Word's sake, they are immediately offended.

Mark 4:18 And these are those being sown among thorns; such as hear the Word,

Mark 4:19 and the cares of this world, and the deceit of riches, and the lust about other things entering in, choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful.

Mark 4:20 And these are those sown on good ground, who hear the Word and welcome *it*, and bear fruit, one thirty, one sixty, and one a hundredfold.”

The word “Hear” is stated 8 times in these verses.

When Jesus uses a word 8 times in a teaching, we should pay close attention. He is not only talking about the Kingdom of God, but also challenging the people to be hearers and listeners to God. How would you grade yourself as a hearer or listener to:

1. God
2. Jesus
3. Holy Spirit
4. Word
5. Spouse
6. Children
7. Parents
8. Accountability people
9. Others

As you grade your listening and hearing skills, what application could you make to improve the areas where you’re weakest?

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Matthew Henry-300 years ago wrote:

*“Why this parable??* That of the many that hear the word of the gospel, and read it, and are conversant with it, there are, comparatively, but few that receive it, so as to bring forth the fruits of it; that comes to good.

The reason why the word doth not leave commanding, abiding, impressions upon the minds of the people, is, because their hearts are not duly disposed and prepared to receive it; the fault is in themselves.”

Review these definitions of the word “hear”:

Greek dictionary: “A primary verb; to *hear* - be noised, be reported, **understand**.”

English dictionary: “to listen to; give or pay attention to: Moving to **understand**.”

From John Hartshorn: “The New Testament seems to make even more clear that “**understanding**” is a gift of God, and like love, manifested through obedience.”

GMJ paraphrase: “We must obey the command/writing to “hear” it.”

In Luke 24:45: “And He opened their mind to **understand** the Scriptures”.

Points on listening/hearing:

Rules for listening to a speaker, of reading anything or the Word.

1. Respect the speaker.
2. Know your subject or be a student of the subject matter.
3. Have a “critical truth filter” within when you listen.
4. Look up the words that were used that you didn’t understand. Get at least one unknown word to look up. Don’t try to get them all.
5. Take some sort of notes. After the talk or conversation, write down all salient points and check the completeness of your list.
6. Turn all sound devices off.
7. Focus intently on the speaker.
8. Mentally (not necessarily verbally) challenge your self-assertions, ideas, and philosophies.  Seek the truth/communication with an open mind.

I asked 5 good men their thoughts on the principles of listening, here are their edited comments:

“If I am listening to an individual who is talking in a group, I am listening for the content and purpose in their comments.”

    “If I am listening one-on-one to someone who is sharing a concern or seeking counsel, I am trying to "listen" with both my ears and my eyes.”

“If I am listening to a teaching from the Word, I try to remember what I am hearing seems counter to my view, that the often-used guideline of Acts 17:11: “And these were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily to see if those things were so’ has an important order.”

Another said it this way, listening properly is a good indicator of a teachable spirit and readiness of mind.

The command to hear is noted over 150 times in the New Testament. Personally, at the start of my walk with Jesus, I was a poor listener to Him and others. I have had to work at it through my life.

Jesus said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear”. Apparently, not everyone has “ears to hear” and some don’t hear. Do we have “hearing ears”?

Application:

1. When you read the Word, Study the Word or discuss the Word, mentally/spiritually prepare to hear from God.
2. Commit yourself to focus on being a better listener to the Word and your spouse.
3. Teach your children to listen and look you in your eyes when you speak to them.
4. Start hearing, recording and looking up words you don’t know.
5. Find men who speak and exhort with the Word, and stay around them.
6. Pray that God would give you ears to hear.

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PS: Some ways God communicates with us:

1. His Word –Romans 10:17: “Then faith *is* of hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”
2. His Word – Hebrews 4:12: “For the Word of God *is* living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to *the* dividing apart of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”
3. Creation – Psalm 19:1: *“*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the expanse proclaims His handiwork.”

Psalm 19:2, “Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.”

1. The Holy Spirit – Acts 1:8: “But you shall receive power, the Holy Spirit coming upon you. And you shall be witnesses to Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to *the* end of the earth.” In your day to day living, study, family life, practice the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life.
2. Trials – Hebrews 12:11: “Now chastening for the present does not seem to be joyous, but grievous. Nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are exercised by it.” (Don’t forget Job.)
3. Fellowship –Hebrews 10:23: “Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering (for He is faithful who promised),

Hebrews 10:24: and let us consider one another to provoke to love and to good works,

Hebrews 10:25: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

1. Revelations, miracles, dreams, and teachers – All of these can lead to an application of God’s thinking.
2. And on … name some yourself.