

THE REACH

“Filtering everyday life through the word of God”

This semester, we have looked at some BIG miracles of Jesus in the gospel of Mark. But, in the second half of his time on earth, Jesus transitioned from miracles to teachings, much of which were parables. In October, we'll tackle the first parable discussed in Mark, the parable of the sower.

At times, parables seem hard to follow, we just don't want to think about what they really mean because it sounds confusing. To get us started, the sower is God and the seed is God's word. And, Jesus actually said if we can understand the parable of the sower we can understand ALL the parables (Mark 4:13). So let's break this down verse by verse and make sure we get it!

READ MARK 4:2-9.

If you put your hands on either side of your head, do you have ears? Yes? Then we need to hear it! So, let's test our hearing.

Maybe you have heard the Jewish *Shema*? “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one...” The Hebrew meaning of the word *Shema* is *obey*. So it could read, “Obey, O Israel...etc.” While reading Scripture, when you come across the word *HEAR*, you can mentally substitute the word *OBEY*.

Shifting to the Greek translation, *obey* can mean *hyper*. Therefore, Mark 4:9, calls for *hyper hearing*...a hearing that goes beyond the eardrum.

READ JAMES 1:22.

- 1) **A hyper hearer might look like this; if we remember someone, we will act on their behalf; if we meet someone, we seek to get to know them; if we hear God's word, we must obey him; etc. If we really practice hyper hearing, how can it change the way we read Scripture? If we changed the way we read the Scripture, how would that change our encounters with those we love?**

Once Jesus established the importance of hyper hearing he moved to the explanations. Basically, he repeated each parable statement and elaborated on the results. It was kind of like watching a game with your husband, he might say, “They are fixing to run such and such...and then briefly explain it right before it happens. Let's observe how Jesus did that in Mark 4.

READ MARK 4:3-4 AND MARK 4:15.

Jesus was talking about a walking path. After a while the path was hardened when a lot of people walked on it, and rode their donkeys over it.

- 2) **According to the Scripture, what is the result of the seed that fell on the hardened walking path?**

- 3) **Considering this through a spiritual principle, has there been a time when your heart was hardened to God's plan? Please share.**

READ MARK 4:5-6 AND MARK 4:16-17.

Even though it received plenty of sunlight, this rocky ground was lacking in soil. It was still shallow, there was no depth when the seed was planted.

- 4) **According to the Scripture, what was the result of the seed that fell on the rocks?**

- 5) **If this physical picture teaches a spiritual one, how can you identify? Has a lack of knowledge, experience, or maturity ever prevented you from moving forward with the Lord when the heat was turned up? What was the condition of your root system? Share an example.**

READ MARK 4:7 AND MARK 4:18-19.

Have you noticed each scenario progresses more tragically? The thorns here were competing for both soil AND sunlight!

6) According to the Scripture, what is the result of the seed that fell among thorns?

7) If the physical teaches the spiritual, we can all identify with this one. What scenarios escalate to a “thorn” status holding us back from developing the seed because they are stealing the “soil” and the “light”?

READ MARK 4:8 AND MARK 4:20.

Here, Jesus contrasts the failed soils and the good soil.

8) According to the Scripture, what is the result of the proper soil?

This final physical scenario illustrates a spiritual principle for the man who has an ear to hear! In other words, the seed will not take root until you put into practice *hyper hearing*. That is the one who bears fruit...much fruit...and real fruit!

READ GALATIANS 5:22-23.

Like sitting at a game with our husband, Jesus explained this parable to the disciples before these things began to happen to them. They didn't know it then, but he would soon leave them. They would encounter all of these scenarios, elevating the importance of understanding this parable. He asked them to consider their ways...is your heart hardened? Are there rocks and obstacles getting in the way? Have you allowed the thorns and luxuries of this world to choke out what's important?

9) We have all dealt with each soil at one time or another, but, of the 3 soils, which do you battle the most? A hard heart? Big obstacles in the way? Or thorns and desires? Can understanding this parable help you combat that?

The Sower spreads his word indiscriminately with varied results. But, there is power in the Sower. He prepares the soil to receive the word! This is hard to understand, but, if you have ears to hear, you will hear it.