

Mark Part 8 - "Stories by the Sea" (4-6-25)

Main Text: Mark 4:1-34 (parallel passages: Matthew 13, Luke 8)

Introduction

Mark 4:1-2 (ESV)

[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. [2] And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them:

Note: Jesus telling stories by the sea - our Easter Sunrise services (I've considered teaching from a boat)

Picture it: Beautiful setting, memorable moments, engaging stories

How many left that day talking about what a cool experience they had and what a great storyteller Jesus is?

1) The Parable of the Sower

Mark 4:3-9 (ESV)

[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." [9] And he said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Note: This story takes about 30 seconds to tell.

Francis Chan (2008) taught this passage. His translation: sower, seed, path, rocks, thorns, good soil.

"If you get it, you get it" - Chan

There was no other explanation at the moment, Jesus just told this story and moved on.

What is Jesus doing, and why is He doing it this way?

2) The Purpose of Parables

Mark 4:10-13 (ESV)

[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?"

Note: Do you understand this? How will you understand more?

vs. 12 - hearing but not understanding . . . Jesus is quoting - Deut. 29:4, Isa. 6:9 & 44:18, Jer. 5:21

Deuteronomy 29 - renewed covenant / grave warning

Deuteronomy 29:4 (ESV)

But to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear.

Deuteronomy 29:9 (ESV)

Therefore keep the words of this covenant and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do.

Deuteronomy 29:18-19 (ESV)

[18] Beware lest there be among you a man or woman or clan or tribe whose heart is turning away today from the LORD our God to go and serve the gods of those nations. Beware lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit, [19] one who, when he hears the words of this sworn covenant, blesses himself in his heart, saying, 'I shall be safe, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart.' This will lead to the sweeping away of moist and dry alike.

Deuteronomy 29:29 (ESV)

The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Jesus gave some insight into the crowds of people following him (Matthew's passage) . . .

Matthew 13:13-17 (ESV)

[13] This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. [14] Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: "'You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.'" [15] For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.' [16] But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. [17] For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

Note: He hides things on purpose so they might be found!

- Have you played peek-a-boo with a child? (I'm bored - they are fascinated!)
- Have you read Where's Waldo books? (Not great literature)

Warren Wiersbe - Jesus' Parables: **Picture** (the story), **Mirror** (your heart), **Window** (kingdom around you)

3) The Meaning of the Parable of the Sower**Mark 4:14-20 (ESV)**

[14] 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."

Note: Don't just hear the explanation, invite Jesus to reveal where your heart is. Are you soaking up the Word of God? Is it growing & producing fruit? What obstacles might be in the way? Will you yield those to Him?

Consider:

- Are you reading the words of Jesus? (Picture)
- Are you letting the words of Jesus "read" you? (Mirror)
- Are you "yielding" to the King, so that you may "yield" a fruitful Kingdom Life? (Window)

Conclusion: Today's sermon could be titled - "Stories by the Sea" or "Pursuing the Parables."

Which will it be for you?

Homework: In Life Group, or at least on your own, prayerfully explore the following 3 Parables . . .

- **Mark 4:21-25** (The Lamp)
- **Mark 4:26-29** (The Growing Seed)
- **Mark 4:30-32** (The Mustard Seed)

Read in Closing:

Mark 4:33-34 (ESV)

[33] With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. [34] He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.

Matthew 13:35 (ESV)

This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world."