

Introduction

- 1 As we look at the 3rd sermon from Mark's gospel, Jesus began to teach in parables in Mark 4
- 2 1:1 From beginning, Mark tells us Jesus is both Christ (Promised King) and God's Son (ruler)
- 3 In 1-3 Jesus shows his auth as God's Son over people, demons, illness, sin, taught with authority
- 4 3:21-22 Yet was rejected by **a** His family “He is out of his mind” **b** Jewish teachers of law, who said he was possessed by Satan to drive out demons **c** 3:6 Religious leaders planned to kill him
- 5 Now Jesus began to call a new people to himself **a** 3:13-19 Chose 12 apostles to train as fishers of men **b** 3:34-5 Whoever seeks to live God's way will become his family **c** 4:1 Always 2 reactions

I 4:2,13-14 The Word of God is central - i.e. Jesus - John 1:1,14 -Expand on Jesus as Word
A 4:2, 13 What is a parable?, with a clue to understanding all parables

- 1 Stories from everyday life to teach 1 main spiritual/moral truth, not every detail important
- 2 4:2 By using parables Jesus now began to focus on teaching His disciples spiritual truths
- 3 Parable of Sower has vital truths re God's Kingdom, its members who have ears to hear 4:9
- 3 4:13 Lord explained this parable in detail, to help us understand all parables- key teaching

B 4:14, 1:4, 1:15 The Word of God is central to this Parable – Hebrews 4:12

- 1 From the beginning of Mark we can see the main focus on the message being preached
 - a** 1:4 John/Baptist prepared for coming king-preached need to repent to have sins forgiven
 - b** 1:15 Jesus as King preached God's Kingdom is near_- repent, believe God's good news
- 2 The seed sown by the farmer is the Word of God, which pictures Jesus as the farmer
- 3 Today many are losing confidence in God's word as they think they know better than God
- 4 God's word plants seeds in the soil of person's heart, has power to change hearts, minds

II 4:1-9 The farmer sows the Seed

A 4:1 Important things to notice-Jesus taught from boat- picture of Jesus fishing for men
 1:33,45; 2:2; 3:9,20 Jesus attracted large crowds; Taught at lake 1:16; 2:15; 3:7; 4:1 Lake-3 times

B Background to private subsistence farming practices by most Israelis at that time

- 1 Most farmers grew crops to feed families on small 1.8 hectares plots trusting God for rain
- 2 On their fields there were dirt paths for walking, stony parts just below surface, thorns ...
- 3 Farmers sowed by scattering seeds on every part of field, then plowed to get large crop

C 4:2-9,23 Sowing seeds on different types of soil (listening ears) has different end results

- 1 There are 4 different sections in the farmer's field as he sows his seed see summary below
 - a** Hard path **b** Rocky places below surface **c** Among thorns **d** Good fertile soil
- 2 All hearers could identify with hard work of sowing seed by hand, plowing under hot sun
- 3 There was nothing wrong with the seeds, but the crop depended on the quality of the soil
- 4 Spreading of God's word is done by planting it in people's hearts, not by force or army
- 5 4:9,23 The difference lies in the listening ears of hearers - central to understanding parable

III 4:9-12 The Word Separates

A Parables can either conceal truth or reveal it depending on the listener – sliding doors

- 1 For example Joe and Bill come to church together as they want to learn more about Ch'y
- 2 For the 1st few weeks, they are both very interested, attend all same meetings, but
 - a** Joe misses a couple of weeks, then comes occasionally, then stops coming altogether
 - b** Bill however keeps on coming, joins B.S. group, soon repents, believes, receives Lord
- 3 Teaching of God's word is powerful, but depends on response of hearer-like sliding door
- 4 Parable **a** Weeds out those who were really aren't interested **b** Has the potential to break

through resistance to the truth, **c eg** Nathan used a parable in 2 Sam 12 to challenge King David re his adultery with Bathsheba, result - David condemned his own actions 12:13

B Quote from Isaiah 6:9-10 provides background to understand these verses

- 1 **Isaiah 5:21-25** tells us Israel had turned their backs on obeying God's word, God will judge
- 2 God was very angry with Israel as they rejected His word-didn't believe He'd judge them
- 3 **6:1-8** Describes how God revealed Himself to Isai'h-commissioned him to preach to Israel
- 4 **6:9-10** tells Isaiah he must continue to teach God's truth although Israel refused to hear it
- 5 The more they rejected and disobeyed God's word, harder it became for them to believe

C 4:9-12 Lord isn't trying to prevent some from receiving God's word, forgiveness of sin

- 1 **4:9-10** Jesus encourages those who want to know more-12 disciples + others -seek & find
 - a Each has responsibility to act on what they hear - small group asked Jesus to explain
 - b Large crowd left, 12 disciples & others around Him wanted to understand the parable
- 2 **4:11-12** Jesus is answering questions of those who want to understand, believe and obey
 - a Hard to understand -seems like Jesus tells parables to stop people having sins forgiven
 - b But this is not consistent with Jesus' character - He does not want to conceal truth, but
 - c Secret of God's kingdom previously hidden, is available for those who desire to hear

IV 4:15-25 Listen to the Word and Obey

A 4:3, 9, 23-25 Lord repeats the need to listen, hear and consider the word carefully

- 1 Thru'out this parable Lord repeats the need to **a 4:3 Listen**; **b 4:9,23 Hear** if you want to
 - c **4:24-25 Consider** carefully what you hear **d** God's Word is so important for Chn growth
- 2 **4:24-25** More person wants to learn spiritual truths, the more understanding God will give

B 4:15-20 Reasons for the different responses and problems that should be addressed

- 1 Emphasis is on the abundant harvest, **with 1st 3** responses basically rejecting God's word
 - a **4:15 Stolen** -Some are like seed sown on the hard path, they hear but immediately Satan steals God's word they've heard-seems they'd never heard - remain unchanged by it
 - b **4:16-17 Starved** - Lack of spiritual depth - Seed on ground with rocks just below the surface, get excited when 1st hear the good news about Jesus' death, resurrection, sins forgiven -but soon mocked, persecuted at home, work, pub, sports, as tell others they distance themselves-over time lose desire to read Bible, witness, go to church-fall away
 - c **4:18-19 Strangled** - Seed sown among thorns is like God's word heard, accepted until connected with everyday living, start to face problems - busyness, social life, sport, music, possessions, making money, spend too much time at work, neglect worship
 - d **4:20 Good soil** - Whoever opens their hearts to receive and believe God's word with a desire to **a** Receive Lord Jesus into person's life through repentance & faith, **b** Allow God's word to direct their daily living, **c** Serve God. It is normal for a crop to yield 30 times what is sown, so 60 or 100 would be a huge bumper crop - Galatians 5:22-23
- 3 In this good soil, the fruit will be clearly seen in the heart and life of the person
 - a Choosing Lord will show **visible** repentance, **visible** faith in Him, **visible** holiness of life
 - b Sin will be truly hated, mourned over, resisted, worked hard on, renounced & confessed
 - c Jesus Christ will be truly loved, given 1st place, trusted in, followed and obeyed daily
 - d Living holy lives will be seen in their conversation, humility, patience, love/changed life
 - e There will be different levels of Chn maturity 30. 60 or 100 times what was sown
- 4 When the Word of God is taught, preached, typically there will be 3 reactions
 - a Goes in one ear, then out the other, as person's mind is set and is unwilling to change
 - b Give the impression that they believe and accept it, but it does not last very long
 - c Some do respond to the teaching of God's word, embrace it, desire to grow, learn more
- 5 Just because person has attended church for years, doesn't mean he is part of good soil

C Two important questions for each to ask self-many churches have watered down Bible

1 Do you/I fully trust the Bible, believe it to be God's full plan for His world & you/me?

2 Do you/I read listen to God's word daily, believing and obeying what God tells us to do?