

Importance of Listening to His Word.

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Mark

4:1 Then Jesus began to teach again beside the sea. Such a large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while the entire crowd remained beside the sea on the shore.
 4:2 He began teaching them many things in parables. While he was teaching them he said,
 4:3 "Listen! A farmer went out to sow.
 4:4 As he was sowing, some seeds fell along the path, and birds came and ate them up.
 4:5 Others fell on stony ground, where they did not have a lot of soil. They sprouted at once because the soil wasn't deep.
 4:6 But when the sun came up, they were scorched. Since they did not have any roots, they dried up.
 4:7 Others fell among thorn bushes, and the thorn bushes came up and choked them out, and they did not produce anything.
 4:8 But others fell on good soil and produced a crop. They grew up, increased in size, and produced 30, 60, or 100 times what was sown."
 4:9 He added, "Let the person who has ears to hear, listen!"
 4:10 When he was alone with the Twelve and those around him, they began to ask him about the parables.
 4:11 He told them, "The secret about the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside, everything comes in parables
 4:12 so that 'they may see clearly but not perceive, and they may hear clearly but not understand, otherwise they might turn around and be forgiven.'"
 4:13 Then he told them, "You don't understand this parable, so how can you understand any of the parables?
 4:14 The farmer sows the word.
 4:15 Some people are like the seeds along the path, where the word is sown. When they hear it, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that was sown in them.
 4:16 Others are like the seeds sown on the stony ground. When they hear the word, at once they joyfully accept it,
 4:17 but since they don't have any roots, they last for only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes along because of the word, they

immediately fall away.

4:18 Still others are like the seeds sown among the thorn bushes. These are the people who hear the word,
 4:19 but the worries of life, the deceitful pleasures of wealth, and the desires for other things come in and choke the word so that it can't produce a crop.
 4:20 Others are like the seeds sown on good soil. They hear the word, accept it, and produce crops—30, 60, or 100 times what was sown.
 [International Standard Version]

The Lord Jesus often used parables to explain various things. This parable of sowing the seeds in chapter 4 is well known. It is about the importance of hearing His word. Actually, this importance is beyond explanation in human words.

We will all regret when we get to heaven: Why didn't I read His Word in the Bible more? The Lord wanted to speak to me, but I did not have ears to hear. I actually had ears, but I was not prepared to hear. It will be so tragic, isn't it?

"Speak, Lord because your servant is listening." Those who constantly have this attitude would never regret it, but would be largely blessed. These verses we just read are about the importance of listening to His Word.

It is written in the Gospel according to Mark, chapter 1, verse 22, that Jesus "was teaching them like one with authority." Jesus is the great and incomparable teacher. Jesus used simple and plain words that anyone could understand to explain the deepest truth of the universe.

Jesus often used parables when He spoke of the spiritual truths. And these parables are often derived from natural phenomenon or the daily lives of ordinary people. Let us divide these verses that we just read into three parts for the sake of discussion.

The first part is between the verses 1 to 9, which consists of the parable of seed sowing. It indicates that there are four kinds of lands: land along the path, stony ground, land among thorn bushes and land with good soil. The second part is between verses 10 and 13 and it describes the secret behind this parable. In the third part, which is between verses 14 and 20, the meaning of these four kinds of lands in the parable is explained.

The four kinds of soil in this parable represent four kinds of people. First of all, the scribes; they were the Bible scholars and religious leaders of those days. Their hearts were so stubborn and hardened. They did

not want to understand what they heard.

Then, there were the so-called bystanders. They were there just because they were curious; they were so pathetic and easily swayed. They never wanted to obey what they heard.

The third kind of people were the multitudes of those days. They insisted on worldly matters, and they were actually preoccupied with them. They heard the Word, but it did not bear fruit in them.

Then fourthly, the disciples who were ready to open their minds to the Lord and obey him. As a consequence of hearing His Word, they bore abundant fruit.

How does His Word work on us? It is explained repeatedly throughout the Bible. The Word of the Lord is first of all compared to a mirror. Secondly, it is a fire. Thirdly, it is also like a hammer. Fourthly, His Word is our food. Fifthly, it is light itself and sixthly, it is also like a sword. Seventhly, it is actually by itself, the truth.

We can see more clearly what this parable is trying to tell us in the verses between 21 and 25. That is to say, this parable shows us the wrong way to hear His Word and, then, the right way to hear His Word. Here, Jesus used the life of a farmer as the subject of His parable. In this parable, He said that there are four kinds of lands.

The first kind of land is located by the path. Paths are trodden down so hard by cars and people passing by that seed cannot move down into the soil.

The second kind of land is stony ground. It is only covered with a thin layer of soil and such land will be completely dried up when it is exposed to the sunshine for a few days. Roots may come out of the seed, but it cannot grow deep down into the ground.

This third kind of land is covered by thorny bushes. The thorny bushes grow over other plants. Therefore, their growth is hindered and thus, no fruit is borne from this land.

The fourth land is good soil. Seeds that fall on this ground are on well-cultivated and fertile land. These seeds, not only do they sprout and grow, but they will bear abundant fruit. Even though they are all the same seeds sown by the same sower, according to the type of the land they are sown in, the fate of the seeds will be totally different.

Sowers of seeds bear two responsibilities. Firstly, of course, to sow the seeds. Secondly, they are

responsible for choosing good seeds to sow. Which is more important in seed sowing, the sower or the seed? Even an immature and less experienced sower can still sow good seeds.

This indicates that seeds are much more important than their sowers. Jesus did not speak about seed sowing in real-life, it was a parable. Jesus did not add any explanation that will make it easier for the listeners to understand.

When the Lord suddenly stopped talking, the disciples must have wondered why. They wanted to know the meaning of this parable. They asked Jesus about it. As an answer to their question, Jesus told them that He intentionally hid the secret but used the parable.

Then, Jesus explained the secret about the kingdom of the Lord God in verses 10 to 13. Why did Jesus have to use the parable to explain this? What was his purpose and reason for sending this message through the parable?

As Jesus proclaimed the Gospel, He spoke of the truth in plain and straight words so that anyone could understand. Jesus revealed the truth of the Gospel clearly. When people heard it, they either instantly accepted Jesus as the Saviour or rejected Him adamantly.

While many people loved the light and came to Jesus, some people loved the darkness rather than the light and left Jesus. When people hear the truth of salvation, they face a choice of completely accepting it or completely rejecting it. Those who needed the salvation came to Jesus and sought for help.

The Pharisees, the religious leaders of those times, always rejected the Word of Jesus and multitudes were totally indifferent to His Word. There were two kinds of people in those days; those who realized their need for salvation and contrarily, those who believed that they did not need salvation.

The first kind of people opened their minds to the Lord, while the second kind of people, after all, refused the Lord. When Jesus realized that most of those who gathered to hear His Word were merely expecting some practical benefits, He began to talk to them through parables.

They only expected physical comfort or healing from Jesus and did not seek the salvation of their souls. For those who do not want to repent, it is pointless to explain the secret about the kingdom of God as they have no need to understand it. It is for this reason that Jesus used parables as He spoke to the people.

Those who did not desperately seek Jesus also did not have a reason to understand this secret.

Only those who sincerely desired to understand His Word came to ask the meaning of His parables and sought the truth behind them. His disciples desperately wanted to understand His Word and asked Him to explain the meaning of this parable.

It was for this reason that Jesus explained only to His disciples what He meant by this parable. The meaning of this parable is written in detail between verses 14 and 20. Here, Jesus mentioned that people are divided into four groups according to the way they hear His Word.

Among these four kinds of people, the Bible scholars and the scribes of those days had the most stubborn and hardened mind as I just mentioned earlier. They did not even want to understand the meaning of the Word they heard.

Mark

3:5 "Jesus looked around at them in anger, deeply hurt because of their hard hearts. Then he told the man, 'Hold out your hand.' The man held it out, and his hand was restored to health.

3:6 Immediately the Pharisees and Herodians went out and began to plot how to kill him."

These people were so hardened and apathetic, just like a ground by the path.

The second kind of people are so-called curious bystanders.

Mark

3:34 "Then looking at the people sitting around him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers!'

3:35 Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

Bystanders are different from other kinds of people in that they listen to His Word, but would never obey Him.

John

6:60 'When many of his disciples heard this, they said, 'This is a difficult statement. Who can accept it?'

6:66 "As a result, many of his disciples turned back and no longer associated with him."

They are characterized by their easiness of being affected by emotion and they are being easily swayed.

The third group consists of many multitudes.

Mark

1:22 "The people were utterly amazed at his teaching."

1:27 "All the people were so stunned that...."

2:12 'As a result, all of the people were amazed and began to glorify God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"'

3:8 "They came to him because they kept hearing about everything he was doing."

They are different from others in that, although they lend their ears to the Word of God and are pleased to accept it, they still do not bear any fruit. It is because their minds are dominated by worldly things and place too much importance on worldly matters.

The fourth group consists of those who open their minds to Jesus and are ready to accept His Word. They included the disciples of Jesus and the sick who were healed by the Lord. There were also many women among them.

Mark

1:18 "So immediately they left their nets and followed him."

2:14 "As he was walking along, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax collector's desk. Jesus told him, 'Follow me!' So Levi got up and followed him."

The sown seed represents the Word of the Lord. Between verses 4 and 8, expressions like, "seeds fell on something," or "seeds fell among something" are used repeatedly. Contrarily, between the verses 15 and 20, expressions like "they hear the Word" and "they heard His Word," appear a number of times. Sown seed refers to the Word of the Lord, which is extremely good. However, what matters is what kind of attitude people take against the Word that is sown on them.

Let us briefly discuss what the Word of the Lord is like. In the Bible, the Word of the Lord is compared to seven things.

John

6:66 "As a result, many of his disciples turned back and no longer associated with him."

6:67 So Jesus asked the Twelve, 'You don't want to leave, too, do you?'

6:68 Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life.'

6:69 Besides, we have believed and remain

convinced that you are the Holy One of God.”

6:63 “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh accomplishes nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.”

David, the author of many Psalms wrote:

Psalms

107:20 “He sent out his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave.”
[New International Version]

Needless to say, 'His Word' referred to here is not a word that was spoken from human to human. It is Jesus Himself. What is His Word like?

First of all, His Word is like a mirror, as James wrote in this verse:

James

1:23-24 “For if anyone hears the word but is not obedient to it, he is like a man who looks at himself in a mirror and studies himself carefully, and then goes off and immediately forgets what he looks like.”

When the Word of the Lord is used as a mirror that reflects what is in the mind of the people who look into it, it will help them realize that they are in serious need of salvation. It will let them seek salvation and help them eventually to be saved.

James

1:21 “...with a gentle spirit welcome the word planted in you that can save your souls.”

His Word is like a mirror.

Secondly, the Bible says that His Word is like a fire:

Ephesians

5:26 “so that he (the Messiah) might make it holy by cleansing it (the church), washing it with water and the word,”

Jeremiah

23:29 “My message is like fire, is it not?”

For those who allow the Word of the Lord to work on them, their hearts are cleansed just like gold is refined by fire.

Thirdly, His Word is like a hammer.

Jeremiah

23:29 “My message is like a hammer that shatters

rock, is it not?”

Those who allow His Word work deep in their souls will experience true liberation. They will be set free.

John

11:44 “The man who had died came out, his hands and feet tied with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a handkerchief.”

Even after Lazarus was brought back to life by the Lord, his hands and feet were still tied with strips of cloth and he could not walk freely. Believers in Galatia were very much like Lazarus. Their state of mind can be seen from this verse:

Galatians

5:1 “The Messiah has set us free so that we may enjoy the benefits of freedom. So keep on standing firm in it, and stop putting yourselves under the yoke of slavery again.”

Paul experienced this liberation.

Romans

8:2 “For the Spirit’s law of life in the Messiah Jesus has set me free from the Law of sin and death.”

Humans can use the Word of God just like a hammer to liberate their own souls from the chain that ties them.

What is the Word of God like? Fourthly, it is our food. Jeremiah, a prophet who lived about 2600 years ago, made this remarkable testimony:

Jeremiah

15:16 “Your words were found, and I consumed them. Your words were joy and my hearts delight.”

He did not study them. He did not understand them. But, he consumed the words of God. In the heart of those who let the words of God come into their minds, the Spirit of the Lord dwells, which fills them with unceasing joy of the soul. In the Epistle to the Colossians, Paul wrote to the people living in Colossae:

Colossians

3:16 “Let the word of the Messiah inhabit you richly with wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, and singing to God with thankfulness in your hearts.”

The Word of the Lord is our food and those who consume this food will be filled with true praise and

gratitude.

Fifthly, what is His word like? It is light. David had this conviction and confessed it in this famous Psalm:

Psalms

119:105 "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my pathway."

It is a great confession. Let us look at the confession of Jesus. He made this confession in His prayer:

John

17:17 "Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth."

It is by itself the truth. Jesus, in whom there is no lie, said, "Your word is truth."

What is the Word of God like? Sixthly, it is written that His Word is like a sword. Paul encouraged his brothers and sisters in Ephesus:

Ephesians

6:17 "Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

When we think of the power of the Word of God, this verse 12 of Hebrews, chapter 4 comes up in our minds:

Hebrews

4:12 "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul and spirit, joints and marrow, as it judges the thoughts and purposes of the heart."

It is extremely important to draw the soul of humans, that is to say, understanding humans, the emotion of humans and the intention of humans from the spirit. The sword of the Word of the Lord has the power to accomplish this. This way, using the Word of the Lord is sometimes accompanied with horrible pain. However, it still needs to be accomplished. "Not what I want but, Lord, let what you want be done."

Finally, what is the Word? It is truth itself. As I mentioned earlier, it is described in the Gospel according to John, chapter 17, verse 17, that Jesus confessed in His prayer, "Your Word is true." When people accept the Word of God, they are newly created. All humans need something to rely on, peace of mind, true joy, meaning, purpose of life and vibrant hope.

However, these things can be obtained through nothing but the Bible. Why is that? It is because the

Bible, which consists of the Word of the Lord God is the seed for conversion. James once said:

James

1:18 "In accordance with his will he made us his children by the word of truth."

Not only James, but Peter wrote completely the same thing:

1 Peter

1:23 "For you have been born again, not by a seed that perishes but by one that cannot perish—by the living and everlasting word of God."

It is a wonderful confession of Peter.

John

5:39 "You examine the Scriptures carefully because you suppose that in them you have eternal life. Yet they testify about me.

5:40 But you are not willing to come to me to have life."

The Word of the Lord is the incomparable treasure that is granted to us. Those who refuse to consume His Word as their daily food are simply pitiful. It is through the Word of the Lord that we are given the opportunity to understand Jesus Himself better and know Him more profoundly. It is also by His Word that we can have the victory over the Devil. Furthermore, it is through the Word of the Lord, that we can lead others to the salvation.

End