



**A SPIRITUAL HARVEST**  
**MARK 4:1-20**

**One of Jesus' favorite sayings is, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."**

- We live in a culture where everyone wants to be heard and seen
  - We have more ways today to that than any other generation
  - Examine your prayer life, what percentage of your time is spent you saying things to God, sharing your heart, what is on your mind, what you want him to do

**One of Jesus' favorite sayings is, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."**

- Jesus is saying, what is more important than being heard is hearing
  - Hearing to understand, accept as truth, apply to your daily life
  - Our ears pick up every sound, but most of the time it never reaches our recognition and understanding

## **The disciples never understood why Jesus was not impressed by the large crowds that followed him**

- He knew the vast majority were not there to hear God's truth
  - Most has a different agenda, they wanted something from Jesus
  - Some were his enemies looking for any slip of the tongue to be able to accuse Jesus and turn the people away from him

## **The disciples never understood why Jesus was not impressed by the large crowds that followed him**

- To help the disciples understand this and to teach us the importance of listening to God's Word, Jesus told a parable about a farmer, seed and soil

- **Mark 4:1-2 NIV** Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. 2 He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said:

## **Just imagine the scene and people's thoughts**

- Some hurt because Jesus has not healed them – not listening
- Some were upset because this is not way to hold a teaching session – no listening
- Some more interested in the excitement of the event and teaching would be considered boring – not listening

## **Just imagine the scene and people's thoughts**

- Some were hostile –listening closely, but for the wrong reason
- But some had their listening ears on, and Jesus' words changed their lives

## **Jesus started using parables when teaching to a mixed audience**

- Parable means “setting beside” with the intent that the two should be compared and understood as similar
- They are intentionally less precise than an allegory or illustration focusing on a single big idea
- We must guard against missing what is important in the hidden truth

## **Jesus started using parables when teaching to a mixed audience**

- We must resist the temptation overanalyze every detail
- A parable is simply the art of teaching through narrative in such a way that the familiar sheds light on the unfamiliar
- They may appear simple, but the truths they convey are vast

## Jesus started using parables when teaching to a mixed audience

- There are two factors that will make interpretation possible for the hearer
  - A “*willingness to understand*” – an unteachable spirit will find it easy to twist a parable into nonsense to prove the teacher a fool

## Jesus started using parables when teaching to a mixed audience

- *“Spiritual discernment”* – Jesus’ parables reveal truths beyond the natural world, they cannot be accessed by human logic or scientist research
  - The listener must have the aid of the Holy Spirit to grasp fully what the parable is teaching
  - The Holy Spirit is available to anyone willing to learn

## **Mark 4:3a NIV** Jesus' first word is Listen

- Listen means to hear clearly, to understand the importance of, pay close attention for the purpose of comprehending and applying/obeying
  - In a time where written material was scarce, listening was the most important personal tool someone had
- It carries the idea of encouragement and comfort
- **Mark 4:3-9**

## **The intent of the farmer is to produce a harvest**

- The seed is full of life and longing to reproduce itself and join other seed presenting a harvest to the farmer
- The seed is the same, the farmer's intent is the same
- The only difference is the soil the seed falls upon

## **The intent of the farmer is to produce a harvest**

- Jesus explained this parable to us in verses 13-20
  - The seed represents God's Word
  - The soil represents your spiritual condition in receiving the seed
  - The farmer is not identified
- Jesus identified four types of spiritual conditions or hearts that respond to God's seed in different ways

## The hard heart of rebellion

- **vs. 15 NIV** Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them.
  - This type resists the seed and makes it easy for Satan to snatch it away
  - It has become hard by life, pride, human logic, rebellion, consistent repelling of God

## The hard heart of rebellion

- Hard hearts must be plowed deep before they can receive the seed, and this is a painful experience
- **Proverbs 4:23 NIV** Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.
- The result is - No spiritual harvest here

## The shallow heart of emotionalism

- **vs. 16-17 NIV** 16 Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. 17 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.
- This heart is like a thin layer of soil on top of a rock shelf
- The seed sprouts quickly, but it cannot lay roots to sustain itself

## The shallow heart of emotionalism

- This represents the “emotional hearer” that joyfully accepts God’s Word but never commits to God’s will or way, no new birth
- They may be looking for God to do something in their life like those following Jesus just to be healed
- There may be great enthusiasm for days or weeks, but then they get bored, life gets hard and their false joy disappears

## **The shallow heart of emotionalism**

- It's easy for fallen human nature to counterfeit "religious feelings" and give a professing Christian a false feeling of confidence
- No new birth, no life transformation
- The result is - No spiritual harvest here

## The crowded heart of unrepentedness

- **vs. 18-19 NIV** 18 Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 19 but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful.
- This heart pictures the person who receives the Word, but does not truly repent and removed the weeds out of their lives

## The crowded heart of unrepentedness

- They just add Christ to their lives
- This kind of hearer has too many different, competing seeds growing in the soil
- Worldly cares, desire for more and the good seed must compete and there is no room for the seed good to grow
- It grows a stalk, but little if any harvest

## The fruitful heart of obedience

- **vs. 20 NIV** 20 Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.”
- This heart pictures a true believer, because fruit is present
  - A changed life is the evidence of true salvation

## The fruitful heart of obedience

- **2 Corinthians 5:17 NLT** This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!
- **Galatians 5:22-23 NLT** 22 But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

## The fruitful heart of obedience

- Not all true believers are equally productive, but from every genuine Christian's life, there will be some evidence of spiritual fruit
- No new Christian starts their harvest at 100 times
- As we mature, we will march forward toward the 100 times

## **Each of the three fruitless hearts is influenced by a different enemy**

- The hard heart is Satan
- A shallow heart is the flesh
- The crowded heart is the things of this world
- These are the three great enemies of the Christian; the world, the flesh and the devil

**Each of these are overcome only through repentance, turning toward God's word and acceptance of Jesus' world view**

- **2 Corinthians 1:20 NIV** For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ. And so, through him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God.

**Each of these are overcome only through repentance, turning toward God's word and acceptance of Jesus' world view**

- **1 Peter 1:3 NLT** 3 By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence.

**Each of these are overcome only through repentance, turning toward God's word and acceptance of Jesus' world view**

- **1 Peter 1:4-5a NLT** 4 And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.

**Each of these are overcome only through repentance, turning toward God's word and acceptance of Jesus' world view**

- **vs. 5 NLT** In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises (seed)
  - Not just know them or even believe in them
- Sow them in your events of life, priorities of life, in your cares of life

**Each of these are overcome only through repentance, turning toward God's word and acceptance of Jesus' world view**

- Then **Philippians 4:7 NLT** will be yours - "Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus."



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