

To Use is to Understand

Mark 4:21-25

2 weeks ago we looked at the first 20 verses of Mark 4, the parable of the soil. Parables in the context of scripture are earthly stories meant with a heavenly meaning. They are truths cast along side an earthly story.

A farmer casts seed and it falls upon 4 soils. The farmer representing Jesus, the seed is His Word, and the soil is our heart. The soil of our heart being not receptive, due to sin or pride and Satan quickly takes the seed away. The second soil of the heart falls on the shallow soil. It's all emotion and quickly dries up when it gets hard. The third seed grows up with the weeds, those things of the world that captivate us, that so easily leads us away from God. Those things we put on the throne of our life and let become more important. The 4th soil of the heart is the good soil. It's fertile, it's cultivated. It's been readied and receives the seed. The seed grows and produces a crop...a bumper crop that exceeds the imagination.

In Mark's 4th chapter, he has laid out 4 parables: The parable of the soil, the lamp (which is really an extension of the first parable), the growing seed, and the mustard see. These parables all build upon the first. The farmer and the lamp in these first parables are Jesus. As followers of Christ, we are extensions of the farmer and the lamp.

The Messiah, this savior the Jews were looking for, the One who would come to rescue and redeem was now on the scene. He came to teach and to unveil and reveal the work of God the Father through Jesus, God the Son. Jesus is God. He is the visible representation of the invisible God. He is God incarnate. He is the Word of God. John 1:1 tells us "In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God." Verse 14 of that same chapter tells us 'who' and 'what' this word was. "So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son." Mark 1:1 also says, "This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God."

This is our role, to unveil and reveal the work of God through Jesus to those around us living in darkness. We are to represent Jesus and all He has done every where we go. This calling is weighty, it is not a burden, but it can definitely bring peace, hope, and joy. We have the the message of hope to share. And people during this time desperately need peace and hope that turns to joy as so many are walking in fear.

This morning we are going to look at this 2nd parable that Mark lays out for us. But before we dive in, I want to ask a questions and share a story. Have you ever tried to do something that you haven't done in a really long time? I mean really long time. While trying it, maybe you remember it being a lot easier...it didn't take as much thought. It just seemed more natural, not as awkward.

We used to go to Mexico for a mission trip every year for about 12 years straight. I remember the first time going feeling like a fish out of water. I didn't understand what was being said. It was a different culture. Some things were the same, but the important things were different. By the end of the 4th day of being there, I always felt acclimated.

Day 1 was getting used to where things were at, names of people, trying to see the customs of the culture. Day 2 was the same. Day 3 was filled with a little bit of understanding how things worked. And, since I had some idea, I was able to look a little farther into the culture and learn some more. I could begin to build upon what little understanding I had of what was going on. Day 4 would come, and I began to see a little bit of the 'why' of the culture. I began to have more understanding. I was now learning more and more of the culture quicker and quicker. It began to be part of who I was.

I began to assimilate into the culture, the way they thought. There were certain customs that I began to be a part of; foods I began to love; smells that became normal and no longer turned me off; a way of doing things that became natural. I even began to understand some of the language. But then, it was time to go home. I was sad to leave. I had friends. I was getting comfortable in where we were. For the first couple weeks after going home, I would think about the trip and what we did, but it would soon fade away into a distant memory. The smells, the relationships, walking on the dirt roads, the dust in the air was all just a distant memory that would lose the personal aspect of being there.

A year later, we would go back. I would somewhat acclimate quicker, but it would still take 3 or 4 days to really be back to where it felt natural being there. I had to work through all the ideas and thoughts and habits that would plague my mind from the culture I was used to, while coming to a culture I was only somewhat familiar with.

It's like this with Jesus. It's like this with being a part of the church. It's like this with reading God's Word. It's even like this with applying God's Word to our lives.

Jesus's simple truth is this: to use is to understand, to not use is to loose.

He wants us to learn and then apply what we learn, so that we will gain understanding. And as we gain understanding, we will learn more. The more you learn, the more your relationship with Him can bud into something that has value, depth, and is solid.

With the effort you put into understanding, that will gauge your amount of understanding.

It isn't about smarts. But, it is about seeking. It's about the posture of the heart. It is about placement. To truly learn is not to only know the answer, but it is to understand and move towards a deep knowledge that says 'what you learned is good, it will be prove to be faithful, and it can be trusted.'

What does it take to really know the truth of God? It doesn't take a seminary education. You don't have to learn Greek or Hebrew. What it takes is a heart in which the "soil" wants to receive the Word. If you're passionate about knowing the truth and living the truth, God longs to pour it into your mind. God longs to pour it into your heart. He wants you to know the mysteries of His kingdom. The only question is: How much do you *want* to know? That's the only thing that will limit the truth in your life.

Mark 4:21-25

I. Vs 21-22

A. The lamp is Jesus.

1. There is a great quote by John Piper. He said, "The light of Christ is the brightness of God shining on the retina of the human soul."
2. John 8:12 says, "I AM the light of the World." This is an acknowledgement, a title of the one who would come to save.

3. John 8:12 goes on to say, “you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.”
 - a) -'never walk in darkness'--the darkness in want of daylight (need to be satisfied, fullness, revelation)
 - b) -metaphorically--used of ignorance of divine things, associated with wickedness, and resultant misery
 4. But what is the ‘light’?
 - a) It’s the truth of God. It’s the presence of God in your life. It’s letting truth reveal and overcome the darkness within your life. It’s taking the things of God you have learned and making them not just part of your life, but fighting to make them your life. Psalms 119:105 says, “your word is a lamp unto my feet”. God’s Word lights our way.
 5. Ephesians 5:1 says, “Be imitators of God”. The Word of God in us reveals the One who is the Word. We are the reflection of Jesus, with the message of salvation. We have the message of the gospel.
 6. Paul goes on further in Ephesians 5:8 says, “For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So **live** (or walk) as people of light.” (Another way of saying apply what you have learned).
 7. What is the result? What is the bumper crop? The next verse in Ephesians 5 speaks of what it does in you. It says, “For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.” Matt 5:14-16 says what happens around you, 'let your light shine before men...so they will see your good works and praise God’
- B. “Does anyone bring a lamp so he can place it under a basket or under a bed?”
1. A very simple illustration of God’s word and our reaction. With the first soil, it is a rejection, an intentional hiding from God’s word. The second soil, it is all about what God’s word will do *for* you and not about what it does *to* you. A subtle difference, but a big difference.
 - a) As we see through the first few chapters of Mark, many followed Jesus, not because what He was doing and teaching them was good for their soul so they sought to really apply it to their life. It was for the emotion of what they saw, how it made them feel, what it did for them. It was about the blessing without the faithfulness, the work, the trust that

carries through the hard times. It becomes even more evident as the crowds turn upon Jesus making Him an enemy instead of friend.

2. The third soil doesn't put the lamp in a place to reveal all the darkness, but puts it in a place where darkness can still reside alongside the light. Sure the light creeps into the darkness and reveals. But, the light isn't put in a place that can overcome the darkness.
 - a) This is the third soil. The Word of God is heard, and it is important. But, so are the things that so easily entangle us. We don't place our trust in God alone, but we try God and also trust the securities of this world.
 - b) We try to serve two masters
 - (1) Galatians gives us some insight into the things that get our attention. You and I will struggle with some of these, and probably not all of these. You will struggle with some, I will struggle with others.
 - (2) Pauls list in Galatians 5 is this: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these.
 - (3) These are things that will strangle the Word of God in us. We must do as Paul tells Timothy. Flee, turn and RUN from anything that stimulates youthful lusts. (2 Tim. 2:22)
3. What are the 'bushels' or 'beds' in your life? What are the things that are strangling you? What are the things that are keeping you from truly experiencing all that God wants for you? What is it that keeps you from knowing His goodness or keeping you from fully diving into His presence that produces pure joy? The presence that walks you through the hard times?

II. Vs 23

- A. Jesus says again, "Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."
 1. He is saying you have a choice to make. It's time to move in action one way or the other.
 - a) Accept the Word of God and invest fully in it and reap its blessing which are heavenly, beyond this world. They may even look foolish in comparison, but they will have longevity,

produce peace, bring hope, cause you to experience joy more and more as you pour yourself into it.

- b) OR, you can be one of the first three soils and experience all this world has. You may even experience all the good this world can muster up, but that is as far as it will go. It will leave you in the never ending cycle of trying to fill the emptiness.
2. The end of 2 Timothy 2:22 tells us what and how to choose, how to walk in the light of Christ and experience all God has for us. Paul tells Timothy, “Instead, PURSUE righteous living, faithfulness, love and peace. Enjoy the companionships of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts.”

III. Vs 24-25

- A. This is the exhortation. “Pay close attention. The closer you listen, the more understanding you will be given—and you will receive more.”
 1. First, this isn’t a “if you give to God, He will give you more”. This isn’t about finances, success, relationships. This is about us laying down our life before Christ and choosing Him as more important than all other things. It is choosing Him when things go good, and when things go bad. When the trials and tribulations, those hard, not so good times in life come, God doesn’t forsake us and leave us. These are times when He is actually working to show us more of who He is: how faithful He is, how good He is, that the things of this world are no where as great as the things of eternity with Him.
 2. Jesus is telling us that the truth of God is being revealed. They are no longer hidden. The mystery is unveiled. Pour yourself into them and put them into practice. You may not fully understand or see all of the Truth right now, but as you practice what you do grasp, how little or how big, the Spirit of God will continue to reveal more and more to you.
 3. Isn’t that what Jesus said would happen when He was with the disciples in the upper room?
 4. John 16:5-15 says, “But now I am going away to the one who sent me, and not one of you is asking where I am going. Instead, you grieve because of what I’ve told you. But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don’t, the Advocate won’t come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you. And when he comes,

he will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment. The world's sin is that it refuses to believe in me. Righteousness is available because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more. Judgment will come because the ruler of this world has already been judged. "There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can't bear it now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me. All that belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, 'The Spirit will tell you whatever he receives from me.'

5. As you use what you learn, more knowledge and understanding will be given to you. The presence of God upon you will be more and more. The relationship with Christ will deepen. The things that seem far off will seem closer. Your mindset will shift from fear to strength. Your outlook will move from unsettledness to peace. Joy will overcome those times of hardship. Praise will be found during the storm. The light of Christ will shine in your situation in such a way that others will encounter it when you speak, or even when you just walk in a room. Why? Because it can't do anything else than bubble up inside you and begin to spill out to the world right around you. People will take notice of the light in you and they will have to choose to respond to how it is effecting them.
6. The warning here is don't let pride take root. The pride that says you have it figured out. We never, on this side of heaven, stop learning and growing in Christ. Phil 1:6 says, "And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns." Until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns." We continue to grow until then when He finishes the good work He began in us.
7. The warning is stern. If you don't listen, even what little knowledge you have will be lost. It will be strangled out by the things of this world.

Proverbs 9:9 "Instruct a wise man, and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man, and he will learn more"

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He demonstrates that a person's spiritual knowledge is based on their willingness to pursue truth.