

The Parable Of The Soil (1)

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[0 : 00] Well, we're venturing into a new chapter today, and it's taken us a while to get here, but we're here, and we've got a while to go still yet. But as we just reflect a little bit on where we've come this far in the Gospel of Mark, remember some people refer to Mark's Gospel as sort of like a newspaper addition to the life of Christ.

You know what I mean by that? You get certain clippings of it. It's much shorter than the other Gospels. It moves at a very brisk pace as he goes through.

He doesn't spend much time on one particular thing. He kind of mentioned it. He makes his point, and then he moves on, and that's different than the other three Gospels that we have. It's evident that through the work of the Holy Spirit, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that Mark limited his writing to what he believed to be the essentials for proclaiming the identity and the purpose of Jesus.

Now, if you'll remember, that's the whole point of the book. If we go back to chapter 1 and verse 1, he opens up and he lays it all out right at the very beginning. He says, I'm writing this. This is the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

In other words, this entire book is about Mark's proclamation that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, and he is the Savior and the Messiah. And so everything that follows beyond chapter 1 and verse 1 is Mark's argument and building of his case.

[1 : 29] And so he puts all of these things in there. He lets us know who Jesus is, what Jesus has done. And all of that is not meant to just tell us a story. It is meant to persuade us to believe.

It's meant to draw us to a point of decision. And so we understand that. And as Mark puts his pen to paper, we find because of his style that he's only putting what he felt was absolutely essential for his readers to understand that proclamation, that Jesus is actually the Son of God and the Messiah.

And therefore, they needed to believe and follow him. And so though he makes it clear already in this Gospel that Jesus' primary purpose was to preach the Gospel, that's what he wanted to focus on.

Even though he had the healings and even though he had the crowds, his purpose was the Gospel. Despite making that clear, Mark actually gives very little space to the actual teachings of Jesus.

When you go through his Gospel, there are statements of teaching that are peppered here and there. But it's really only in chapter 4 and chapter 13 that Mark gives any significant space to the details of Jesus' teaching and what he was actually saying.

[2 : 50] And we know the theme of everything falls under the umbrella of chapter 1 and verse 15, which is Jesus came into Galilee and he was preaching, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, repent and believe the good news.

So all of his teaching, we understand it falls underneath that umbrella, but we just get statements here and there except for chapter 4 and chapter 13.

And so when we come to this chapter and we see a good portion of it devoted to Jesus' teaching, we need to listen. We need to listen. Because Mark, in his writing, determined that of all the things that Jesus taught, these are the things that are most important from Mark's perspective.

And so we need to take them seriously as we come, especially here to chapter 4. The entire chapter covers or is presented as if it is a single day in the life of Christ.

It begins in the passage that we just read. It begins with a seaside, lakeside service. And then it continues with a private time of explanation to a group of his followers, a group of his disciples.

[3 : 59] And then it wraps up with one of my favorite stories in the Gospels, which is this divine power demonstrated. It starts with this massive service.

Then there's a little bit of private explanation. And then there's this enormous miracle as they cross the Sea of Galilee. Now, scholars estimate that the events recorded in this chapter took place towards the end of Jesus' second year of ministry.

And it's hard to figure that out in Mark's Gospel, right? Because Mark doesn't cover the first year of Jesus' ministry. After his baptism, he spent some time in Judea, several months at least, that John's Gospel tells us.

Mark doesn't tell us about that. So we get here and we think, this is early on, but it's really not. This is actually coming towards the end of Jesus' ministry, especially in Galilee.

His authoritative teaching, his miraculous works had provided overwhelming evidence of his deity, but there were still many people that did not believe.

[5 : 06] So Jesus shifts here how he was teaching them. He began to teach the crowds in stories. And the text that we're studying today, and we're going to be here for the next two Sundays, actually, the text that we're studying here is one of the most important passages of Jesus' teaching that we find.

It's a familiar parable. It's a familiar lesson. But it's also one of the most important. It not only helps us to understand why people respond to the preaching of the gospel differently, but it is said by Jesus that this particular parable is actually the key to unlocking the meaning of the other parables.

That's pretty significant. So significant that all three of the synoptic gospels cover it in great detail. And so when we get here, Mark shifts even his style.

Remember, he moves at a brisk pace. But then he spends 20 verses. Unbelievable for Mark. 20 verses on this particular parable and the events surrounding it.

And so in it we see four things. We see the setting of his teaching. We see the story that he told. We see the significance of Jesus using parables. And then we see the sense or the meaning of what he was teaching with this particular parable.

[6 : 33] What we're going to do today is focus on the setting and the significance of the parables. And then next Sunday we're going to actually dig into this specific story and see what Jesus was on about here in chapter 4.

Let's first look at the setting. Look with me again at verse 1. Now you'll remember chapter 3 concludes with an event that is taking place in Capernaum.

A series of events actually. Jesus based his ministry there and he and his disciples had circled back and had spent some time there in the city.

And as was typically the case, large crowds began to surround the house. Probably Peter's house. We don't know exactly for sure but probably. And there were large crowds that were gathering around it.

Once they heard that Jesus was back in town. You almost get the feeling. It doesn't say this explicitly. There's a couple of times where it alludes to it through the gospels. But you get the feeling that whenever Jesus and his disciples circled back around to Capernaum, it was almost as if they were kind of sneaking in.

[7 : 50] Like maybe they came under the cover of night and they kind of worked their way to the house so that they could maybe get a good night's rest. Or maybe they could grab a meal or whatever it was. But it doesn't take very long before people know that he's there.

And as soon as people know that Jesus is there, masses of people begin to gather. And we're so demanding that in chapter 3 we learn that he oftentimes could not even eat a meal.

So the crowds, as we've seen before, grow so large that Jesus has to intentionally move his ministry outside of the city in order to carry on.

And again, I know I feel like I'm beating this to death right now. But it's so important for us to notice here. As we've often noted, Jesus constantly accommodated inconveniences in his life to serve other people.

Why? Because of his heart of compassion for them. His heart for sinners and sufferers was to inconvenience himself in order to serve them, in order to teach them, in order to heal them.

[8 : 56] And so when we come to the Gospels and we're studying through them, we don't only come just to see Jesus' identity. That's the primary thing. We see who he is. We see his purpose in the Gospel.

We don't just learn the stories. We come as believers and we see, okay, this is who Jesus is, which means he's my Lord. And therefore, I'm going to pattern my life after his life.

And even something so simple as to be willing to step out of the comfort of the city, out of the comfort of a home, to move his entire ministry out to the desert, out to the sea, out to wherever it was that he was going in order to accommodate other people, shows us something of what Christ wants us to do with our own lives.

We never display the heart of Christ more than when we serve others rather than ourselves. And so we follow Christ's example.

We willingly inconvenience ourselves to do what? To help others, to serve others, specifically to teach others the Gospel. Why? Because that's what our Lord did.

[10 : 04] He inconvenienced himself for that purpose. And we see that very clearly in just the fact that he came. Why would he do all of this? It was the whole reason, according to Philippians 2, that he condescended to man and set aside the glories of heaven in order to become a man, in order to willingly lay down his life for us.

But how often do we so willingly inconvenience our lives for others, especially sinners and sufferers? But it's exactly what he did.

And it's a pattern we need to follow. This time the crowd was so large that Jesus was unable to stay on the land. Now we've already seen that the crowds would grow and it would be dangerous and he would have a boat just kind of waiting in case he needed an escape route.

This is a little different. The crowd is so big that he can't actually stay on the land. So he boards what was probably a small fishing vessel. He pushed out into the lake just a little ways and then he began to teach the people.

And I want you to picture this for just a moment. Imagine this scene. In fact, this may be one of the only times I'd ever encourage you to take your phone. Maybe just Google Sea of Galilee right now and you see a picture.

[11 : 24] My brother's been there. He's seen this. I've seen his own pictures. It's a beautiful place. But there are areas around the Sea of Galilee where with the rolling waves coming in from the lake and then the climbing mountains that were just offshore, it created a natural amphitheater for Jesus.

So he finds a specific place that experts have studied now and say that Jesus could have taught thousands of people with no problem at all. Didn't need a PA system. And he sits out and he pushes out into the lake and he sits on the boat and you can picture this beautiful lakeside setting as Jesus is out on the boat and he's speaking to these people and he's teaching these people.

And what a magnificent scene that that must have been. Well, look with me at verse two. What was it he did once he pushed out? And he was teaching them many things in parables.

Now, this is a change in Mark's gospel. We haven't seen this yet. Not quite like this. Did you ever have a favorite teacher growing up? I had teachers that I like more than others.

I still have teachers that I like more than others. Perhaps you even have those that you like to listen to maybe on a weekly basis. Maybe it's preachers you like to listen to or maybe just a podcast you like to follow because you learn from certain people in a significant way.

[12 : 46] Now, you might have gone to a high school that had all kinds of highly skilled educators but there's probably still one that you best identified with.

Something about their personality, something about their teaching style, something about what they did attracted you and you were able to learn maybe more in their classes than you otherwise would have.

Well, here in this passage, we actually get to have a front row seat to hear the greatest teacher that ever lived. It doesn't matter who you are.

How could Jesus not be your favorite teacher? I mean, he spoke with power and authority unlike anybody else. In fact, as soon as he comes into Galilee, that's the first thing that people say.

He doesn't teach us like all these other people teach us. There's power to his words. There's authority to his words. There was something about him that sucked you in. And of course, we understand what that power is.

[13 : 45] And when we study the gospels, you'll find that Jesus employed different methods of teaching. For instance, you could go to the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5 through 7, and you'll see in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus actually had a very lengthy, very orderly, structured, clear, plain, sermon to teach.

There's not a lot of stories in the Sermon on the Mount. It's very plain teaching. It's very structured teaching. It's very clear and explicit what he was trying to say to the people. So you've got that in Jesus's ministry.

Then we can go to John chapter 3, the conversation with Nicodemus, or then John chapter 4, which was the Samaritan woman at the well. You remember these. Well, how was Jesus teaching?

Well, he's teaching conversationally. He not only could teach a structured, orderly outline that just filled you with knowledge, but he could also have a conversation with you, and leaving that conversation, you were completely changed.

Something about his way of speaking, something about his way of discipling was so powerful. But then we get to this passage and others, and most often when we think about Jesus's teaching, it's in regards to his parables, the stories that he would tell.

[15 : 05] The Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, record about 60 of these stories. And this chapter focuses specifically on parables.

Chapter 13, when we get there, Mark is dealing specifically with a single sermon that Jesus spoke about the end times. Here, though, he is focusing in on the parables.

Now, if you grew up in Sunday school like me, we probably would all define parables the same way, right? An earthly story with a heavenly meaning, right? That's what parables are.

That's how we understand them to be. The word parable is made of two other words. One of them means beside, and the other one means to lay down. And so when we think of a parable, what it's supposed to do, it helps us to understand that it literally means to lay beside, lay beside something else.

So in essence, a parable's purpose is to make a comparison. So Jesus would have a point, he would have a truth that he wanted to get across, he would make that truth clear, and then he would take a story and he would link the two things together.

[16 : 14] He would lay them beside one another, so to speak, so that we could see the story and better understand the truth. That was their purpose, to lay beside so that we could have this comparison.

And you'll notice sometimes Jesus actually spoke specifically to this. You're in Mark 4, look down at verse 30. As he's going through this series of parables, notice the first phrase here. He says, where into shall we liken the kingdom of God?

Or with what can we compare the kingdom of God? That was their purpose, a comparison. He's laying beside in order that he can teach truth.

So parables then aren't for entertainment. They're for illustrating. Illustrating and explaining a particular point.

And most often, Jesus' parables were really communicating a single point. And so we have to be careful sometimes when we come to these stories. We have to be careful that we don't read too much into them because we can confuse ourselves.

[17 : 14] Almost always when Jesus gives a story like this, there's a single truth he's trying to communicate. A couple of times you'll find more than one, like the prodigal son. You see there's the rejoicing of the father over the lost son that has come home.

Then there's also the point to be made about the self-righteous brother. But those aren't nearly as common. Most of the time, a parable is getting across a single point. And Jesus is illustrating and applying his message.

So as Jesus sat in the boat on the Sea of Galilee, we're told that he began to tell these stories. And they all illustrated his gospel message.

And so this text not only contains one of the most important parables, but it also provides Jesus' explanation for why he was using parables, which is where we're going to focus our attention now.

In fact, look with me now at verse number 10. Verse number 10. So we've seen the setting. Now we're going to look at the significance of these parables.

[18 : 21] And when he was alone, they that were about him with the 12 asked of him the parable. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but unto them that are without all these things are done in parables, that seeing they may see and not perceive, that hearing they may hear and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted and their sins should be forgiven them.

Well, Mark has another sandwich here, if you noticed. Remember at the end of chapter 3, he used that sandwich technique. He presented the story of Jesus' family.

And then he takes a pause from that to talk about an interaction with the scribes in Capernaum. Well, he's doing that again here in chapter 4. He starts by telling the story that Jesus told, this parable of the soils, and he's going to come back to the explanation of that later.

But sandwiched in between these two stories and explanations is Jesus' explanation of the general use of parables. He intentionally taught in the form of stories, and these verses reveal why.

And this is an important question for us to ask. Consider this for just a moment. Some believe that this on the Sea of Galilee might have been the largest crowd that Jesus ever preached to.

[19 : 53] We don't know that for certain, but it's a huge crowd. This is the peak of his Galilean ministry, and it's not long after this that a lot of these people that have been following because of these parables, mind you, are going to start to stop following.

They're going to leave him. They're going to walk away from him. And so there are thousands of people on the seashore, and Jesus gets in the boat, and he pushes out, and he's got this opportunity.

What's he going to say? Because surely he's going to get up there, and he's going to say, hey, I want to let everybody know why I've come. I am God. I'm going to die in Jerusalem to pay for your sins, and then I'm going to raise up three days later to prove it.

And if you'll just follow me, I'm going to forgive all your sins. Like surely, if Jesus has all these people, surely that's what he's going to do. But that's not at all what he did. It almost feels like a wasted moment, right?

He told a story about soil. He didn't even explain the story. He just told a story. And he said somebody went out, and they sowed some seed, and there were four different types of soil. Let's pray together, and you can be dismissed.

[21 : 00] What? Why did he do this? Why did he do it? Look at verse 10. When he was alone, those around him with the 12 asked him about the parables.

Now, they weren't just asking about this parable. They were asking about the parables in general. That's what Matthew 13 tells us.

Matthew 13 and verse 10, they said literally in this story, why are you teaching in parables? And so Jesus begins to go into that explanation. Sometime after the crowd had dispersed here, a group of Jesus' followers asked him about this.

It was a private setting. And it's an encouraging note that this group is not just made up of his 12 closest disciples. Did you notice that? Look again at verse 10.

When he was alone, the crowds have gone away. Those around him with the 12 asked about this. Now, I think this is an encouraging note. I think it's an important note, actually, for us to understand here.

[22 : 06] Though they were present, the 12, other disciples were there too. Meaning that this truth of the gospel was not limited to only those who had reached a particular status within Jesus' circle.

Our understanding of biblical truth is not based on whether or not you've reached a higher plane of spirituality. That's what the Gnostics said.

That's what Paul was confronting to the Colossian church. There was the Gnosticism that said, really, if you want to really be super spiritual, you're going to have to do these things, maybe through asceticism, or maybe it's going to be through these mystical experiences.

But if only if you reach this certain level of spirituality, then you'll really be in the know. And they began to lead people away in the churches of Colossae with this confusion that only certain people could really understand Jesus and his message.

But Jesus made it clear that that's not the case at all. Every single believer has the same enlightening power from the Holy Spirit to understand the gospel and to understand the word.

- [23 : 22] You don't have to be a pastor. You don't have to be a Christian that has been in church his whole life. You don't have to have gone to Sunday school. You don't have to have done any of those things. If you've got the Holy Spirit within you and you've got a copy of God's word, you can understand it.

That gospel, that message, it's for you. And that's encouraging to me. Because I fall short of a lot of people. But I'm encouraged to know that this message is for me too.

And that I can understand it too. And that if we'll give faithfulness to the word, God will help us to understand it. The only condition for understanding, according to this passage, is faith.

That's the only condition. And this group reminds us that all believers are included in God's enlightening work. And so now let's look at verse 11.

And he said unto them, To you it has been given the secret of the kingdom of God. This is these people who were following Christ.

- [24 : 24] But for those outside, everything is in parables. And here's that pattern again, right? We noted it again at the end of chapter 3.

This pattern emerging in Mark's gospel where he presents insiders and outsiders. And we have to read into that text to understand that up to this point.

Here, Jesus makes it explicitly clear. There are those who are on the inside. That is, they believe genuinely and follow Christ as Lord.

And then there are those on the outside, which included most of the crowd. They didn't get an explanation. Why? Because they were on the outside.

They were not following Christ. So Christ makes it clear. The only condition for understanding, for connecting these dots of the gospel, is faith.

- [25 : 26] This distinction is the basis of Jesus' reason for speaking in parables. And in his explanation, we find two things.

On the one hand, they brought clarity to those who were believing in him. So think about this. You've begun to see Jesus. You have witnessed his miracles.

You have heard his clear teaching of the gospel. And you have become a believer and a follower of Christ. Now, when you hear one of these parables, it actually brings clarity to your mind.

Further enlightenment as to this gospel that you have begun to follow. Just like we do after we come to faith. Every time we come to the Bible, you may read one passage a hundred times in your life.

And every time you come to it, there's something else that sticks out. There's more understanding that you gain. There's more clarity that you gain. So on one hand, the parables were blessings. They were blessings to believers because it brought gospel clarity to them.

- [26 : 24] But on the other hand, the parables were actually an act of judgment against those who rejected the gospel. They had a hardening effect.

And in the sense, if you think about this one parable that Jesus is saying about the sower and the seed and the soil. So to use Jesus' parable here, these stories were a sort of testing of the soil, so to speak.

As Jesus told these parables, it made clear who was in and who was out. Not because Jesus was saying who was in and who was out, but because depending on their clarity or their hardening depended on whether or not they were a true believer or they weren't.

Because that's what the parables did. They were either a blessing to believers or they were an act of judgment and hardening of heart to those who were not believers.

And so those who were not genuinely believing hardened themselves to the truth and eventually they moved away from him. Which is what most of the people in the crowd did.

[27 : 32] Jesus said, this is why I'm teaching in parables now. Because those who have come to faith are going to receive clarity and those who continue to reject me, they're not going to be able to understand. You say, that sounds kind of harsh.

Well, he goes a little further in verse 12. Look at it with me. He plainly says, so that they may indeed see but not perceive and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.

Okay, that's a hard saying. Because on the surface, it seems like Jesus doesn't want people to be forgiven. It seems like he doesn't want people to be saved.

Because it sounds like he's saying, I'm teaching in parables so that they won't understand. Therefore, they won't be forgiven. So when we come to this, there's a note that we have to make here.

We have to understand what Jesus isn't saying. We know that Jesus wants to forgive sinners. We know that. That's the entire purpose that he came.

[28 : 42] Think about it for just a moment. The whole reason that Jesus came to this earth was in order to save sinners. That's his heartbeat. We've already seen it even in this passage.

He constantly inconvenienced himself for the sake of these people, to heal them, to teach to them, to save them. That was his whole purpose. Of course he wants people to be forgiven.

Of course he wants people to be saved. That's his heart. God delights himself in mercy. And time and time and time again, we see the promises of forgiveness listed to us.

And Jesus himself even says, anyone who will come to me, I will not cast them out. He wants to forgive. He wants to save. That's his deepest heart's desire, is to be glorified through redemption.

So what is Jesus saying here? Well, he's quoting Isaiah chapter 6. If you remember, Isaiah chapter 6 is the call of God on Isaiah's life.

[29 : 49] You remember the first part of the passage. God comes to Isaiah and calls his name. And Isaiah says, here am I, Lord. And he goes through this whole vision. And he says, woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips.

And I dwell among a people of unclean lips. And he goes through this whole really, really strange, but really awesome experience. And then God commissions him. And he says, I want you to go and preach to the people.

I want you to go and preach to Israel, who for hundreds of years I've been patient with. But I need you to know, Isaiah, God says. Your message is not going to serve the purpose of redemption.

Your message is actually going to harden their hearts further. They're going to hear it, but they're not going to perceive it. They're going to see it, but they're not going to understand. I'm sending you, Isaiah, knowing that you will produce no fruit.

It was an act of judgment on those who for years and years and years continued to reject the Lord. And now Jesus says, this is why I'm teaching in parables.

[31 : 01] For two years, Jesus has been clear about the gospel. For two years, he's been going to Judea and Galilee. And he's saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Repent and believe the good news. He's demonstrated for two years his miraculous power. He's healed blind people. He's cleansed lepers. He's healed the paralytic.

He's done all the things. And all of these people have seen it. They've witnessed it. But they still didn't believe. And so Jesus says, I'm moving to parables now. And he quotes Isaiah chapter six.

And he says, because they've rejected me, I am rejecting them. Which is a hard saying. Whether from a pulpit on a Sunday or in daily evangelism in our communities, preaching the gospel has both an illuminating effect and a hardening effect.

As the saying goes, the same sun that melts the ice hardens the clay. And as we take the gospel of Jesus out, there are two potential responses.

[32 : 20] Either God will use his word to melt the hearts of unbelievers and draw them to faith. Or God will use his word to harden the hearts of unbelievers and prevent them from coming to faith.

These parables are a warning. They're a warning against those who would hear the truth and continue to willfully reject it.

And here's the thing. The Bible is clear that a time of judgment will eventually come to all who reject Christ.

And that judgment may come sooner than what you think. Consider Genesis chapter six. At the beginning of this chapter, we see the wickedness of the world, the pervasive wickedness.

And it introduces the story of Noah and his ark. But what is it that God says in verse three? He says, my spirit will not always strive with man. Though he is patient and long suffering, there is a limit to God's patience.

[33 : 29] Because eventually, there is judgment. Consider Romans chapter one. Romans chapter one, Paul is going through the gospel and the power of the gospel.

But then he talks about how the people have continued to reject the gospel. And in verse 28, he says, since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, they had the stuff.

They had the knowledge. They had the word, the Old Testament. They had the miracles of Jesus. They had all the stuff. But since they refused to acknowledge God, God gave them up, Paul said, to a debased mind, a reprobate mind to do what ought not to be done.

You say, what does that mean? It means if you continue to reject Christ, there comes a time where he's going to reject you. There's a judicial hardening effect where Paul says, there comes a point when we continue to reject the truth that we've been exposed to, where God gives us up.

He gives us up to the hardening of our hearts. He gives us up to the sin of our lives. He gives us up to reprobate minds, worthless minds, empty minds.

[34 : 46] That's what the parables do. They're an act of judgment. In Acts chapter 28, this is the closing of the book.

Paul's made it to Rome where he is being in prison there for another two years. And Jews in Rome began to come to him. And he was preaching the gospel.

And it says, and some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved. And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement.

And the statement is another quote of Isaiah chapter 6, verses 9 and 10. The same exact quote that Jesus gave. Paul quotes it. The Jews get mad because they know what he means.

And then here's what Paul says. Therefore, let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles because they will listen.

[35 : 49] You say, what does that mean? That means that there comes a point where God stops drawing. Where the hardening is no longer our doing.

But it's God's doing. MacArthur said, due to the people's repeated rejection of his clear teachings and undeniable miracles. From this point on, Jesus would frame his teachings in a way that they could not understand.

Think about that. All of those people on the seashore, they didn't get the explanation of the parable. Only the people in the private setting did. The ones on the outside, they didn't get it. They heard the story.

It's not that they didn't understand a sower and seed and soils. They understood all of that. What they couldn't understand is what it meant. Because Jesus didn't tell them.

Their willful rejection of the Son of God had led to God's judicial rejection of them. And we close with this question.

[36 : 54] You say, how do I know if I have reached that state of God's judicial hardening? And my first thought is, if you're concerned about it, you haven't reached that state.

Because someone with a hardened heart is indifferent to all of this. They don't believe it at all. But then you say, what about in my evangelism? How am I supposed to know who I should actually share the gospel with and who I shouldn't bother with because they have been given over to a reprobate mind?

And the answer to that is, you don't know. Nor are you supposed to know. That's not our business. That's God's business. What's our business?

To share the gospel. And to share it with everybody. It doesn't matter how far gone you think they are. Share the gospel. Cast the seed. Throw it out.

Share Jesus. Preach Jesus. Because that same gospel message is going to melt some of their hearts. Because God has intended to melt some of their hearts and bring them to faith.

[38 : 01] But God's message is also going to harden many of them. And in the process of that hardening, they're not going to respond in faith. And that's when you know. If they reject, they reject.

But it's not up to us to decide who that is. Neither is it for us to understand if that has now been the case for us. We'll repeat what the writer of Hebrews quoted in chapter 4 and verse 7.

Today, if you hear his voice, don't harden your heart. You hear his voice today? Don't harden your heart. Here's the thing.

Don't think that you can wait. Because you can't. You say, I've got all kinds of life left to live.

Well, you might not. The scripture says our life is but a vapor. It appears for a moment and then it vanisheth away. You say, I'm young. I've got all this time.

[39 : 02] Maybe you say, I'm just a kid. I've got all this time. I can make these decisions later. Well, you might not actually have that opportunity to make those decisions later. Tragedies happen all the time. But even more than that, the judgment may come before your day of death.

God has brought you to this place to hear the gospel preached. He has exposed you to the truth. And if you continue to willfully reject that truth, there may come a day where he just stops calling.

There may come a day where he hardens your heart. You don't know when that's going to be. So today, if you hear his voice, don't harden your heart.

Because eventually, he will. And once he does, it's done. You may have 30 years left to live in your life and it won't matter.

It'll be too late. Well,