

# Fruitful Hearers Of The Word

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, we've noted a number of times through our study of the Gospel of Mark that Mark's Gospel presents the life of Jesus in a mosaic form.

And so rather than narrating the events of Jesus' life in a strictly chronological way, Mark, under God's guiding hand, is choosing to write in a sort of topical way.

As we go through his Gospel, we see that he's really given us these snapshots of various things about Jesus rather than giving us a clear timeline exactly of how Jesus went about his life.

And his desire, of course, as we have said over and over, was to persuade the reader that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Messiah and the Son of God.

And so he accomplishes that by giving us these snapshots, persuading us not just to be entertained by the stories, but to actually come to a point of faith in the person of Jesus and to believe in his work, ultimately in his death and resurrection.

[ 1 : 11 ] And though there are various moments of Jesus' teaching that are expressed and explained throughout the book, there's really only two places that Mark deals specifically with the content of Jesus' teaching.

Mark is focused on the Lord's use of parables, and he collected just a handful of them, and he linked them together to help us understand the message of Christ, the Gospel of Christ, as well as the message of the kingdom and these comparisons to the kingdom.

So, one thing that we don't have in this chapter is, it's not a random assortment of stories that Jesus told. It's not that Mark just grabbed a few of his favorites and threw them in here.

We know that Mark is keeping a very succinct and systematic approach to his teaching about Jesus. And so, what he has collected here in chapter 4 are the parables that, in his estimation, are most important for his Roman audience, his early Roman audience, to understand.

And so, when we come to these parables, we don't come just saying, okay, Jesus told this really nice story here about the four soils, and then he told this really nice story about a lamp, and then he told this really nice story about casting seed and things eventually growing, and then ultimately wraps it up with just another nice story about the mustard seed and how it grows into a big bush.

[ 2 : 45 ] It's not just that Mark thought, these are all my favorites. I want people to hear these favorite stories of mine. No, there's a very intentional purpose to what Mark is doing. These are all linked together.

There's a purpose to what he is giving us here, and we need to come to it understanding that purpose. Now, remember at the beginning of the chapter, we saw that Jesus was teaching a massive crowd on the shore of the Lake of Galilee.

And after that time of public teaching, when he gave this parable of the four soils, he has some time privately with a few of his disciples and some of his other followers as well.

They were inquiring the meaning of the parables that he had been teaching, but they were also trying to figure out exactly why he was all of a sudden beginning to teach in stories.

That's not what Jesus had done up to this point. Up to this point in the Gospel of Mark, he's actually had a very consistent message. The consistent message we see is summarized in chapter 1 as the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

[ 3 : 48 ] It is near. Repent and believe the Gospel. Repent and believe the good news. And so for two years now, Jesus has been teaching this message. He has been preaching the message of the Gospel. Preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom.

Demonstrating that in his works. And now he's all of a sudden making this switch to where he's telling stories. And so they ask, why are you teaching in parables? They don't seem to be as clear as you were before.

Why are you doing that? And so Jesus gives that answer in verses 10 through 12. Now, though the text doesn't explicitly state this, it is reasonable for us to conclude that verses 21 to 25, what we just read, are a part of Jesus' private teaching to his disciples.

So that very first section, that was the public crowd on the Lake of Galilee. He tells the story. And then there's the private setting in which Jesus gives the explanation of the story, the explanation for why he was teaching in parables.

Well, verses 21 to 25 are tied into this private teaching. We haven't left that scene yet. We're going to in verse 26, but we haven't quite left that scene yet.

[ 5 : 00 ] And there's a few reasons that I've come to this conclusion. Maybe I can persuade you that this is it through these four things. The first note that I notice here is that while verses 21 and 24 indicate Jesus addressing a specific group, verses 26 and verse 30, the other two parables, they do not do that.

So look at it with me. Verse 21, the very first phrase, and he said unto them. It's referencing a very specific group of people that he's teaching. And then if you look down in verse 24, same thing.

And he said to them, to them, a specific group tying it back to this private time of teaching. But when we get to verses 26 and verses 30, we don't have that same phrasing.

It is just simply that Jesus said. And so it is reasonable for us to conclude, and I could be wrong, but it's reasonable for us to conclude that those last two parables are just, that it didn't happen at this particular time, didn't necessarily happen in this particular place, but it mattered to the point that Mark was making in this chapter.

But verses 21 to 25 is more of the explanation for why he's teaching in parables, and it's certainly tying into the parable of the soils as well.

[ 6 : 18 ] So that's the first thing that I noted that makes me think that way. The second thing that I noted is that the teaching of verses 21 to 25 is better understood as a companion piece to the story of the soils and to the story or the explanation of verses 10 through 12.

We're gonna come back to this throughout our study this morning. But if you think about it, if you just take verses 21 to 25, apart from 10 through 20, it is a very confusing passage.

I mean, there's some weird language that he's using here. It's not very easy just to grab it and understand. But when we set it within the context of verses 10 through 20, we begin to understand, okay, he's just explaining further.

He's unpacking further what he was trying to explain to them before. And then here's the other thing. Like the parable of the soils, the last two stories are agricultural in nature.

They come back to this casting seed, this growth of plants. They're all kind of on the same theme. But this section 21 to 25 is not on that theme. So it seems reasonable that Mark, after explaining the parable of the soils, does this other thing in this private teaching with Jesus.

[ 7 : 35 ] Then he circles back around to deal with the explanation of the kingdom in these agricultural terms, which would have made sense to his Roman audience.

They would have understood that clearly. And so it just makes sense that maybe there's a separation here. And then the last thing, if you notice the conclusion of the whole section in verse 33, Mark writes, this is Mark narrating now, is writing and he says, and with many such parables spake he the word unto them as they were able to hear it.

But without a parable spake he not unto them. All right. Well, we know that he spoke to the disciples at times without parables. So that can't be necessarily applying to this private time of teaching.

That's got to be applying more to the general audiences that he was teaching when he would include these parables and what they were doing. So the content of verses 21 to 25 need to be linked really with the content of verses 10 through 20 and especially verses 10 through 12.

Now there, Jesus explained why he was teaching in parables. And the summary is this. For those who were believing on him, the parables brought gospel clarity to their mind.

[ 8 : 56 ] But for the unbelieving, the parables had a hardening effect. And we've used that common phrase, the same sun that melts the ice hardens the clay.

And the parables had that effect. For those who had believing hearts, their hearts were melted further. They became more believing people. But for those who had hardened their hearts to the Lord, the parables further hardened their hearts to him.

And it had this hardening effect. It's not that Jesus's stories were difficult to understand. That's not what this is about. It's just that their spiritual meaning was lost for those who did not believe Christ in faith.

And so Jesus unpacks this thought further in 21 to 25. And he first brings some clarification. Some clarification, lest someone read verses 10 through 12 and think that Jesus actually was trying to conceal the gospel, that he was trying to hide it because he didn't want certain people to be saved.

That's not what he's saying in this. And so the first thing he does in verse 21 is he brings some clarification to that. And then he emphasizes the necessity of being fruitful hearers of the word.

[ 10 : 19 ] And so that's really the object of our study today. We want to understand the clarification that Jesus brings. And then we certainly want to see the emphasis of being fruitful hearers.

And just for my help, I've broken this down into three words. If you want to write these down in your margins, maybe it'll be helpful to you as well. First, I have clarification. Then I have exhortation.

And then explanation. Clarification, exhortation, explanation. And we'll work our way through those three words this morning, okay?

First, let's look at clarification. Look with me again at verse 21. And he said to them, Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket or under a bed and not on a stand?

That's an interesting way to kick things off here, isn't it? It's just another parable. It's another story. And it's almost humorous what Jesus is saying here. It's a ridiculous notion that he's pointing his finger to here.

[ 11 : 26 ] The lamp that Jesus is referring to is the lamps that would have been small clay vessels that they would have had scattered throughout their homes in ancient Palestine.

It's difficult for us to now think about this. It's difficult for us to relate to a time when there's no electricity, when there's no electric power, right? But that's certainly the time that they lived in. Now imagine your house, Clementine, is this stone house in Israel 2,000 years ago.

But there's no light switches. There's no lights in the house. There you have windows. They're just holes that are cut out in the wall, but there's no glass because they wouldn't have had glass for their windows. Even the glass that they had, that was really for more of the wealthy people at that point.

And it wasn't very clear glass like we would have in these mirrors here in this room today. They didn't have what we have now. So in the evenings when it was time to shut the shutters to the windows for safety or for privacy or for whatever it was, the rooms in the house would be especially dark.

There's no light coming in. And so they had these small clay vessels that had kind of a large opening right in the middle and then maybe it would have had a spout on one side or maybe it would have just been the hole.

[ 12 : 38 ] They fill it up with oil. They light one end of it and then they set it up on a shelf or on a table or on a particular stand and it gives light to the house. They can now see what otherwise would be hidden by the darkness.

And so you can visit museums even today. Julie and I have had an opportunity to go to the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C. And this is just this is not a paid advertisement.

This is just a by the way. If you ever get an opportunity to go, go. It is really, really fantastic. I think you'll enjoy it. But in there they have they have a collection of lamps that are about 2,000 years old from Israel, Iraq, Iran from that area.

And they have this collection where you can go in and see. And they're very small. They're very small and it's just displayed and you can get a picture of what it was that Jesus is referring to here. Now, what does he mean by this?

Well, his question was somewhat silly. It was somewhat humorous as the thought of hiding that light is really ridiculous because who does that?

[ 13 : 46 ] Right? Who goes into their dark house, lights a lamp so that they can have light and only to take it to the kitchen and cover it up with a basket or to take it to the bedroom and slide it underneath the bed that completely defeats the purpose of the lamp?

Who would do that? It's a ridiculous notion and that's really what Jesus is saying here. Jesus, in the same way, wasn't trying to hide the gospel through his use of parables.

That's not what the parables were doing. They weren't hiding anything. It wouldn't make sense for God to bring the kingdom near as was Jesus' message. It wouldn't make sense for God to bring the kingdom near to them only to conceal Jesus.

That wouldn't make any sense at all. So the fact of Jesus' constant traveling and his accommodation of these massive crowds only contributes to the understanding that Jesus wanted to be known.

He did not desire to live in an obscurity. Think about it. He could have. He could have found a place where nobody could find him. He could just grab the 12 disciples and maybe a few others, bring them in and he could spend his three years doing that and then make his way to Jerusalem to provide redemption.

[ 15 : 03 ] But that's not what Jesus did at all. He went from village to village and town to town. He accommodated the crowds, even the unbelieving crowds. He accommodated them. Why? Because Jesus didn't desire to live in obscurity.

He didn't come just to be concealed. He came to be revealed. And so his parables, they weren't about hiding the gospel. They weren't about doing that at all.

That wouldn't make any sense. He was actually here bringing clarity to what the gospel meant in the parables. And we just reminded about Luke chapter 19.

The son of man came to do what? to seek and to save that which was lost. He didn't come to hide and just hope that you figure it out.

That's not what Jesus was doing with the parables and he brought some clarification to that. Now look at verse 22. For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest, nor is anything secret except to come to light.

[ 16 : 07 ] Now the reference to secrets and things hidden here connects back to what Jesus said is the mystery of the kingdom of God in verse 11.

Let's look back up to verse 11 with me. And he said unto them, unto you, this is to his disciples, unto you it is given to know what? The mystery of the kingdom of God.

Well when he gets here and he's talking about things hidden and he's talking about secret things, it's a reflection on what is said to be the mysteries of the kingdom of God.

So just as one uses a lamp to reveal what is hidden in his house, so does God intend to reveal the mysteries of the Old Testament through the person of Jesus.

That's the point. That's the point of the parable here. Now mystery is used often in the New Testament. It's almost exclusively used to refer to things that were at one time hidden but have now been revealed in the gospel.

[ 17 : 08 ] They have now been revealed in Christ. And so Paul uses this word often. Paul even refers to these mysteries as shadows.

But God's intention was always to bring to light the things that were hidden in the Old Testament, in the law and the prophets. And in his time, he brought a lamp to manifest those things.

And that lamp is Jesus. He is the lamp. So when Jesus says, who lights a lamp and hides it under a basket or a bed, he's referring to himself.

He's saying, I did not come to be hidden. In fact, think about it. John chapter 1. In him was life and the life was the light of men.

The light shines in darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. What was John saying? Jesus himself is the light.

[ 18 : 13 ] He is the lamp. Jesus himself said this. John chapter 8 in verse 12. Again, Jesus spoke to them saying, I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life. What's the light he's referring to? He's referring to a lamp. Same thing he's referring to in Mark chapter 4.

So we come to this. We're not just talking about a theological belief or a set of doctrines. We're talking about a person. The lamp is Christ. And when we go back to the Old Testament we start trying to sift through all the things there.

What is all of this about? What is this system of sacrifices about? What is this whole issue about the kingdom that the prophets are getting on about in the Old Testament?

What is this all about about David and lineage and all these kinds of things? All of those things are revealed and answered in the person of Jesus.

[ 19 : 12 ] He is the lamp and he came to cast light on the darkness of this world and on the mysteries of the Old Testament. And so it wasn't his goal to conceal the gospel but his very presence demonstrated his intention actually to display the gospel.

And think about that message that he had been preaching. He was the representative of the kingdom. When Jesus said the kingdom is near he meant himself as representative of the coming kingdom of God I am near spatially.

Spatially. He's not talking about time but space. I am near you look to me and all who heard the good news were commanded to repent and believe.

And so what's the point of this parable of the lamp? Jesus is the light. He is the representative of the kingdom. Now that you know repent and believe.

And for all who will not repent and believe they will only be hardened further as they come to these stories and as they come to these parables and as they come to this truth time and time again.

[ 20 : 29 ] James Edwards said the lamp coupled with the theme of disclosure testify that God's purpose in Jesus is to enlighten and reveal.

He is the lamp. So he brings clarification. Secondly we see exhortation. We've seen clarification now we see exhortation.

Now look with me at verse 23 and just the first part of verse 24. Jesus says again if any man have ears to hear let him hear.

And he said to them pay attention to what you hear. Pay attention to what you hear.

So after providing some clarification Jesus again emphasized the necessity of quote hearing the word.

[ 21 : 27 ] So the fruitfulness of the word of God in our lives is not then a matter of intellectual capacity but it is a matter of spiritual faith.

faith. It is not that Jesus parables were challenging to understand but the clarity they bring is entirely useless unless you receive it by faith.

So the issue for those that weren't grasping what Jesus was getting at with these stories it is not because they were dumb that is not what it was these were very simple stories. They would have understood the stories themselves but the extent of the fruitfulness of the word in their life was directly related to the way that they heard or received it and whether or not they received it by faith.

And so throughout this entire section an emphasis is placed on how we receive the word and this is even true in the parable of the soils.

Remember the sower teaches the word of God that is the casting of the seed and the fruitfulness of the seed is based on how the individual or the soil receives what is taught.

[ 22 : 43 ] And we can trace this emphasis throughout these verses as well. 21 all the way really to 34. Five times Jesus is specifically noted as speaking, teaching, saying, casting the word.

Five times. Five times then also there is a specific emphasis on how that teaching and how that speech how that word is then received by the hearer.

So immediately after the parable of the lamp, Jesus emphasized the necessity of receiving that teaching by faith. Well, what teaching? That he is the light.

Come to him. Repent and believe. And he's not just simply saying to listen. He's saying to listen with ears intent on heeding what you hear.

It's not just about hearing what he says, but believing and receiving what he says. There's many ways that people hear the word and yet they often fall short of exactly what Jesus was commanding here.

[ 23 : 46 ] Think about this. Some people come to the word of God for intellectual stimulation. Intellectual stimulation. That is, they're not concerned about believing it.

They don't come with a posture of faith. Their aim is actually to argue against it. And so maybe they come to church or maybe they read their Bibles or maybe they go to a Bible study group or they have the conversation with their Christian friends, but their intention is never really to come to the word in order to have their mind enlightened to truth or to come to an understanding of who God is or to find out how their souls can be redeemed.

That's not their intention. It is intellectually stimulating to them to argue back and forth with people that believe the word. And so those people hear the word, but they don't hear it.

Does that make sense? Are you with me? They hear the word, but they don't hear the word. And so some people come with intellectual stimulation as their primary goal. Others come simply for moral motivation.

It's not really that they're looking to exercise any kind of faith, and they certainly don't have any interest in a spiritual birth. They just want somebody to tell them what to do. They want somebody or something to tell them what to do to improve their life.

[ 25 : 04 ] So they don't go to church looking for an understanding of the Bible. They go to the church and they want 10 ways to be a better parent. Or they want to know or have some instruction on how to win friends and influence people and increase the success maybe of their life.

Or they want some tips on how to overcome the various struggles of their life. But they're not compelled at all to consider the claims of Jesus or to follow him in faith.

It's moral motivation. They just want somebody to tell them what to do so that their life can be better. They're not really interested in the spiritual diet. They're not really interested in faith. They just want somebody to improve their life.

They want their best life now, so to speak. And discussions of theology are just distractions from what they actually hope to gain from the Bible. So they hear the word, but they don't hear the word.

You with me? Some people come for emotional exploration. So some come with intellectual stimulation as their goal. Some come with moral motivation as their goal.

[ 26 : 11 ] Still yet, others come with emotional exploration. Well, what are these people doing when they come to the word, or when they come to church, or whatever it is when they're exposed to the Bible? Well, they really only care about how it makes them feel.

they're not really looking for any kind of rational understanding of truth. And really, when it comes down to it, they may not state this, but really when it comes down to it, whether or not the Bible is actually used is irrelevant to them, so long as they leave the time feeling better, feeling better about themselves.

They want heaven without hell, or they want blessing without lament, repent, or they want other things that just make them feel better about themselves.

Works without repentance, life without death. But then there's another form of emotional exploration that's almost the antithesis of that particular person, but it really fits the same category.

They want hell without heaven, or they want to emphasize repentance without any kind of good works, or they want the opposite of that. You know what I mean?

[ 27 : 25 ] That person? That person, it's not that they're wanting to feel good, everybody to feel good about themselves. They actually want everybody to feel bad about themselves, but they don't want to offer the good part of the gospel.

You know what I mean? It's emotional exploration. There's one side where this extreme, they just want to be made to feel good, and this extreme, they just want everybody to be made to feel bad with no actual resolution to their badness.

All of these people hear the word without actually hearing it. But in response to this, Alistair Begg is helpful, and he says that we should approach the Bible in three ways, three ways to be fruitful hearers.

One, consider it carefully. Consider it carefully. Now, Jesus, when he says, listen, when he says, if you have ears to hear, hear, he wasn't talking about an uninformed faith.

He wasn't talking about a blind faith in the sense that someone stands up on a platform on a Sunday and they say, say, Jesus is the Son of God, believe it and go to heaven, and just say, okay, I'm not going to actually put any kind of rational consideration to this.

[ 28 : 35 ] I'm just going to accept it and hope everything is good. That's not what Jesus is saying. He never says that we are to take our brains and just set them to the side and never actually access them for anything related to theology or anything related to truth.

We are to come to the word and consider it carefully. We shouldn't be satisfied with a surface knowledge of truth, but we need to study the Bible thoughtfully.

Secondly, we believe it thoroughly. Believe it thoroughly. Consider it carefully and then believe it thoroughly.

Rather than coming to your time with the word with a posture of argumentative spirit, rather than coming with a critical eye to see everything that you can find wrong with the Bible, no, that's not the right posture.

That's not the right posture. We are going to consider it carefully, but we have to start with the fact that this is the very word of God. Therefore, whatever it says, even if I disagree, or I don't like it, or it doesn't make me feel the way that I want it to make me feel, I will believe it, I will believe it thoroughly, not because it's what I want necessarily, but because it's what God says.

[ 29 : 51 ] It is His word. It's important. We talked about this a bit in our Thursday night group this week. Undergirding every doctrine that we believe is the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible.

That what we have in the pages of Scripture is the very word of God. He literally spoke these words and used men to write it, but it was breathed out by God, Paul said.

And then the writer of Hebrews says that this is a living book. It's alive. It discerns the thoughts and intents of our hearts. And I mentioned on Thursday night, when you take your Bible, unless if you do devotions in the morning or in the afternoon, whatever you do it, if you spend an hour reading your Bible, that is an hour of time that God is literally speaking to you.

That's how he speaks. He doesn't speak through epiphany. He's not going to give you a dream. There's not going to be any kind of subjective thing that God comes and gives a pertinent revelation that's going to affect you in a different way than anybody else.

No, he speaks through his word. It's his word. Come to his word and believe it because it is his. And God cannot lie.

[ 31 : 07 ] And so what he has given us is truth. And we need to believe it thoroughly. And then thirdly, we practice it diligently. We practice it diligently. So in addition to careful consideration and thorough belief, we must approach the Bible prepared to obey what it says.

Take one of those three approaches out of the way and you will not be a fruitful hearer. You can understand it rationally. You can even believe it to an extent as far as just giving mental assent to the things that you read.

But unless you're going to practice it, it will have no impact on your life. There will be no fruitfulness there. You have to have all three of these. And so the question this morning is, what kind of hearer are you?

Are you just looking for the stimulation that it brings to argue with somebody about these things philosophically? Are you just, you just want somebody to make you feel good?

And you really just want to just point me to the scriptures that are really just going to help me feel better about myself. Well, there's a lot of scriptures that aren't going to make you feel better about yourself. That's not the point. The point is to point you to Christ.

[ 32 : 23 ] Maybe, maybe your, your goal is really most of the time you just want something to help you live a better life. And, and the Bible does all of those things, but, but those are not its purpose. But we come in a way that is fruitful, ready to hear.

So we see clarification. We see exhortation. Finally, we see explanation, explanation. Look with me now at verse 24 and 25.

This is a weird saying, but hopefully I can bring some clarity to it. With the measure you use, it will be measured to you and still more will be added to you.

For to the one who has, more will be given. And from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. All right. That's kind of weird.

That's a little bit of weird language there. Okay. Let's, let's unpack it a little bit and remember the context of the passage. Now, Jesus closes this dialogue with an explanation for why hearing is necessary.

[ 33 : 26 ] That's what these two verses are doing. So he says, you need to hear, you need to pay attention. And here's why you need to hear. This is why you need to be a fruitful hearer. And again, the fruitfulness of the word is linked directly to how we receive it.

And so Jesus says to pay attention because our attitude toward the scripture will determine our understanding of the scripture. And the extent of our understanding is based on the extent of our hearing.

Let's unpack that. It's helpful to consider these last two verses in light of the parable of the soils. This is why I think it's significant to connect these. And Mark's not the only gospel that puts these together.

Matthew and Luke cover the, the other parables in at different times. They don't put it in the same timeframe as Mark does, but they all put this one there. This statement is with the parable, the soils.

It's important for us to understand. Now, Jesus said earlier in Mark four, that the understanding of the parable of the soils is the key to unlocking the other parables. These two verses tell us how it unlocks the other parables.

[ 34 : 35 ] So the variance in the soil, if you remember the story, the variance in the soils is based on the individual's reception of the word. And so here in verses 24 and 25, Jesus first addresses the good soil, the good soil.

And what we could really read this like this. We might read this as to the one who hears or to the one who has faith.

And we would bracket faith as an insertion to help us understand what Jesus is saying to the one who has faith, more bracket understanding will be given. In other words, those who receive the word through faith reap the benefits of abundant fruit.

So that the person who welcomes the truth of God will be given more and more of God's intended fruitfulness. It doesn't come all at once.

We all know that. The moment that you came to faith in Christ, you didn't all of a sudden have all the understanding that you would ever need about the Bible and about theology. No, we grow in that throughout the process of our life.

[ 35 : 43 ] And there's even an insinuation in the scripture that even when we get to heaven, there is still this progressive understanding. We will never fully understand the depths of our infinite God, right?

It's progressive. It doesn't happen all at one time. But to those who welcome God's truth, God gives more and more fruitfulness in their life. That word impacts their life in more and more ways and to a greater and greater extent.

So he addresses that. The measure that you use, it will be measured to you and more will be given. In other words, if you receive it, God will give more and more and more.

You will be impacted in more and more ways. But then in verse 25, he addresses those represented by the other three types of soil. So think back to the parable.

Remember, the word was sown in every type of soil, but the first three were unfruitful. Only the good soil had fruit. Now these people, they hear the word.

[ 36 : 48 ] They may even understand the word intellectually, but the truth never has any lasting impact on their life. Why?

Because they came just looking for some intellectual stimulation. Or they came just looking for some moral motivation. Or they came just looking for some emotional exploration.

But they weren't fruitful hearers. And we know that because the word has no impact at all in their life. So to these people, Jesus said, even the understanding that they have will be taken away.

Look again at verse 25. That's what he's getting at. He that hath to him shall be given. He that hath not from him shall be taken away even that which he has.

What does that mean? That Jesus is going to take away even what he has? We'll think back to the parable again. You see how it's beginning to unlock things for us.

[ 37 : 50 ] Did the soil on the pathway receive seed? Did it hear the word? Yes. The seed was cast on the path.

It did not receive the seed. What happened? Immediately, the birds came and devoured it. What it had was taken away. Okay? Why?

Because it didn't receive it. Didn't hear it. What about the shallow soil, the rocky ground? Did it receive the word? Did it hear the word? Yeah, it did. It heard the word.

The seed was cast. But what happened? The sun scorched it. So even what it had was taken away. What about the thorny soil?

Did it receive the word? Yeah, it did. It received the word. But what happened? The weeds choked it out so that it lost, had taken away, destroyed, even what at one time it had.

[ 38 : 51 ] In each circumstance, what truth was sown was ultimately destroyed or taken away due to how it was received. So while those who believe the word grow in fruitfulness, those who do not eventually lose even what they had, even what understanding they had.

So Sinclair Ferguson states it this way by means of application. This is why Jesus stresses the importance of how we hear now, Sinclair says.

If we fail to grasp the mystery of the kingdom of God now and do not respond to it now, we may be increasingly alienated from it in the future.

But if we do respond to it, we will grow in our understanding and appreciation and increasingly experience its benefits. And we continually come back to this verse in Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 7.

Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart. Because you don't have forever to receive the word.

[ 40 : 06 ] Which was the point Jesus was getting across about his use of the parables in 10 through 12. That there comes a point where he will harden your heart. So if you hear his voice today, don't harden your heart.

Receive the word. And then God, through his spirit, produces this fruitfulness in your life. Well, let's close it this way.

We need to recognize that this principle of fruitful hearing is not applied only to the work of the gospel in salvation. It doesn't stop there.

This continues on. This principle in your life as a believer is to be actually acknowledged at every point in your walk with Christ. There are varying degrees of fruitfulness in the good soil.

Did you notice that? Look back with me again at verse 20. Verse 20. These are they which are sown on good ground. They hear the word and receive it and bring forth fruit. Some 30 fold.

[ 41 : 14 ] Some 60 fold. Some 100 fold. Now that's a little strange. If this is about God providing fruitfulness to those who accept Christ by faith, why are there varying degrees of fruitfulness?

Why doesn't everybody get the same amount of fruit that everybody else gets? Because there's varying degrees of hearing. The writer of Hebrews acknowledged this.

He was addressing spiritual maturity for believers. In Hebrews chapter 5 he said this. For though by this time you ought to be teachers. But you need someone to teach you again even the basics of the gospel.

You need milk not solid food the writer says. For everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature.

For those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. What's he getting on about? He's rebuking the church. And he's saying look I know you know the gospel.

[ 42 : 21 ] I know you believe the gospel. But some of you ought to be teachers by now in your walk with Christ. But because you didn't stay fruitful hearers of the word after your salvation. You're just as much a baby as you were the day you were saved.

And somebody's got to keep giving you the milk of the word because you won't ever listen. You won't listen. And so this principle continues on. You want to grow in your walk with Christ?

Hear the word. Study the word. Consider it carefully. Believe it thoroughly. Practice it diligently.

And I promise if you do those things with the word. If you come to church Sunday by Sunday Thursday by Thursday whenever it is that you come to the word. And you're coming to consider it carefully and believe it thoroughly and practice it diligently.

You won't be able to help but bear fruit. You can't help it. Because it's not you that bears the fruit. It's God that bears the fruit in you. And he does it through the word.

[ 43 : 17 ] But you have to be a fruitful hearer. You have to be a fruitful hearer. There's so many Christians that they're stunted in their growth because they don't really care about the Bible. They don't really care.

They never read their Bible. And when they do maybe they're bouncing around from place to place they're not setting themselves up in a way where they can really understand what it means. They come to church they're not prepared to listen.

They're not prepared to hear. You want to grow in your walk with Christ you got to be a good hearer. You got to be a fruitful hearer. This doesn't stop at salvation. It actually continues on.

And let me say spiritual maturity it cannot be faked for long. It can't be faked for long. You can't for a little while. You can't do that forever.

Because eventually the fruit just shows. Jesus said you'll know them by their fruit. How does the word impact you? Are you just as knowledgeable today as you were the day you were saved?

[ 44 : 18 ] Or have you grown in that time? Are you allowing the word of God to do its work in your life? Our level of faithfulness to the word will always reveal itself in the fruitfulness of our lives.

And it's a shame for a Christian not to advance in spiritual maturity. But hearing the word is what will make all the difference. Can we not commit today that we're going to be fruitful hearers?

We're going to be fruitful hearers as a church. We're going to care about the word. And as we care about the word we're going to share that word. We're going to live that word. And we're going to let God do his work.

[illegible]