

# Parable of the Soils

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[ 0 : 00 ] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

We'll continue in our study of the second gospel, the gospel of Mark. I'm excited. Every week, this is a wonderful passage.

So Mark, chapter 4, verse 1. Again, he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land.

What a vivid image. And he was teaching them many things in parables. And in his teaching, he said to them, Listen! A sower went out to sow.

And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. Other seed fell on rocky soil, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil.

[ 1 : 16 ] And when the sun rose, it was scorched. And since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain.

And other seeds fell into good soil, and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.

And he said, He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Verse 10. And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables.

He said to them, To you, this is our Lord, obviously, to you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God. But for those outside, everything is in parables.

So that they may indeed see, but not perceive. And may indeed hear, but not understand. Lest they should turn and be forgiven. And he said to them, Do you understand this parable?

[ 2 : 28 ] Or do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? And then Jesus explains it. The sower sows the word.

And these are the ones along the path where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. Verse 16.

And these, almost like he's pointing out in the field. And these are the ones sown on rocky ground. The ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy.

And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while. Then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. Verse 18.

And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word.

[ 3 : 30 ] And it proves unfruitful. But those that were sown on good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord abides forever. That's what we put our lives and everything under this morning. In the eleventh grade, my class studied the seven wonders of the ancient world.

I'm sure we had studied it before, but we gave another look then. You know, the Egyptian pyramids, the temple of Artemis in Ephesus, things like that. And afterwards, after studying these, we were required to write an essay and argue for an eighth wonder of the world.

It could be anything. We just had to justify its place as the eighth wonder. I don't know what you would add. Maybe the Smoky Mountains or Neyland Stadium. One of those wonders.

That's an Alabama fan laughing at that. I wrote my essay on my little brother. Now, yeah, before you say huh.

[ 4 : 39 ] But I actually remember I can't find the essay. But there are many reasons. My little brother's name is Macaulay. There are many reasons Macaulay has a legitimate shot at being the eighth wonder of the world.

He's a natural salesman. Once when I was playing in a tennis competition, believe it or not, at nine or so, he was watching in the stands like a good little six-year-old.

And he slipped away from my parents to the back of the stands and began selling the free programs for a dollar. And people were lining up to buy him.

I mean, it was so great. You know, he's just that type of guy. You know, he's quite bright. You know, he was not like or is not a bookworm per se.

But his mind is a steel trap for memorizing and remembering things. Once he played Toto in The Wizard of Oz. Now Toto, being a dog, has no parts.

[ 5 : 42 ] But somehow, he memorized every other line of the play. And it was just hilarious because maybe he's in fifth grade or something. And he would just, you know, when Dorothy was, starstruck Dorothy would forget her part.

He'd just kind of hop across the stage and whisper in her ear. You know, this is what's next, Dorothy. And maybe the Tin Man and all the ones. He helped them along.

So he had this incredible memory. But one of the things most interesting about him was his persistent interest in famous people. You know, as a young kid, we both collected comic books. But once we got into sports, him in particular became very interested in famous athletes. He would put their posters on the wall. Well, he would write to them these letters exaggerating some of the things going on in his life.

He would, I won't go into all the details. He would ask for autographs. You know, so autographs came pouring in for people like Nolan Ryan and Cal Ripken and Michael Jordan.

[ 6 : 38 ] He got a Michael Jordan autograph came in. But he didn't just stop at autographs. He wanted to hang out with these guys. I remember we were big Wake Forest Demon Deacons fans back in the day. And he wrote the Wake Forest basketball team.

He said, I want you all to come to my birthday on May 10th. And what was great was Coach Odom replied to him in a personal letter and said, sorry, the guys are in finals.

They can't come. But he had this massive poster that the whole team signed, including the greatest power forward in the world or in NBA history, Tim Duncan.

So that's just the way he rolled. And, you know, I think in a lot of ways, in that way, we're a lot like Macaulay. We have a persistent interest in famous people.

Some of us may come by it honestly today. Some of us not so much. But that's why People Magazine, with zero articles, sells on the grocery checkout lines.

[ 7 : 36 ] That's why reality TV shows just pop up left and right, whether you prefer Keeping Up with the Kardashians or maybe the more family-friendly Duggars, 19 and counting.

You know, these little things just pop up. That's why Instagram and Twitter pages just keep drawing our attention to the famous. We want to see what they're up to. We want to see what they're wearing.

We want to feel like we know them. And one of the things I find surprising when we come to the Gospels is there's not this similar fascination with Jesus Christ.

Now, don't get me wrong. There is the crowd that we've kind of been studying as we go. But one of the things we're going to begin to see is that not all are excessively interested and preoccupied in Jesus.

In fact, this parable is Jesus' attempt to articulate what's going to happen as the Gospel goes out.

[ 8 : 36 ] As He begins to announce that He is the Savior of the world, He's the light of the world, no one can come to the Father except through Him. Not everybody's going to run to get in line. And He tells this parable, very few in fact, that follow Jesus will follow Him to the end.

And He tells this parable to help us understand why. So we're going to kind of work this through. In fact, if you were with us last week, this is another Markin sandwich. I'm not going to do the bun and the meat and the whole thing. But this is another little sandwich passage.

And so we're going to work it through and then come to a main point in the end. So we're going to try to understand this parable. He says, if you don't understand this one, you want to understand the

rest.

And so we're going to try to understand it. The first is the seed is the Gospel. The seed is the Gospel. First century Palestine was a community familiar with farming.

Seeds, sowing, fruitfulness, and failure of crops would have been one of the most common topics of everyday life. Would have been some of the most common metaphors of life and death.

[ 9 : 39 ] And so Jesus tells a story that everyone would have been familiar with, a story about seeds. A story about sowing. And that's what we see right there in verse 1 and 2.

Sorry, got to flip. He began to teach along this crowd. A very large crowd gathered around him. So he got in the boat and sat on the sea. And the whole crowd was beside the sea. And he began teaching them a parable about seeds and sowing.

You know, there's a couple things we say at the outset. This is another example of Jesus gathering a crowd and sitting and teaching. And this is the first time he kind of begins to talk about these parables.

He begins to teach in parables. You know, they're really stories with a specific point. But as we'll soon see, they're stories that pack a punch. They kind of catch you by surprise.

They come in the back door, as one commentator says. They come in the back door instead of the front. And they bring you the surprising way of life in the kingdom. And so he tells this story about a sower.

[ 10 : 41 ] Verse 3, listen, a sower went out to seed. It's a very simple story. It's about a sower that walks around kind of grabbing seeds out of his hand and just kind of tossing them out. He's an open-handed, generous sower.

He's throwing seed everywhere he goes. And some along the path. Some falls into rocky soil. Some among thorns. Some on the edge of the field. Some lands in good soil and bears much fruit. And he says, he who has ears, let him hear. But the story makes little sense unless he explains it. So thankfully, Mark includes that explanation.

And when the disciples, when they pull away and the disciples are talking to him, the first thing Jesus says is, The seed is the gospel. Look in verse 14. There's a direct correlation right there. The sower sows the word. Right? So the sower went out and sowed the seed in the story. But the sower sows the word. And the word there refers to the word of the gospel.

[ 11 : 42 ] The word he's been proclaimed in all throughout these first opening chapters of Mark. And so the seed is the gospel. And we've got to kind of, we've got to step back a little bit to capture the impact of what Jesus is teaching.

If you remember, Jesus came and he said, The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand. And he said, Repent and believe the gospel. And so the kingdom of God is at hand. And many people in the first century would have expected and assumed that Jesus would ascend an earthly throne to save and protect his people.

That he would make things right. That he would do what kings ought to do and set the captives free, feed the poor, establish justice, and all those things. But it's very clear, they're hoping the gospel and through this parable, that that's not what he came to do.

While he does heal and cast out demons, he didn't just come to do those things. The main thing he came to do was teach. And I love the way it was put. And we saw it a couple weeks ago in Mark 1. When they go searching for him, they said, We want to start up an itinerant healing ministry. You know, you're making things happen. Jesus said to them, essentially, very provokingly, Let us go to other towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.

[ 12 : 49 ] That's a tremendous purpose statement. That's why I came to teach. I didn't come to heal. And so, this parable, just Jesus' another way of saying, I am the sower and I'm sowing the seed of the gospel.

That's what's going on. Okay, simple enough, right? I am the sower and I'm sowing the seed of the gospel. But there's something else Jesus adds here that's very important. When he gathers the disciples, look at verse 11.

He says, To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God. But for those outside, everything is in parables, so that they may indeed see, but not perceive. May indeed hear, but not understand. Lest they turn and be forgiven. Now, that's pretty harsh, if we're quite honest. Now, you're telling me that Jesus is teaching in parables to keep people from repenting.

I don't, not exactly. That's very noncommittal. But this verse is a direct quotation from Isaiah 6.

[13:57] So, you remember after, in the year of King Uzziah died, he saw the Lord high and lifted up. He said, Woe is me. He came and put that burning coal on his lips. And then he gave him this charge in Isaiah 6, 9.

What he's saying, the same way with Isaiah, what he's saying is that as you preach, some will see, but not really see. Some will hear, but not really hear.

What he's saying is that these parables, these stories of Jesus, are designed to reveal and conceal at the same time. Just like the message of the gospel.

But they're designed to reveal those who are inside and to conceal those who are outside from the secret of the kingdom. So, they have this wonderful deliverance and judgment effect.

There's a lot we could say there. But he says, Some will not understand, but to you it's been given the secret of the kingdom.

[15:00] And so, we ask, like, what is the secret of the kingdom? I think here it is in a word. The kingdom of God begins small and bears fruit through preaching the gospel.

That kind of feels like I'm saying the same thing over again. The kingdom of God begins small and bears fruit through the preaching of the gospel. One of the great theologians, Herman Ritterbos, said it like this.

We used to call him the boss. Because he is. What mystery is it? So, the word secret is literally mystery.

And so, that's the word he's referring to. Secret in the ASV might be mystery in your Bible. What mystery is it? So, what is the secret of the kingdom? This, before anything else, that the eschatological, that's just kind of the final, the complete kingdom of God, is coming as a seed. Seemingly the weakest and most defenseless thing there is. It can be devoured by foals. It can be choked by thorns. It can be scorched by the sun. And sometimes, it can hardly be distinguished from tares.

[16:09] Wheat and tares. Remember that one? That is the secret of the kingdom. The secret of the kingdom is that the kingdom comes as a seed. I love the way he says it.

The weakest and most defenseless thing there is. The kingdom comes in a way. It comes into this world in such a way that is so weak, so puny, so pathetic.

It's no surprise that Jesus enters this world as a baby. It captures, I mean, his birth captures in parable the mystery of the kingdom.

That the one who comes to reverse all that this world boasts in is the one who's born as a baby. But what he's saying, the kingdom comes in a seed, and the seed is the words of the kingdom comes through words.

Six and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me because they're so puny and pathetic. They're just out there. They're not going to do anything to me.

[17:05] You know, sometimes we can think what the church really needs is a certain man as president, or a certain political party in control, or a better ministry to the poor and social programs in order for God's kingdom to really advance in this world.

What we think we need, what we think the church needs is something visible and obvious, something fast and loose to show the world who the king is. But Jesus tells his disciples, though you don't see it now, my kingdom advances and bears fruit through the words of the gospel. Jesus is telling us, he's telling them and he's telling us, don't be distracted. The main work of the church is word work. The main work of the church is word work. You know, in a widely read book called How to Do Things with Word, the author pointed out that words not only capture information, but do things.

Obviously, they do things in the Bible. My word does not return void, but accomplishes the purpose for which I sent it. When a pastor says, I now declare you husband and wife, as we'll do in a few weeks, a new social and spiritual reality comes into being.

Two human beings are now married and recognized by society with all the tax benefits that come with it because of these words. Just words. When the U.S. says you are now a citizen, a new social and relational reality begins.

[18:26] You are now legally employable. You belong. You are an American. Words do things. They change reality. Words change lives for eternity. That's what Jesus is saying here.

My kingdom will not come with swords and spears, politics and policies, social programs, social reform. My kingdom comes now through the words of the gospel, delivering sinners from the

kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God.

Without faith, it's impossible to please God. For he who would please God must believe that he exists and rewards those who seek him. But how do we find faith? Well, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ.

That's what he's entrusted us with. That's incredible. You know, until Jesus returns, the job of the church is to keep sowing the seeds of the gospel.

And this is where I just love this metaphor. And it's riddled throughout the New Testament, the use of this type of metaphor. We're called to sow, not reap. You know, we like to keep track of things, report them in the annual report.

[ 19 : 31 ] We better be careful. Our job is not a reaping job. It's a sowing job. What could be easier? I mean, that's kind of, what could we eat?

We're just slinging the seed out, man. Man, that would liberate our parenting, you know, wouldn't it? We're just sowing. Oh, this is not a reaping day.

Our two-year-old. I can recite the catechism yet. You know, whatever it is. What that means is we're called to faithfulness, not success.

Man, the world screams at us, success, success. But the church will be judged on its faithfulness, well done, good and faithful service.

A wonderful time of the year to think about how you can sow the seed of the gospel. You know, everybody kind of loosens their belt a little bit in summer. You know, bedtimes push back and they're open to different things.

[ 20 : 34 ] How might we ponder anew an opportunity to sow the seed of the gospel with someone we're praying for?

Wow, what a privilege. Point two, the different soils are all who hear the gospel. Point two, the different soils are all who hear the gospel. After explaining how the seed is the gospel, Jesus goes on to say the different soils are those who hear.

And you kind of see the direct correlation as he's going through. He talks about the soils, you know, some fell along the path and along the rock and different things. And then he correlates it with people in the explanation.

So the soils are people, personified. Personified, you know, their people and their hearts in the way they respond to the gospel.

So different types of soils, different types of people, different types of response, different hearts in relation to the Lord. So that's the way we're going to look at it. Four different hearts that respond to the gospel here.

[ 21 : 37 ] The first is the hard heart or a hard heart. You know, the first soil, the sower sows out a seed that lands on hard soil.

It's along the path. It's been walked on and trampled on for years. The rain runs off and the sun only hardens it more. The seed doesn't take root because the ground is so hard.

Look at verse 15. These are the ones along the path where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown to them. If you look up in verse 4, it fell on the path.

The birds came and devoured it. So it's hard. Nothing lands into it. You know, I think what he's saying is some fail to hear the gospel and be saved because of their hardness of heart.

They hear the word, but their heart is hard such that the devil comes to snatch away the seed from being embraced. There are a few things scripture encourages us to fear more than a hard heart.

[ 22 : 41 ] You know, no one sets out. I'm going to harden my heart today. You know, no one goes that way, but our hearts grow high when we hide and indulge sin. It may be hardened through withholding forgiveness from someone who has wronged you.

You're not even the one who did the wrong, but you're the one who becomes bitter. What do they say? Bitterness is drinking the poison and waiting on your friend to die, waiting on your enemy to die.

That's a hard heart. It may be hardened through quieting the persistent voice of your conscience. You know, as we get older, I talked about that book last week.

We get older, there's nothing more important than listening to this voice. You can deaden it with another glass of wine or another burger or something.

But gradually, it becomes hard. Maybe hardened by conflicts that catch you off guard and leave you licking your wounds. Our hearts become hard by making room for, making excuses for, making peace with sin.

[ 23 : 53 ] We think of Pharaoh, right? He's the great hard-hearted man in the scriptures. After a heart grows hard, the seed of the gospel no longer takes root.

The same word that rescues people and delivers them lands without effect. Not the word's fault. Shallow hearts.

Be shallow hearts. The second soil the seed lands on is shallow soil. Look at verse 5. Other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil.

Mark points it out. Immediately it sprang up. Since it had no depth of soil. It's shallow. It was on a rock. The ground is not deep enough.

There's not enough access to water. The seed produces fruit and it quickly withers away. Look at verse 16. These are the ones that sown along rocky ground.

[ 24 : 58 ] The one who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. They have no root in themselves, but endure for a while. Then when tribulation or persecution arise on account of the word, immediately they fall away.

You know, some fail to hear the gospel and be saved because of their shallowness of heart. If you've been a Christian for any length of time, you've seen this. You know, many people start well. Have you ever run a race? I mean, it's easy to start well. You know, you just run out of gates. You're ready to rock and roll. You know, many respond to the gospel with immediate joy. Many confess Jesus Christ, make commitments to those who, and make commitments to follow him all the days of their life.

And yet few finish well. Jesus once said the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life. And those who find it are few. Few stay on the narrow way, not because it's so, so, so hard, but because of their shallowness of heart.

Look again at verse 17b. Their shallowness is revealed when tribulation and persecution arise on account of the word. Immediately they fall away.

[ 26 : 08 ] Martin Luther used to say that there are three rules for understanding the scriptures. *Horatio, meditatio, and tentatio.*

I don't know Latin either, but prayer, meditation, and trial. These are the three. You want another word? Prayer, meditation, and trial.

Tim said it well. Jana's been through the fire. And she's learned. That's why she's a wise woman. Martin Luther said, I myself owe the papists, that is the Roman Catholic Church, many thanks for so beating, pressing, and frightening me through the devil's raging that they have turned me into a fairly good theologian, driving me to a goal I should have never reached.

All Christians must suffer through many tribulations. We must enter the kingdom of God. But trials don't always drive us to prayer and meditation.

That's what they're getting at. Sometimes they drive us far from the Lord, and that's what happens here. There's joy, but when trials come, the joy evaporates. The joy withers, and they fall away.

[ 27 : 21 ] This alerts us. Our feelings are wonderful things. They're incredible. We must feel deeply about who God is. We must, we're commanded to feel.

Delight yourself in the Lord. He'll give you the desires of your heart. We're commanded to feel things about God. The Christian faith is not an intellectual faith. You cannot be saved by just mental assent to something.

You must feel something and embrace it in a deep and profound way. But feelings are not enough to hold you. One of my friends several weeks ago went home to glory. Brendan Japp.

One of the things he used to say in his final days, when people asked him, how do you feel? He would say, this is what I know. This is what I...

Try that on for size. This is what I know. Feelings are wonderful, but not strong enough to sustain. The shallow heart falls away because it has no root.

[ 28 : 25 ] Soil is not deep enough. Mark points that out very carefully. We need to be anchored. Point... Or C. Strangled hurts.

That's a little vivid. Strangled hurts. The third soil the seed lands on is on the outside of the field. If we're walking with Jesus and he's saying, these are the ones and these are the ones and these are the ones.

Where the soil is not tilled. Where weeds and thorns grow. Everybody knows that. You know, those rows are where it gets a little ugly.

Growing up around the seed, the thorns choke it out. We know how this works. It technically is still spring. And it's that season of the year. We got to round up all the weeds that are taken over.

And just a weed will wrap. I have this tree in the back. I was cleaning out with the kids. It just wraps around the tree, you know. And it'll eventually cut off its light and choke it out.

[ 29 : 26 ] A weed that's to a tenth the diameter of the tree. If that will choke out its life. Same thing happens with the gospel.

Look in verse 18. Others are the ones sown among thorns. They are the ones who hear the word, but the cares of the world, deceitfulness of riches and desires for other things, enter and choke out. Choke the word and it proves unfruitful.

Some fail to hear the gospel and be saved because of their strangled heart. The verse is haunting. Isn't it? The Lord has given us so many good things to enjoy in this world.

The diverse colors of each evening sunset. The soul-stirring harmony of live instrumentation. The thirst-quenching satisfaction of cold water. The tenderness of a kiss from your spouse. These things are gifts and are given so that we might enjoy God as we enjoy these things.

But even these good things can strangle our hearts when we want more than what we've received from the Lord. I think that's what he's getting at. You know, this is how our heart begins to be strangled.

[ 30 : 33 ] We're no longer content with simple pleasures that we have. We're no longer satisfied with the possessions that we've been given. We're no longer happy with the house or the car or the spouse or whatever we have.

We want something more. Something different. A couple years ago, I read this devastating article from a serial adulterer. It was in the New York Times. She said, she lured men into breaking their wedding vows many, many times.

She said, you don't have to be prettier. That kind of breaks down some of our misconceptions. You don't have to be funnier. You don't have to be more intelligent.

You just have to be different. That's the way our hearts get strangled. What we have is not enough. We want something else.

We want something different. I love the way Mark says it. Their hearts were strangled by the cares of this world. Got it. Yeah. We don't want to be like the other worldly people. Materialism, stuff like that. The seefulness of riches.

[ 31 : 37 ] Got it too. But also by desires for other things. He's just saying anything that rivals, that's different, that leaves us. That's a direct hit.

You know, that awakens us. These other things distract and disturb. My joy in God. These different things that lead us.

Elizabeth Elliott, the way like only she can. She says, I think we can divide the whole world into two classes. The people who make a habit of complaining about what they haven't got and what they have got.

And those who make a habit of saying, thank you, Lord, for what they haven't got and what they have got. Try that. You know, let's resist the weeds and thank the Lord for what we have and what we haven't got.

The fourth soil, point D, is open hearts. The final soil the seed lands on is good. It's soft ground right in the middle of the field.

[ 32 : 37 ] It immediately bears fruit and grows and brings forth a hundredfold. Look in 20. Sow it on the good soil. All the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit. Thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold.

The least time in the whole parable is spent on the good soil. Because it's just simple. Just lands on the good stuff and it just takes off. You know, it's simple.

The seed lands in good soil and it bears fruit. Thirtyfold, sixtyfold, a hundredfold. Now, what's the point of all this? Jesus. You know, what are you trying to say?

As Jesus continues in ministry, as the disciples face many who resist him and oppose him, many who refuse to follow him, Jesus says, The soil makes all the difference. The soil makes all the difference.

One of my close friends is a soil science major. I don't even know what that means. And he sent me an article once. It said the premise of the article is feed the soil, not the plant.

[ 33 : 37 ] Feed the soil, not the plant. Take care of the soil and let it do its work. The article is making a surprising point. It's not the sun or the rain or the pruning or the tilling that makes all the difference.

It's the soil that makes all the difference. And Jesus is saying that right now. He's saying it's the soil. It's the heart that hears the gospel that makes all the difference in the reception of the gospel. It does not matter what are the contours of this soil. It doesn't matter the background of this soil. It doesn't matter the background of this heart, whether it's a Jew or Gentile tax collector or sinner. It doesn't matter whether they have a religious background or whether they're raised as pagans. It doesn't matter whether they're rich or poor or any other worldly measure. It only matters whether the heart is turned toward the Lord.

And this is liberating for the disciples. I mean, they're sent out to toss seed, trusting that the soil will reveal whose are the Lord's.

[ 34 : 36 ] Point three. The fruit is salvation for all who hear and embrace the gospel. The fruit is salvation for all who hear and embrace the gospel.

Though the seed is small and though many fall away, it bears fruit in the end for all who truly hear and embrace the gospel. The emphasis upon hearing is obvious, right? You know, it's a parable that centers around a seed and the seed is the word.

So the emphasis is just littered throughout. It's a message. It's a word. And then he says, listen, numerous times. He says at the beginning of the parable, he says, listen. At the close of the parable, he who has ears, let him hear.

So listen. Verse 12, that they may hear and understand or not understand. That they may hear and not hear, you know, is both there.

And in verse 14, he's talking about these people that receive the words when they hear, when they hear. They're the ones who hear, the ones who hear. And so there's this emphasis. There's this command.

[ 35 : 38 ] It's very obvious. Listen is the main point he's pointing at. But the final reference to hearing drives towards the meaning of the whole thing. In the description, each of the references have, each of the explanations of the parable, it has it in the hearing in past tense.

Now, this is a little bit harder to see in the English, but you see it when they hear. These are the ones sung, when they hear the word. So with that preposition saying in the passage, when they heard it, when they hear it, this is what happened.

When they hear it, this is what happened. When they hear it, this is what happens. But in 20, it's a different word in the original language in the present tense. Those who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit.

They are the ones who bear fruit, who accept it. And the word for hearing there emphasizes always hearing. The good soil of those who are always listening, always leaning forward, always humbling themselves, always eager to learn.

And this good soil bears fruit because they're always leaning forward in this way. It bears fruit 30-fold, 60-fold, and 100-fold because they've been hearing this word.

[ 36 : 57 ] So in a word, this parable, what it's trying to say is listen up, hear, and hold fast to Jesus Christ for life. It's just pushing that into it. Hear, keep hearing. You know, one of the greatest dangers of Christian life is a sense of arrival, a sense of I can't learn anymore.

That's the guy that's about to go over the edge, over the cliff. Hear, listen. Tune your heart to see these things, understand these things, and to hold fast to Jesus Christ for life.

I don't think the main point of the parable is for us to search and find out what heart we are, you know, or what heart we're prone to be. I think the main point of the parable is turn and listen.

That's obviously a parable. It was used with the disciples to explain, hey, there's going to be these different types of hearts you're going to see out there. But for us, this audience, the reason Mark includes it in this gospel, the reason he's pressing it into our lives with all the exhortations all around it, is just you need to hear.

And by hearing, you'll find life. The metaphor captures, actually, or the emphasis on hearing captures, that hearing is not another work, you know.

[ 38 : 18 ] Hearing is just open up our ears and listen. Listen, we're not going to be saved through our hearing, but saved through the word. You know, we come to see when we take in all that Jesus did in his life, death, and resurrection, that the mystery, the secret of the kingdom, is deeper still than just that the seed is the word.

I alluded to it in Jesus being born as a baby. The kingdom comes as a seed. It looks small. It looks weak and puny and pathetic. The secret of the kingdom is that the sower of the seed becomes the seed.

We're not merely saved because of a puny-looking word. We're saved because of a marvelous Savior that became a seed.

John 12, 25, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoa.

1 Corinthians 15, So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable. What is raised is imperishable. It's sown in dishonor. It's raised in glory. It's sown in weakness. It is raised in power.

[ 39 : 40 ] It's sown as a natural body. It's raised as a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there's also a spiritual body. Thus is written, the first man, Adam, became a living being. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

He was sown and raised. The perishable, raised imperishable, that he might give life. That he might bear much fruit.

That his death might be the firstborn among many brethren. That the spoils of his victory might reach every tribe, tongue, and people, and nation.

Just because this one was so great and so wonderful. Did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. But emptied himself into the form of a baby. But into the ground as a sinner judged to die. That through his death, he might raise up many sons and daughters of glory. Through his death.

[ 40 : 38 ] That's what we get to proclaim. We get to hear. And we get to proclaim that others might hear. And by hearing, find life. Father in heaven, we thank you for your mercy towards us and Jesus Christ.

You don't treat us as our sins deserve. Lord, we thank you that you have given us this word. It locates us and situates us and envisions us for our life.

We praise you and worship you for the secret and the mystery of the kingdom. We praise you. Praise you that though you were rich, you became poor.

Though you were strong, you became weak. Though you were glorious, you became an infant child.

And embraced. Not just the reality of life in this world. But the shame of the cross. We praise you and worship you.

[ 41 : 52 ] And call upon you this day. In Jesus' name. Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander. Lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

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