

“The True Light”
Mark 4:21-25
(Preached at Trinity, May 26, 2010)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In the beginning of **Chapter 4** we saw one of the most familiar of our Lord’s parables – the Parable of the Sower. Though the parable has several elements, there is one theme that runs throughout the parable. The theme is hearing the Word of God.
^{NAS} **Mark 4:15** - "And these are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them."
Mark 4:16-17 - "In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky *places*, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; ¹⁷ and they have no *firm* root in themselves, but are *only* temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away."
Mark 4:18-19 - "And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, ¹⁹ but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful."
Mark 4:20 – “And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold."
Mark 4:3 - "Listen *to this!* Behold, the sower went out to sow;"
ἀκούω – “listen!” - hear
Mark 4:9 – “And He was saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."
2. The problem is 3 of the four hearers were only temporary hearers. They did not actually hear the Word, they did not actually receive it – even the one who temporarily received the Word with great gladness and joy.
3. This parable describes the multitudes who due to the hardness of their hearts remain deaf to God’s Word.
They harden their hearts *and* their hearts are hardened.
 - A. Lost humanity is spiritually blind and deaf. They stubbornly resist God. As they continue in hardness God judicially hardens them.
 - B. We can see this clearly with Pharaoh during the plagues of Egypt.
 - C. To those who hear God blesses with more understanding. To those who continue in unbelief even the understanding they have is taken away.
Mark 4:11-12 – “And He was saying to them, "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables, ¹² so that WHILE SEEING, THEY MAY SEE AND NOT PERCEIVE, AND WHILE HEARING, THEY MAY HEAR AND NOT UNDERSTAND, OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT RETURN AND BE FORGIVEN."
^{NAS} **Matthew 13:12** - "For whoever has, to him shall *more* be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him."

4. The longer the lost man continues in unbelief the harder his heart becomes. In judgment God denies them the knowledge of the truth.
^{NAS} **Isaiah 6:8-10** – “Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here am I. Send me!”⁹ And He said, “Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand.’¹⁰ “Render the hearts of this people insensitive, Their ears dull, And their eyes dim, Lest they see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, Understand with their hearts, And return and be healed.”
5. As we conclude the Parable of the Sower Jesus tells another parable. It is very brief.
Mark 4:21-22 – “And He was saying to them, “A lamp is not brought to be put under a basket, is it, or under a bed? Is it not *brought* to be put on the lampstand?²² For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has *anything* been secret, but that it would come to light.”
6. What is the meaning of this passage?
 A. The exact meaning is difficult.
 We must avoid being careless in our handling of the Word of God.
 The rule of context is an important hermeneutical principle – that is, allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture. This begins with the immediate passage. Then we examine the passage in the context of the Bible as a whole. This is referred to as the analogy of faith.
 B. As we’ve seen, the Parable of the Sower deals with hearing and receiving the Word of God. I think these verses are interpreted in this same context.
7. In once sense, we can apply **Verse 21** to the fruit that all true believers bear. Those who have heard will bear fruit for all to see.
Mark 4:21 – “A lamp is not brought to be put under a basket, is it, or under a bed? Is it not *brought* to be put on the lampstand?”
 A. Christians shine in this world of darkness as we reflect the light of Christ.
 Christians manifest the light of holiness before all.
^{NAS} **Ephesians 5:8** – “for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light”
 1. This world is a world of darkness blinded by the corruption of sin.
 2. We shine forth the reality of our transformed hearts. It cannot be hid. The good soil always bears fruit
 B. Christians shine the light of the Gospel throughout the earth. The good soil bears a great harvest.
 We automatically want to interpret this passage in light of our Lord’s teaching in the Beatitudes. But this passage isn’t speaking of *our* light.
8. But there is another way to look at this passage. Again, The Parable of the Sower deals with hearing and receiving the Word of God. I believe this passage says much about the Bible.
9. I want us to look at this passage under two simple heads tonight
 1. The Word of God is plain and open for all to receive – **Verses 21-22**
 2. Every man is responsible for how he hears – **Verses 23-25**

I. The Word of God is plain and open for all to receive – **Verses 21-22**

A. The Bible shines forth as a bright light

1. It is written in plain language – It is clear, understandable.
We refer to this as the perspicuity of Scripture.
2. On one hand, God is transcendent and incomprehensible. He cannot be known. He is past finding out. His ways are unknowable.
NAS **Romans 11:33-34** – “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! ³⁴ For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?”
NAS **Isaiah 55:8-9** - "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Neither are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. ⁹ "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts."
3. On the other hand, God *has* made Himself known – clearly
 - a. It reveals the glory of God
 - b. It directs the path of the righteous as a bright light
Psalms 119:105 – “Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

B. The Word of God is not hidden. The Gospel is not mystical or concealed.

1. When we say that the Bible is perspicuous we have to understand what this means and what it does not mean.
 - a. It does not mean that all parts are equally plain.
 - b. It also does not mean that great care doesn't have to be exercised in order to understand it properly.
 - c. It doesn't rule out the need for teachers. God has gifted the church with pastors to teach and explain the Scriptures
NAS **Acts 8:30-31** – “And when Philip had run up, he heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" ³¹ And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.”
 - d. It also doesn't mean that the Holy Spirit is not essential for the proper understanding of the Word of God.
2. It does mean that the Bible *is* a plainly written book. It is open and transparent.
 - a. It is not a light hidden under a bushel. In the Bible is all that a man needs to know for salvation and guidance.
It is sufficient.
NAS **2 Peter 1:19** – “And so we have the prophetic word *made* more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.”
 - b. It is simple enough for the simplest to understand using ordinary means, yet deep enough to challenge those of the highest intellectual ability

- II. Every man is responsible for how he hears – **Verses 23-25**
- A. Every man is responsible for his own soul
1. Every man is responsible to hear the Word of God
Mark 4:24 - "Take care what you listen to."
 2. Every man is responsible to heed the Word of God
James 1:23-24 – "For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was."
 3. Every man is responsible to examine carefully what he hears
Acts 17:10-11 – "The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹ Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily *to see whether these things were so.*"
 4. It is a great blessing to hear
^{KJV} **Mark 4:24** – "unto you that hear shall more be given."
- B. There is great warning for those who will not hear
- ^{NAS} **Mark 4:25** - "For whoever has, to him shall *more* be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him."
- ^{NAS} **Malachi 2:2** - "If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name," says the LORD of hosts, "then I will send the curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings; and indeed, I have cursed them *already*, because you are not taking *it* to heart."
1. The one who will not hear becomes more and more hardened to the Word of God.
 2. God will remove what little understanding we have. We will continue to grope in darkness and ignorance until we perish in our sin.

Conclusion:

1. It is a great blessing to be exposed to the Word of God. But there is great responsibility.
Luke 12:48 – "And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more."
2. We must not only hear, we must receive – and those who receive will bear much fruit.