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INTERNATIONAL

TEACHING THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

Mark - Lesson 4B

Chapter 4:13-25

P.O. Box 702107
San Antonio, Texas, 78270
210.319.5055

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- In our last teaching of the parable of the soils (Part 1), we went through the parables' agrarian example of sower, seed, and soil.
 - We went through 4 soil conditions that rendered a different result for seed dispersed in that particular condition.
 - And we broke down each soil condition to understand them both individually and collectively.
 - Tonight, we will hear from our Lord and Savior as He explains in detail what this parable truly means.
 - Let us sit at the Master's feet tonight and hear what He has to say in Part 2 of the Parable of the Soils in verses 13-25.

Mark 4:13 And He *said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables?”

Mark 4:14 The sower sows the word.

Mark 4:15 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 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;

Mark 4:17 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 And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word,

Mark 4:19 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 4:21 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?”

Mark 4:22 For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it would come to light.

Mark 4:23 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Mark 4:24 And He was saying to them, “Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides.

Mark 4:25 For whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.”

- Let's Pray
- What will they see? Who will they see? How will they see?
 - Jesus tells His close followers and the Twelve about the mystery of the Kingdom of

God and He does this in parable form.

- The mystery of the Kingdom would entail the unfolding of the Kingdom of God both partially now and eventually in its full consummation.
- This news of the coming Kingdom begs some questions:
 - 1. What do the citizens of the Kingdom look like?
 - 2. How do the citizens of this Kingdom behave?
 - 3. How does one come to the knowledge of the Kingdom and its future glory?
- We witnessed in Part 1 of the Parable of the Soils that the knowledge of the Kingdom of God is revealed in the hearing and accepting of the word of God.
 - The hearing and acceptance of this truth is only realized because the Spirit of God opens up the hearts and minds of men and women to know and respond.
- You will know those who will have accepted this grace gift of salvation and come to the reality of this eschatological unveiling by the fruit they bear.
 - Jesus has just taught the disciples and the Twelve the reality of the Kingdom and those who will possess it.
 - However, in telling them the parable, they will need further explanation in their hearing of the Gospel of God so that they may come to full knowledge.
- We will take a peek behind the veil to witness the very unfolding of the mystery of the Kingdom of God.
 - He who has ears to hear let them hear. Pick me up at verse 13.

Mark 4:13 And He *said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables?”

- We see at this point of Jesus’ teaching the disciples and the Twelve this parable that there seems to be some sort of confusion as to what Jesus just said.
 - We see this clearly in the questions that Jesus poses here in verse 13 to His disciples and the Twelve.
 - You can almost sense that Jesus believed these men should have known what the parable meant.
 - Perhaps there was some non-verbal communication happening at this point.
 - Maybe the looks on the disciples’ faces were a bit perplexed as if crickets were going off and their heads tilted in utter confusion.
 - Plainly put, the disciples did not understand the parable that Jesus gave, which is what would have prompted Jesus’ questions in the first place, but more specifically, His 2nd question:
 - “How will you understand all the parables?”
 - We can safely assume as we inferred in Part 1 of our teaching through the Parable of the Soils that this parable would be the easiest to understand.
 - This would be the parable in which all the rest would be built upon. So knowing this parable was key to understanding the rest.

- So in what seems to be a bit of Jesus' frustration, He moves to provide the interpretation of the parable so that clarity and understanding could be given.
 - And it's in verse 14 that Jesus begins to provide the explanation. Check out the text.

Mark 4:14 The sower sows the word.

- If you recall in Part 1, we discussed that this parable was agricultural in nature and most connected with that of farming.
 - In that we were given 3 specific items with the parable:
 - The Sower
 - The Seed
 - The Soils
 - And with that, from Jesus' opening line of explanation in verse 14, He tells us that the sower/farmer sows the seed.
 - As we read in Luke's account last time, the seed in the parable is the word of God (the Gospel) according to Luke 8:11.
 - And it's here that Jesus gives clear distinction as to the role of the sower.
 - Again, not much emphasis is given to the sower except for the reality of what they do.
 - Simply put, the sower sows the word of God.
 - The sower, from what we can tell, is faithful to sow the word of the Gospel.
 - And what is most encouraging is that the sower sows the seed despite the varied soil conditions.
 - At every opportunity given, regardless of the soil's condition, the sower indiscriminately sows the seed.
 - Could this be why the Apostle Paul mentions these words in Romans 10:14-17? Check it out with me:

Romans 10:14 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?

Romans 10:15 How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!"

Romans 10:16 However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?"

Romans 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

- In order to know and benefit from the power of the Gospel, the message of the Gospel must be preached. It must be heard!
 - Jesus will now move to explain each soil condition. Check out verse 15.

Mark 4:15 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.

- So what we see from soil condition #1 is that the individual does in fact hear the word of God.
 - However, because of the type of ground that this soil is in, the seed has no opportunity to root itself in the hearts of the individual.
 - Therefore, because there are no spiritual roots, there is no spiritual fruit.
 - In other words the message of the Gospel goes in one ear and out the other.
 - Jesus tells us this happens because Satan, the moment that the word is heard, takes up the word.
 - So we have a hearer of the word but no reception of the word, which means there is no fruit.
 - Therefore, we can conclude that this individual is not a believer and is not saved.
 - Let's look at verse 16-17

Mark 4:16 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; **Mark 4:17** 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.

- As we approach condition #2, I want to make us aware that at face value this condition can be misleading, therefore we must approach it carefully.
 - Notice again that this person hears the word as well.
 - And what can potentially catch someone off guard regarding condition #2 is how the individual reacts to what they hear.
 - The text tells us that when the word is heard, they immediately receive it with joy.
 - One could look at this and be elated for this particular hearer.
 - Joy should be the result of every hearer!
 - However, Jesus' explanation of this condition does not end here. We must continue reading.
 - As we continue reading in verse 17, you'll notice that this individual has "no firm root" within their hearts.
 - If you think this is confusing, keep reading on in the same verse.
 - The text tells us, because there is no root in this person, "their ability to remain is only temporary."
 - Or as the ESV records "they endure for a little while."

- The moment that tribulation or persecution comes knocking at their door on account of the Word, this individual “falls away.”
 - This word “fall away” in the Greek is the word *skandolizo*.
 - It is used 29 times in the New Testament and of those 29 times, 15 are used in the passive tense, of which this one is.
 - And the passive tense carries the sense of falling away into apostasy.
- In other words, the immediate joy of this individual is fleeting and temporary.
 - Their measure of joy is not rooted in an everlasting hope, but rather it is rooted in false belief.
- The “immediate joy” springs forth from what can be benefited from knowing Christ rather than what it means to be fully satisfied knowing Christ alone.
 - This person’s hope rests not upon the supremacy and sovereignty of Christ but rather a “name it and claim it” mentality.
 - The moment that the healing doesn’t happen or the moment that the “blessing” doesn’t come, they abandon the faith.
 - Ultimately revealing their hearts were never rooted in Christ of the Scriptures.
- 1 John 2:19 tells it in this way:

1 John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

- One that does not endure with a Christ it claims to love is a heart that never held to the Christ of Scripture.
 - The believer truly rooted in the faith is anchored not only to what was heard and first received, but they are anchored to the One in whom the content, of what was heard, is all about – Jesus Christ.
 - Friends, a crucified Christ points us to the reality that we too will face suffering; He points us to a carrying of our own crosses.
 - Seeing and knowing a resurrected Jesus provides the hope of knowing that we too can and will endure to the end despite the suffering.
 - The Word Faith and Prosperity Gospel movements are confusing thousands of people into believing that Christ is here to benefit their bottom line or for their best life.
 - But that type of gospel brings no true satisfaction and a genie for a type of christ.
 - Only a suffering and crucified Christ can bring complete and total joy, because in Him on account of His word, our souls must be anchored in the Lord.
 - Let's keep moving to verses 18 and 19.

Mark 4:18 And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word,

Mark 4:19 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.

- Condition #3 if you recall was the soil where the seed was sown among thorns.
 - Notice, again, we see that this person hears the word as well.
 - Most importantly, we must pay close attention to the response of the seed in this soil.
 - It is in Jesus' explanation here that He flushes out what the thorns represent in this parable.
 - The thorns, Jesus explains, are:
 - 1. The cares of the world
 - 2. The deceitfulness of riches
 - 3. The desires for other things
 - Jesus states that these are the proverbial thorns that choke the Word, therefore causing unfruitfulness.
 - Notice that this person does have the word of God rooted in their hearts, which means they are believers.
 - However, their affections and attention are towards the things of this world rather than them having eyes for eternity.
 - In other words, this person hears the Word but does not yield fruit of the word.
 - I love Luke's account on Jesus' explanation of this parable as it provides us with clear spiritual insight.
 - Check out Luke 8:14 quickly:

Luke 8:14 The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity.

- Did you notice the ending of verse 14? It's quite revealing isn't it?
 - "...and bring no fruit to maturity."
 - The person that falls into the Condition #3 category is one who the word of God has set root in their hearts, however they are distracted with the world around them.
 - They seek for temporary satisfaction rather than attaining eternal rewards.
 - The deceitfulness of this person's riches provide a false sense of security and comfort.
 - This is why scripture speaks to the reality that the love of money is the root of all evil.
 - It's not that money is bad, it's the motive behind the money that leads to further steering from the main thing.

- I love what Paul instructs young Timothy to teach and instruct to those in whom he is leading. Turn with me to 1 Timothy 6:17.

1 Timothy 6:17 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.

- Friends, our joy and pleasure, affections and attention, our work and our aim should be solely to and for the Glory of God.
 - The goal is not to store up your treasures in a world that is perishing.
 - The goal is not to focus on 401K and other investments, all the while depriving your spiritual health and maturation.
 - Although money and careers, and things of this nature aid in accomplishing certain familial obligations, they do not and should not supersede the priority of the Kingdom program.
 - The true goal is Gospel fruitfulness which renders eternal rewards and effectiveness for the Kingdom.
 - Let's move to the last condition. Verse 20.

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.”

- This soil condition couldn't be any clearer than what the text presents. As my mom would say, if it was a snake it would bite you.
 - It is evident that this person has received the gospel message and has embraced and is growing in maturity and bountiful beauty.
 - Jesus says here that the word was heard, it was accepted, and it bears fruit.
 - Seems to be that this heart is a receptive heart that moved from simply hearing to effectual doing.
 - One could assume from an agrarian perspective that a harvest that doesn't produce fruit/crop is unfruitful.
 - Whereas a seed that produces a harvest renders itself fruitful.
 - And in the same way the gospel proclaimed produces within the receptive heart, spiritual transformation and spiritual blessing.
 - Bock, in his commentary on Matthew and Mark, states that the varying yield of crops indicates the different levels of productivity.
 - In other words, when the Gospel roots itself in the hearts of men and women, it produces transformed and fruitful lives.
 - Paul says these words to the people of God in Colossae. Check out what he tells them in Colossians 1:5-6.

Colossians 1:5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel
Colossians 1:6 which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth;

- The question and answer that is screaming to be asked and answered here is: What does the gospel do within the prepared hearts of the hearer?
 - It bears much fruit!
 - Jesus points to this reality that the gospel demands a proper response in your life as well as mine.
 - If one has truly been drawn by God, there will be external evidence (fruit) to show for what dwells in you richly (the word of God).
 - It is important to note here that the fruit of your life is not the measure by which one is justified by God.
 - Salvation is not based upon what you do for God but rather what God has graciously done for you.
 - We are justified by faith alone in Christ alone not by works.
 - Therefore, the proper response that reflects glorious gratitude for the grace God has freely given you and I in Salvation, is a life that wholly reflects His glory!
 - This is why Jesus says in Matthew 5:16 the following words:

Matthew 5:16 Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

- ◦ Watch how Jesus provides a proper illustration of what a life captured by the Gospel looks like. Check out verses 21-23.

Mark 4:21 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?

Mark 4:22 For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it would come to light.

Mark 4:23 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”

- It is here that Jesus further works out his explanation with proper illustration.
 - This particular illustration that Jesus uses is one that was extremely relatable to the 1st century reader and audience.
 - Notice that Jesus is speaking about a lamp and a lamp stand.
 - This may seem to be a simple detail, but it makes the most potent point.
 - For a source of light to be placed in a home during the 1st century, it required the pouring of oil into an oil lamp.
 - As you know there were no electrical grids or power sources of that caliber

during that time as we have today.

- It's not like how my kids freely leave on the light as if they pay the electric bill every month.
- The value of having to burn oil for light was so costly that knowing where in the home this light would be placed was of great importance.
 - So because of the value of the light and the cost it took to purchase oil, it would be a waste of time, money, and resources to put the light under a basket or a bed for that matter.
- The purpose of the light is to be made visible and to illuminate every dark corner in the vicinity.
 - Light illuminates the dark areas and reveals what is hidden.
- In the Hebrew scriptures, lampstands serve as a symbol of people's connection with Yahweh and the anticipation of His full light shining upon them.
 - In other words, the way in which people know what is within you will be seen in what comes out of you!
 - The Christian should be known and marked by what they believe, and it should be visibly evident in how they live.
- Hear me when I say this: this is not performance Christianity. This is simple spiritual maturity!
 - Are you maturing in the faith or are you still on the same spiritual level as when you first came to faith in Jesus?
 - The Gospel demands a whole-life response!
- Check out what Martyn Lloyd-Jones said in his book, "What is an Evangelical?"

“There is no purpose in having a basis or a confession of faith unless it is applied. So we must assert the element of discipline as being essential to true life of the church. And what calls itself a church which does not believe in discipline, and does not use it and apply it, is therefore not a true church.”

- Notice what Jesus says in v.23. He states that “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”
 - Recognize that Jesus has just explained the parable to them.
 - He is now drawing those closest to Him to lean in and pay close attention to what He has said and is saying to make a point.
 - The Greek word for “hear” is *akouo* which is in the present, active imperative.
 - Meaning this goes beyond simply hearing to hear, but rather the hearing translates to doing.
 - The idea is that you listen to obey and that the more you listen, the more you obey.
 - Check out how the last two verses provide the key to the point of hearing and obeying.

Mark 4:24 And He was saying to them, “Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides.

Mark 4:25 For whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.”

- Jesus begins to wrap up His point with the staunch reality of the light of the Gospel and its implications upon the hearts of men and women.
 - The purpose of the light is to be made known and to reveal areas of darkness so that you may know the way and know the truth.
 - It’s like driving a car in the dark on a two-lane road in the middle of nowhere.
 - You are unfamiliar with the area and the only way to know where you are going is to have your headlights on.
 - The moment that you turn on the lights, everything becomes visible and you become informed of what is around you and before you.
 - In this same way, Jesus is making known the importance of the truth which has been revealed to the disciples.
 - But most importantly, what must be done with the information that has been revealed.
 - Once the headlights are on it makes no sense to turn the headlights back off.
 - You now must grow with the illumination and information that you have.
 - This is why Jesus tells them, “Take care of what you listen to...”
 - I love how the New Living Translation reads in this verse.

Mark 4:24 (NLT) Then he added, “Pay close attention to what you hear. The closer you listen, the more understanding you will be given—and you will receive even more.

- To put it another way, as you grow in spiritual maturity in obedience to Christ which leads to more fruit, the greater your rewards will be in the Kingdom.
 - Your fruitfulness is measured by your obedience, and your obedience reveals your affections.
 - The efforts that we put towards this world should be put into the work that we do for the Kingdom of God because of the Light of life we know in Jesus Christ.
 - Jesus sums up His point of the last two soils at the end here in verse 25.
 - He mentions that just as those who bear more fruit bear more reward in the Kingdom, he mentions the opposite for the believer that bears no fruit.
 - Check out part b of verse 25, “whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.”
 - Condition #3 Christians fall into the consequences mentioned in part b of verse 25.
 - For the believer who keeps their lights under the bowl; hide their witness in

the world because of their love for this world, Jesus makes it clear that their rewards will be few to none in the Kingdom.

- Check out what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:9-15.

1 Corinthians 3:9 For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building.

1 Corinthians 3:10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it.

1 Corinthians 3:11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:12 Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

1 Corinthians 3:13 each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work.

1 Corinthians 3:14 If any man’s work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward.

1 Corinthians 3:15 If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

- ○ The Condition #3 Christian will have nothing to account for what is within them because their rewards will have all been burned up rather than stored in the incorruptible Kingdom that has no end.
- So what do we see Jesus speaking to here in the Parable of the Soils?
 - We see that C1s are completely lost and without hope.
 - C2s have a false sense of belief and simply need to come to know the true and living Savior.
 - C3s are Christians who need to move from spiritual immaturity to spiritual maturity and abandon their need for worldly things.
 - And lastly C4s are Christians who are mature and growing in eternal rewards.
 - Here’s the question on the table tonight: “Which condition do you fall under?”
 - Are you the C3 Christian that needs to, as the Lord God says in Jeremiah 4:3:

Jeremiah 4:3 For thus says the Lord to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem, “Break up your fallow ground, And do not sow among thorns.

- The idea of breaking up the fallow ground and not sowing among the thorns speaks to this need to remove the weeds and thorns that hinder the harvest so that room can be made for fruitful growth.
 - God’s desire for the C3 Christian is that they move from fruitlessness to fruitfulness.
 - And by God’s grace through obedience and prayer the distractions of life can

wane in the background so that the Glory of God may be made evidently known.

- Here is the good news here for the C3 Christian, you can be fruitful, simply begin the work of breaking up the fallow ground.
 - Make yourself available to the Lord and as David said in the Psalms, “Create in me a clean heart that I might not sin against thee.”
 - There is hope, simply submit and obey.
- Let’s Pray.

Citation:

- Chad Michael Foster, [“Lampstand.”](#) ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016)