

**Mark 4:21 – 25**

April 14, 2018

I remember the very first hearing test I took in grade school in Slidell, LA. As a first grader I was told to report to the nurse's office. It is strange, the nurse never had a name, but she had a domain – her office.

I went there and there was looked to my 6 year old eyes a high tech marvel. There was a big computer looking thing with fancy headphones attached. The nurse told me to put them on and when I heard a tone raise the hand that corresponds to the ear I heard it with.

If you hear the tone with your left ear, raise your left hand and vice versa. So, for the next minute or two I looked like a marionette constantly raising or lowering my hands to a rhythm only I could hear.

But was I right? I have no idea. After the hearing test the nurse just sent me back to my class without telling me how I did on the test. I'm sure the school mailed my parents the results, but as a child it was all very mysterious.

In fact, I never received the results of any of my hearing tests that I ever took. I never knew how I did on any hearing test.

Today, we are all going to have a hearing test and the results are going to be plain and clear. Jesus is going to administer this hearing test and he is going to let us help us evaluate how we hear.

You see, the hearing we are talking about today is not so much about the physical act of using your ears but of listening. It is possible and often the case to have fully functional ears – to be able to pass the hearing tests in any nurse's office – and yet not hear. It is also possible to be hearing impaired and yet hear perfectly well.

Hearing is not merely biological, but the kind of hearing Jesus is talking about today is also spiritual. You see, Jesus is talking about not how well you hear noises but how well you hear him.

That is the test – do you hear Jesus?

Which leads us to the main idea for today – Listen to Jesus and his Word.

And if I were to put it in one word, it would be:

PROP: Listen!

We join Jesus again on the shores of the Sea of Galilee as the crowds gather in to listen to him teach.

“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? <sup>22</sup>For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. <sup>23</sup>If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.” <sup>24</sup>And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. <sup>25</sup>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.” Mark 4:21-25

## PRAY

There are two short parables here that Jesus uses to teach the gathered people.

The parable of the lamp

The parable of the measures

### *1. Listen! The parable of the lamp (Mark 4:21-23)*

Listen!

Verses 21 and 22 are a bit strange and at first blush a little obscure and hard to understand. We have to remember what has come before in Mark 4 – what we heard last week in Jason’s sermon – we need to remember that Jesus told the famous parable of the sower. I like to call it the parable of the soils.

If you were here you remember Jesus told the story twice – first to the gathered crowds and then to his close associates. The first time he told the story with no explanation and the second time he told the story and explained the whole parable.

You'll remember if you were here that the parable of the soils are 4 different ways that people respond to Jesus and his word. 4 different ways of hearing.

A farmer throwing seed – and that seed ends up on four different kinds of ground.

1. Seed on the path: This ground is hard and the seed cannot gain any depth and the birds come and scarf it down. This kind of hearing that is not hearing corresponds to the devil coming and snatching away the effect of the word.
  - You do realize that Satan and his demons are violently opposed to you taking the word in? Either by reading the word or sitting on the preaching of the word.
  
2. Seed on rocky ground: Seeds on this ground seems to take root because a plant pops up but they really don't have any roots in themselves. So, when the trials of persecution or hardship come the plant is burned up. This kind of hearing is not really hearing either.
  - These people will follow Jesus until life gets too hard.

3. Seed amongst thorny ground: Seeds on this ground are choked out as the thorns overwhelm the sapling and it is no more. This corresponds to people who hear the word but the trial of prosperity choke it out. This kind of hearing is not really hearing either.

- These people will follow Jesus until he doesn't seem worth following.

4. Seed on good soil: Seeds sown on this ground take root, grow and produce fruit. From that tiny little seed we see a harvest much greater than any can imagine coming from a tiny seed. These are people who hear the word and fully accept it. This is only real example of hearing from the four pictures.

- These people are the only ones who hear.

Jesus did not explain to the crowds at the time what all these seed pictures meant. Can you imagine? I went to hear the teacher and he taught about farming methods.

Put seeds in good soil.

Mysterious.

But right in the middle is a confusing and unsettling quotation that Jesus says from Isaiah. After the

disciples say, Why do you teach in those confusing parables he says,

[11] And he said to them, “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, [12] so that

“they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.”  
Mark 4:11-12

Jesus is quoting Isaiah 6 – it is not just that many of the people were unable to understand the parables – he is speaking in riddles and mysteries for now. Only his followers understand that Jesus is the key to understanding the kingdom of God.

Only his disciples are beginning to understand the sparkling power of the kingdom of God in the words, the person and the work of Jesus.

And the followers don't yet really understand.

No one else gets it yet.

The crowd heard Jesus but did not understand yet. The Pharisees heard Jesus and what they did understand threw them into a murderous rage. At this point – both – fail their hearing test.

The question then becomes – will the message of Jesus always be confounding? Will this message always be obscured by strange farming analogies?

NO.

Verse 21,

[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? [22] For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. Mark 4:21-22

You see the point of the lamp parable? When you bring a lamp into a room, none of you puts it under a bed or a basket. Why? Because the point of the lamp is to bring light to a room.

The point of the words, person and work of Jesus is to bring light to the world. It is just not clear yet. Jesus and his message will not be hidden away under a bed or obscured by a basket.

Jesus and his message will shine for all to see – if they are willing.

And as you follow the storyline of this gospel and the rest of the Bible, you see the light and the glory of Jesus Christ get progressively brighter.

By the end of Mark, Jesus is going to die and rise again. More will see his light. He ascended to heaven and scattered his apostles and more hear his light. The lamp of God cannot be hidden.

As time passed more and more will hear the message of the light of the lamp until one day all will see and hear Jesus the great lamp of God.

Jesus is saying, The parables do not present me in a clear light now, but because I am the light of the world, people will see it.

I'm going to be like a lamp that lights up the room. I'm going to make myself clear. I am going to shed light not just by my words but by my all my actions.

The message about me can't be put under a basket or a bed, but it is meant to shine forth like a lamp that illumines an entire room.

What is hidden when Jesus walked the earth teaching in parables will be clear when he ascends. Have you noticed that after the gospels, the other NT writers do not write in parables.

Paul, John, Peter, Jude and the boys speak to be understood. They are clear, just like a light put in the middle of a room.



But even when who Jesus is and what he does is clear – that does not automatically mean that people will hear.

Hearing takes work.

Verse 23,

**“If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”**

I might render verse 23,

“If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen.”

The message of Jesus in the word of God is unlike any other anything else we hear in life. When you come in contact with the message of Jesus you are put on notice.

His message makes a claim on the hearer.

No one can just say, that is interesting. OR I'll think about that later. If you do, you prove you are not listening. You fail the hearing test.

Are you listening?

To understand who Jesus is and why he matters takes more than just using the sense of hearing. You must hear, consider and use your mind. You must hear to understand what is being said to really listen.

He who has ears to hear – hear what Jesus is saying.

The nation of Israel had a history of NOT listening. The three major prophets – Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah; the one mid-major prophet – Daniel and the rest of the minor prophets warned Israel.

And they did not hear.

They had ears to hear but they did not listen. In other words, Israel's problem was not one of biology but of spirituality.

They refused to listen to the prophets of God. They all went their own way and did not listen.

Do you know why Israel did not listen?

They worshiped idols. As you know Idols were false Gods crafted for worship. An idol always was a figure of some kind with eyes and ears and arms and legs.

Idols had eyes but could not see.  
Idols had ears but could not hear.

Israel worshiped lifeless idols with ears but they could not hear. They worshiped idols with eyes but those eyes were useless. They could not see.

So when Jesus says, “If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen.”

He is saying. Don't be like the dead idols who have ears but do not hear and they have eyes and cannot see.

At the time Jesus is on earth the idolatry of the nation had morphed from statutes into an idolatry of religious traditionalism.

Israel of Jesus' day worshiped their own rules and regulations and ignored God the son. They were just like their idols – they had eyes but could not see – they had ears and could not hear.

They failed the hearing test.

We can fail it too. Why?

Idolatry is not just an ancient phenomena, it can and does tempt us today. We worship an idol when we put make a thing ultimate.

It is putting something – anything – in the place of God. That is idolatry. Even we who know and follow Jesus can be tempted by idolatry.

What do I mean?

Idolatry of any sort causes us to losing our hearing. When we worship idols – those things we put in place of Jesus – we lose the ability to hear Jesus and his word.

We begin to fail the hearing test.

No one of us are going to be tempted to worship a Buddha statue who has eyes but cannot see and ears but cannot hear.

We are more sophisticated, we take our idols, make them invisible and carry them around in our hearts. What are some idols we might worship?

- Idol of comfort: We worship at the shrine of comfort and ease and do anything to avoid sacrifice or hardship. If you are put out you are not just put out your god is challenged.
  - If you worship the idol of comfort – you will fail the hearing test. You'll have ears but be unable to hear the word of Jesus.
  
- Idol of money: Worship at the sanctuary of the almighty dollar. You live to gain money and you worship the power you get. To lose money is more than just a loss, it is a tragedy. To gain money is more than just a win it is the best ever.
  - If you worship the idol of money – you will fail the hearing test. You will have ears but unable to hear the word of Jesus.

- Idol of family: Some of us worship in the hallowed halls of family. We live for the perfect family. When your children don't perform or turn out – you are not just disappointed – you are crushed. When they do perform you are not just happy you are euphoric.
  - If you worship the idol of family – you will fail the hearing test. You will have ears but be unable to hear the word of Jesus.
  
- Idol of Respectability: Some of us worship in the temple of what others think. When you are not respected you are not just disappointed, you are crushed. When you are respected you are not just pleased you are elated.
  - If you worship the idol of respectability you will fail the hearing test. You will have ears but be unable to hear the word of Jesus.

Just to name a few.

“If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Do you hear the voice of Jesus?

You can live for a great many things but none of those things will deliver. Idols cannot help anyone, Jesus can.

Christian – we can catch ourselves worshiping idols and forget how good it is to serve Jesus. You can tell by what you are listening to.

Are your ears tuned into Jesus and his word or idols and their preferences?

Are you hearing him?

Not a Christian – I hope you see that all of us worship something. What are you worshiping? That idol whatever it may be cannot do for you what you are asking.

No idol can give you meaning or purpose or happiness.

I hope today you are beginning to hear Jesus.

## ***2. Listen! The parable of the measures (Mark 4:24-25)***

Verse 24,

[24] And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. Mark 4:24

This is not hearing in general. But listening and taking in the message of Jesus Christ. Jesus is NOT telling us here merely to be good listeners but he is saying – listen to me!

The more you listen to Jesus and his word, the more you will hear from him.

To listen to him, we are not just talking about the teaching he gave on earth – though we must listen to that teaching – but also we must listen to the other biblical teaching about Jesus.

We must listen to who Jesus is, what he has done and why it matters. That is what the NT is all about.

With the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you.

This is a stunning promise. ‘With the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you.’

We might say – you get out what you put in.

- Mediocre work-out = mediocre results.
- Middling school effort = Middling grades.
- Moderate work performance = Moderate career

We get that, but Jesus is saying much more.

He is not just saying you get out what you put in, but you get out much more than you put in.

When you give yourself to the private reading of God's word – you will receive far more than you put in. The words of life will make a difference.

- Try this: Pick one verse and memorize it and see how often that bit of truth props you up.

When you give yourself to sitting under the consistent singing and preaching of God's word – you will receive far more than you put in. The words of life sung and preached make a massive difference.

- Try this: When the preacher preaches from the word of God – listen and hear the voice of God.

When we give ourselves to the study and meditation of the word of God together – you will receive far more than you put in. Sitting with Christians talking about Christ and his word does wonders.

- Try this: Ask someone you respect what the Lord has been speaking through his word.

Sometimes we can feel far from God – and the first question is a question of hearing. Are you hearing the word of God as you read? No. You will feel far from God.

Sometimes we can feel God is distant – but sometimes we create that distance by not being consistently with the saints on Sunday.



The measure you use as you use the ears you have to hear – more will be given to you. And you will pass the hearing test.

The hearing test we are talking about today has nothing to do with whether our ears work and everything to do with our hearts work. Jesus is not talking about biological hearing but spiritual hearing.

The more you hear, the more you will hear.

Do you find yourself more and more drawn to Jesus and his word? Or more and more distant?

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

And if you don't listen to Jesus and his word – a terribly frightening fate awaits:

[25] 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." Mark 4:25

If you don't listen to Jesus you will not be able to listen to him – and you will fail the hearing test.

You see, entrance to the kingdom of God is by hearing and not by doing. Christ Jesus is calling today to you – are you hearing?

Are you listening?

Listen!