

“Who do you say that I am?” Mark - Part 5
The One who Communicates Truth
Mark 4:1-34
January 22nd, 2017

I. Jesus tells the CROWDS a PARABLE. (4:1-9)

- A. The NUMBERS are GROWING...(3:7-34)**
- B. The SEED and the SOILS. (4:1-9)**
- C. EARS to HEAR... (4:9)**

As we continue from chapter 3 on into chapter 4, Mark reminds us that the crowds are growing. But Jesus isn't seeking crowds, He has come to form a new nation, led by the 12 and connected by those "who do God's will." (3:31) In chapter 4 He begins to help his disciples understand why people respond in different ways to the good news that He is bringing.

1. What insights have you taken from this parable in the past? Why do you think Mark would choose to place it here as He tells the story of Jesus?
2. How can you know if you have "ears to hear" or not?

II. The DISCIPLES want an EXPLANATION. (4:10-20)

- A. A CRYPTIC quote from ISAIAH. (4:12)**
- B. A variety of RESPONSES to the WORD. (4:14-20)**
- C. This is a FOUNDATIONAL PARABLE. (4:13,33-34)**

We may think the disciples were a bit slow, but remember, we have heard this story a lot, as well as the explanation that follows it. For the disciples it was the first time they had heard it; it was a story without context and they were confused. They had some questions...and Jesus' answers doubtless inspired more questions.

3. What do you think Jesus means when He says that "the secret of the Kingdom of God has been given to..." the disciples?
4. Why do you think Jesus taught in parables? Does 4:12 make you uncomfortable? How does it relate to 4:22?
5. Is Jesus telling this parable to tell us to care for our "soil" or to help us understand how people react to the communication of the gospel? Or both?

III. GUIDELINES for DISCIPLES (4:21-32)

- A. MAKE the message VISIBLE. (4:21-25)**
- B. Let the TRUTH do its WORK. (4:26-29)**
- C. SMALL things make a BIG difference. (4:30-32)**

After this Mark share three quick little vignettes taught by Jesus to help bring some more clarity to what He is trying to say to His disciples...and to us. The point isn't how people respond, it's that we are sharing the light and planting the seeds, letting God do the work only He can do in the lives of people.

6. In what ways does sharing the light of the gospel come most easily to you? What ways are the most challenging?
7. How does 4:26-29 impact the way you interact with those you are sharing the gospel with? Does it point out specific things to you that you should or should not do?

IV. LISTENING from the CROWD today...

- A. Make sure your SOIL has EARS. (4:1-9,13; Ezek. 3:10)**
- B. Don't DIG UP what you've PLANTED. (4:27; Jas. 1:2-4)**
- C. Don't OVERLOOK what others see as TRIVIAL. (4:31-21; I Cor. 1:27-29)**

We are in the crowd today. We are the ones following Jesus, listening to His teaching. And just as Mark has shown us in the past weeks that this is the One with authority, the One who can redefine how we relate to God, now He makes clear that He is calling us on mission with him to share the truth. How will we respond?

8. What types of things in your life (pursuits, hobbies, activities, relationships) have you found help you listen better to Jesus? Which ones hinder that?
9. How can be careful not to "dig up what we have planted"? Why is that hard for us to do sometimes?
10. What trivial or small things has God used in your own life? What (or who) have you often disregarded because you thought it was too small to be of any importance? What is God saying to you about that (or them)?