

Mark 4:1-20 – Four Types of Hearts; Four Types of Responses

TSK, GreekLexicon, INT, Handfuls, Poole, Robertson, JFB, Calvin, Geneva, Rienecker, Alexander, Henry, Gill,

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: I was reading over some commentators (解经书) on this text and was surprised by how some interpreted it. One of them said: “Before the seeds are sown, you must consider how much of the seeds you are to eat...and you must consider the danger of wanting to eat what you must sow.” What the commentator was saying was true, but this was not the purpose of this parable. A parable (比喻) has one meaning...one main point. And the point of this parable was to **show how various people respond to the Gospel**. If you remember the context: Jesus had just appointed the 12 apostles (使徒) to go on a practice run of preaching the Gospel and he therefore wanted them to be prepared for how some might respond to the Gospel they preached. So you will hear today about the 4 types of hearts on which the Gospel seed would fall.

Our headings are:

Four Types of Hearts

Four Types of Response

Our goals are: **That you will have good hearts for the Word to grow, and that you might be prepared be patient when you bring that Word to others.**

Four Types of Hearts

1 And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea. 2 Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching:

1. Jesus assumed his regular position of backing the lake while he spoke so his voice could travel to many more people. It was

also a spot where he could talk to Jews and Gentiles (外邦人) – being away from prying eyes of the city elites. (Romans 1:14) Apostle Paul: “I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians (野蛮人), both to wise and to unwise.”

So with Jews and Gentiles there he started to teach them a parable about a sower (撒种的人).

3 "Listen! Behold, **a sower went out to sow**. 4 "And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the **birds of the air came and devoured it**. 5 "Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. 6 "But when the **sun was up it was scorched**, and because it had no root it withered away. 7 "And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and **choked it**, and it yielded no crop. 8 "But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and **produced**: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."

2. Jesus wanted their undivided attention for this parable so he used the word “behold.”

3. In this parable he spoke of a sower who sowed seeds on 4 different types of soil or ground.

a. The first set of seed fell on hard ground, on the wayside, and they were quickly eaten up by birds. The soil was too hard for the seeds to penetrate.

b. The second set of seed fell on stony ground. It grew up, but quickly died because of the sun's heat as it had no depth. It never produced any grain.

c. The third set of seed fell among thorns (荆棘) and grew up, but were choked by thorns and died. Even though it had depth of soil, it did not produce any grain.

d. The 4th set of seed fell on good ground, grew up, and bore much grain.

9 And He said to them, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

4. Jesus then urged those who heard the parable to pay attention and search out the meaning of the parable. They all heard it, but not everyone cared to pursue the understanding of the parable. Some loved ignorance.

5. Lessons:

a. No one gets the Word until God gives it to them through you. There is no intrinsic (天生的, 内在的) knowledge of salvation in man. You might know about the world and you might know that God exists, but you only know your sin, how you are set free, and how you are to thank God through the Bible. So get involved in evangelization (传道).

Effectively support those who are involved in evangelization. This is surely applicable to your family. Don't stand on judgment day and **watch your children march to hell** because you did not bring the Word of God to them!

b. Receive also a general warning: You must necessarily put energy to studying and receiving the Word of God. It is pure laziness to read something in the Scripture, know that you don't know what it means, and then move to the next chapter.
c. If you are not a Christian, search out the Word of God. Let it sink into your heart. Let it bear fruit. You will have to give an account for every sermon (讲道) you wasted! Don't waste this precious seed.

Four Types of Response

10 But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. 11 And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, 12 "so that '**Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand;** Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them.'" 13 And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?"

1. Jesus' disciples heard the parable, but did not understand it, so they asked for an interpretation from the Savior. Others heard it but did not care to get the meaning.

2. Jesus first stated that he did not explain the parable otherwise some would hear it and believe the Gospel. Why would he not explain the Gospel to others? He did this because no one deserved to hear the Gospel and he was only going to reveal it to the ones he chose! So he quoted the dirge(哀歌) of the damned from Isaiah...a recurring theme in the Bible.

Isaiah 6:9 And He said, "Go, and tell this people: '**Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.**'

Romans 11:8 Just as it is written: "**God has given them a spirit of stupor (昏迷),** Eyes that they should not see And ears that they should not hear, To this very day."

2Corinthians 4:3 But **even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,** 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

The Gospel does not blind or deafen. It is man who is willfully blind and deaf. God simply leaves them and they blind their own eyes. **Many people not like this,** but this is the teaching of the Word of God.

This doctrine surely would have made the disciples pay more attention.

14 "The sower sows the word.

3. Now the meaning: The sower was sowing the seed.

a. What is the seed? The Word of God. So this is Gospel preaching.

Luke 8:11 "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

b. Who is the sower? The Lord Jesus and those whom he redeemed to join him in this work.

Matthew 13:37..."He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 "The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares (稗子) are the sons of the wicked one.

15 "And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.

4. What are these 4 different types of ground? The four different types of ground are four hearts.

So it is the same seed with the same Sower, but the ground is different...the soil...the soul...

5. How does each heart respond to the Word of God that is sown in it?

a. Some hearts are truly hard. They hear the word but it never sinks in (吸收 , 了解). There is never a proper understanding of truth.

Ezekiel 33:32 "Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; **for they hear your words, but they do not do them.**

The Word goes in one ear and comes out the other. And the Devil likes to snatch away truth...snatch away like the birds tried to snatch away pieces of the sacrifices in Genesis 15, when Abraham fell asleep.

16 "These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; 17 "and they have **no root in themselves,** and so endure only for a time.

Afterward, when **tribulation or persecution** arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble.

b. Some hearts are superficially impressed with the truth, but the truth never sinks in deep enough. They listen carefully, even eagerly, but they are never brought to a sense of sin and shame, and so never repent. Luke's account say these may even have joy. They may confidently talk the Christian talk. They may even fool people into thinking they believe.

Luke 8:13 "But the ones on the rock *are those* who, when they hear, **receive the word with joy;** and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation (试探) fall away.

But they wither and die as soon as there is trouble: they lose a friend, they have to give up a job, or they had to change some things in their lifestyle... They promised fruits, but only dry stubble (作物收割后遗留在地上的残茎) remains. Yes, **they imagined they have faith**, but it is exposed as soon a persecution comes-like sun on grass. Shame of the cross cripples (出现问题 , 严重毁坏) . But a true inheritance never fades.

1Peter 1:4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

18 "Now these are the ones **sown among thorns**; they are the ones who hear the word, 19 "and the cares of this world, the **deceitfulness of riches**, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

c. Some hearts allow the Word of God to sink it and it even starts to grow, but other things take over. Salvation seems close, but never in grasp.

Luke 8:14 "Now the ones *that* fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, **and bring no fruit to maturity.**

Sports, fame, influence, wealth, and other pleasures choke the grain from growing. **Lusts of the flesh, lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life raise their ugly mutant heads.** John Calvin said that each of us has a "forest of thorns" that we must pull out. And one of the biggest thorns is covetousness(贪心)...the overwhelming desire to pursue earthly possessions as oppose to spiritual things. Sometimes fear of persecution can also choke out the Word.

20 "But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."

d. Some, however, are not rebellious. They don't react emotionally, but become fully conscious of their sins when the Word is preached. They don't allow pressures and persecution to take over and they don't let the pleasures of this world to take over. They overcome all obstacles (障碍物) that try to kill their new life. And then show grain... fruits of obeisance (敬意) and obedience!

Luke 8:15 "But the ones *that* fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep *it* and bear fruit with patience.

6. Lessons:

a. In this parable it is the fruit that shows salvation...not the life of the plant. So don't misunderstand this to think that it is possible for someone to lose his salvation after he gets life.

Remember the genre (体裁) : It is parable. Parables have one point!

b. Jesus had no obligation to bring the Gospel to you. This means you must be very, very thankful that you have it. Remember what the **Gospel is to Christians:**

Psalms 119:105 Your word *is* a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

Psalms 119:130 The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.

What a precious privilege (特权) you have to have the Gospel! God could easily have prevented you from seeing the truth, but he graciously sent someone to you with the Gospel. Covet the Gospel!

c. Your heart must allow the Word of God to sink in. When the Word sinks in and is nourished by God's Spirit, not cares and worries, it will produce faith and holiness - fruits of the Spirit.

Conclusion:

There are 4 common types of hearts: rock hard, superficial hearts, lustful hearts, and good hearts. Only Christians have good hearts...and they only have the good hearts because the Holy Spirit softened them.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

a. Learn to "lay aside all filthiness (污秽) and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls." Remind the Holy Spirit to keep your heart soft. Remove the thoughts and activities that hinder your Christian growth. Rip out lusts. Receive the Word of God and let it grow in you each Sunday and throughout the week.

b. Spread this Word. Spread it everywhere you go. These people with the different hearts were all around Jesus, and they are all around you. You don't have the knowledge of each heart, so sow everywhere!

c. Pray that the Holy Spirit will work in bad soils to prepare them for the Word of Truth. So when the message of the cross comes, men will realize their sins, repent of them, and rest in Jesus.

Finally: If you are not a Christian, you have one of the 3 bad hearts. Whichever one you have, you will take it to hell with you, unless the Holy Spirit makes your heart soft! Will you pray today that the Holy Spirit will remove that heart of stone... marred (被损伤) by sensuality and lusts... and give you a new heart to receive the things of the Lord?