

The "Secret"

Opening Announcements

Opening Prayer

Q: Have you ever wondered why Jesus often uses parables?

Q: What is the effectiveness and the strength of a parable?

Q: What's the challenge of a parable?

READ: Mark 1:1-9 "Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. ² And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: ³ "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. ⁵ Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. ⁶ And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. ⁸ And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold." ⁹ And he said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Q: What's the command of verse 3?

Q: Why is it important to "listen"?

Q: What does the word "Behold" mean?

Q: What's the relationship between listening and paying attention and what Jesus is about to say?

Q: What's interesting to you about this parable?

Q: How many in this parable are "fruitful"?

Q: Why is the majority NOT fruitful?

Q: What problems do the different soils have?

Q: Have you ever experienced any of those in your life?

Q: What's different about the "good soil"?

Q: How do WE become "fruitful"?

READ: Mark 4:10-12 "And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. 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.' "

In this section, the disciples ask Jesus privately about this parable. He quotes Isaiah 6:9-10.

READ: Isaiah 6:9-10 " 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' ¹⁰ Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

- This seems like Isaiah has been called to an impossible and futile task! But there's MORE going on in this than maybe first meets the eye. Remember Jesus quotes this to the disciples.

Q: What does Jesus mean by saying "to you has been given the secret of the Kingdom of God"? Who/What is the "secret"?

Q: Why are some "outside"?

Q: How does Isaiah's calling and Jesus' words represent God's judgement on those who refuse to see and hear?

Q: Why didn't they "turn and be forgiven"?

READ: Mark 4:13-20 "And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? ¹⁴ The sower sows the word. ¹⁵ And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. ¹⁶ And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. ¹⁷ And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. ¹⁸ And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, ¹⁹ but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. ²⁰ But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."

Q: What's interesting/insightful to you about this section?

Q: What do you notice about the "path", "the rocky soil" or the ones sown in the thorns?

Q: What do you notice about the "good soil"?