

Mark 4

Opening Illustration: Everyone loves a story.

Russell Conwell proved that to be true when he told one particular story over 5,000 times. In the process, he made for himself, eight million dollars. It was a story that you may have heard, entitled, “**Acres of Diamonds**”.

- It is the story of a farmer in Africa, who had heard that other African settlers had discovered diamond mines. So, he sold his little flea-bitten farm and took off looking for a mine. He ended his life tragically one day, by killing himself. The result was, he never found a diamond.
- However, the man who bought his little farm was out at the stream that ran through his property one day, and discovered a stone. That stone turned out to be an extremely valuable diamond. After further searching, he found that his farm was literally, sitting on one of the richest diamond mines in all of Africa.

Point: It is fascinating to hear a story.

- **Note:** Everyone seems to lean forward a little more when you tell a story.

In **Mark 4**, Jesus takes a dramatic turn in His ministry.

- He will now begin teaching by using stories.
- We call these stories “parables”.
 - The word “parable” means to “cast alongside”.

The standard definition of a “parable” is “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.”

- **In other words:** you tell a story of something natural and, by that story, teach something eternal.

With that said, there are some things you should keep in mind about parables:

1. Parables aren't allegories...

- Not every item refers to something else...
- we need to try to find the intent of the parable, avoiding subjective correspondence.

2. Jesus used parables like a two-edged sword.

- **David Platt** says of parables: “parables revealed truth to those who were believing the mysterious; and the parables concealed truth from those who were denying the obvious.”
- **The mystery or the secret concerns Jesus.**
- **It wasn't a secret that God was going to send the Messiah. -----**
----- THE secret or mystery being revealed was what kind of Messiah God sent in Jesus.
- **SO, Parables revealed what kind of Messiah Jesus was to those who believed, BUT to the unbelievers they were used to make them unsettled- disturbed!**

3. Jesus didn't invent parables, but no one used them more in scripture than Jesus.

- There are 60+ parables from Jesus recorded in the gospel records.....

4. Parables are presented in particular contexts for specific reasons.

- In **Mark 4** this parable is here because **Mark 2-3** was packed with opposition.
- He's making the point here that **there are some who do get it and some who don't.**
 - The insiders receive it and the outsiders don't get it.

....All throughout the book of Mark people are following Jesus, but not all of them followers of Him.

Jesus will be teaching now to show why there are these two groups.

Mark 4:1 “And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; (typical teaching set up for Jewish leaders- Acoustics were great) and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.”

Kyle Shearin says here that Jesus is “holding a seminar at the beach...”

Mark 4:2-3 “And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine, ³ Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow.”

- **Note:** It was very likely that he could have looked over and saw in the distance a farmer sowing seeds.
- **Either way:** Everyone would have understood his story:
 - **Info:** The two occupations producing the most jobs in this area would have been fishing and farming.

1 st Century farmer	21 st Century farmer
Leather bag containing seed (male fanny pack) scatter grain by hand.	Equipment
John Doe – emphasis on seed	John Deere with a pull behind seed drill
Back then or today: All seed is good seed – but productiveness is determined by where it fell.	

Just as James 3:1-12 teaches us there is a spiritual connection between the heart and the tongue, Mark 4 teaches us there also is a spiritual connection between the heart and the ear. **How we listen to the Word really reveals our heart towards the Word.**

So,

- Vs. 1-2: You have Jesus on a floating pulpit
- Vs. 3-9: He talks about the farmer sowing his seeds

And then in **Vs. 10** it says, “And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.” (They wanted to know what it meant)

And then Vs. 11 Jesus says something interesting: “**And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:**”

- In basic, this is saying that Jesus is the secret of the kingdom of God.
- **If you get Jesus, then you can get the kingdom. He is the Messiah!**

But not everyone got this: so, he goes on to say:

“All things are done in parables... (Vs. 12) so that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them:”

All of vs. 12 is Jesus quoting Isaiah 6:9.

To me, this passage seemed at first sight to be saying that those who were NOT Christians were being denied the possibility of belief...

BUT THAT DOESN'T FIT INTO THE MESSAGE OF JESUS.

- Matt 11:28 – Everyone come to me for relief
- John 3:16- I love the world... Whoever believes gets eternal life
- Mark 1:14- Jesus came preaching the Gospel to everyone!
- As we looked at before- Mark 2: Jesus is the friend of sinners
- And the list goes on and on.

So, what is Jesus saying here?

- He is not denying people opportunity for belief- He's denying the opportunity for further instruction in the kingdom as long as unbelief continues.
- Further insight only comes through faith.

Point: **Those who have ears to hear – those who are humble – they receive more understanding. Those who harden their hearts do not.**

The good news is that outsiders can become insiders.

Then Jesus explains the parable he gave to the disciples in Vs.13-20.

- In doing so he reveals the four types of hearts that hear

Four Types of Hearts

The first type of heart is revealed in vs. 4 and 14.

- Kyle S. calls it a hard heart
- Tony Merida calls it an indifferent heart
- Stephen Davey and Johnny Mac, calls it an unresponsive heart

It call it-----

1. The “I just don’t care” Heart (4, 14–15)

Vs. 4 “And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.”

- As the sower cast seed some of it fell on the well-worn footpaths.
- This compressed dirt would be like sowing seed on the sidewalk outside of this building.

In **vs. 14-15** Jesus unfolds the meaning of this:

“The sower soweth the word. And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.”

- This heart suffers from “gospel deafness.”
- They quickly dismiss the Word without giving it careful consideration.

There are many reasons why one may have a “I don’t care” heart:

A. Because you find the Bible “boring.”

Example: Sometimes I feel like this is the inevitable response coming from some of our teens in.

- I’m about 30 seconds into speaking and their eyes are already closed...
- It looks like their literally thinking, **“I’d rather snack on rocks while watching a Spelling Bee, than listen to this sermon.”**

I don’t know if you’ve ever been there, but here is the truth: If you have ever found yourself saying, **“It’s a waste of time to hear the Bible.”** Then you have this heart.

Some people listen to sermons like I take out the trash... endure, push through it, and forget it happened.

The second reason you might have a “I don’t care heart”:

B. Because you find Christianity “archaic and irrelevant.”

This type of person thinks:

- **“Christianity expresses ideas and behaviors that almost everyone views as archaic. The Bible is an outdated book for primitive people”**
- **“Dead man coming to life? Flood, plagues, walking on water? Come on.” It’s called ice!**

C. One may have a hard heart because he or she finds Christianity “offensive.”

- Feminist theologian **Delores Williams** said, **“There is nothing divine in the blood of the cross.”**
- Episcopal Bishop John Spong rejects propitiation when he said, **“Neither do I want a God who would kill his son.”**

- **Steve Chalke** compared the cross to divine child abuse. He said, “A vengeful father, punishing his son for an offence he has not even committed... [is] a twisted version of events...”
- Someone said, “The difference between a Christian and a strong Atheist is that a Christian rejects the existence of a few thousand Gods and Goddesses who have been devoutly worshipped and sacrificed to down through the ages. The Atheist merely rejects one more deity: the God of Christianity.”

For some of you here today, that’s your heart expression.

So how am I going to respond to that?

- I could employ some apologetics, but we must never forget that no one has ever been reasoned into Christianity. **It’s always a heart issue.**

I Corinthians 1:21 summarizes a “I don’t care heart” perfectly. (Reading NASB)

*For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the **foolishness** of the message preached to save those who believe.* (NASB)

The word **“foolishness”** is the Greek Word *Moria*...it’s where we get our English words *moron* or *moronic*.

- This first group says the preaching of the word is moronic. This is how some of you view Christianity.

D. You may have a “I don’t care” heart because you find Christianity “unattractive.”

- “I’ve tried it before, and it did not work.”
- “I don’t see how my life could be the result of the plan of a loving God.”
- “Christianity is a straightjacket... TOO MANY RULES.”

Notice again what’s going on in verse 14. **“Satan takes away the Word.”**

- **This is spiritual warfare.**
- Satan hates that you are here today.
- He is trying to distract you. Trying to get you to feel self-conscious, or offended, or whatever he can do to lure you away from this seed.

- He hates that you may pick up a Family Worship book this morning
- He hates that you are thinking about attending a small group.

It's not a *head problem* it's a *warfare problem*.

Satan snatches away seed. He does it in a lot of sly ways.

- He wants there to be drama in your car when you leave.
- He wants there to be distractions in the service.
- He's thrilled when you're so pre-occupied during the service that you miss the seed.

That's the first type of heart: A "I don't care" heart.

The second type is found in vs. 5-6 and 16-17

I'm going to call it a

2. Firecracker Heart (5-6, 16-17)

5 And some fell on stony ground, where it had not 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..

- Researchers say that there was a thin layer of soil over a limestone ledge.
- There would be several places in the field where an unbroken rock ledge existed.

Vs.16- Jesus explains this for us...

16 And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; 17 And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

The shallowness of the soil represents a lack of commitment.

Kyle S. calls these people firecracker Christians. In the beginning there's a great spark of excitement, but it fizzles out.

- Grows fast and dies quickly.

Mark Dever says they are “Quickly green and quickly gone”

- Lightly come/lightly go.

These Christians “go” because the emotion wears off...when does the emotion wear off? When the difficulty arises.

They have no depth to face the crushing trials, specific affliction, or persecution.

- This often begins at summer camps, a Christian college, or a church that helped to get you sober, recover your marriage, or help you with finances.
- They have an amazing early adventure, showing up at everything, but they're missing depth.
- Great start but no finish.

Because there's no depth there's no perseverance!

- **Persecution and trouble are master revealers.**
- **It definitely was in Mark's day. This hit home for Mark's readers.**
 - In the 1st century, a guy comes up to a new Christ-follower and says, “Hey, you a Christian?” Yes, just became one a few months ago. “Cool, you see that lion over there? I'm going to put you in an open coliseum with thousands of spectators so this lion will have his way with you.” Oh wait, Nahh, I'm not a Christ-follower. I mean I've seen the guy, but I'm not a Christian. My bad, I misunderstood the question...

Friend,

- **At some point the shine will wear off...**
- **Will you continue to grow when the shine is gone?**
- **Will you stick with us for 30 years?**

You need to know that there are going to be people who look like Christians for a while.

These are the “fake believers,” who look at Christianity as a comfortable, enjoyable thing. They might say,

- My bills are paid now.
- Everything is going smoothly.
- My home seems to be better.

Can't you just hear them saying, “I just finished reading the best seller *Your Best Life Now*.”

- The only way this life will be *your best life* now is if you go to hell when you die.

Stephen Davey said,

“This is the kind of individual who is going to join something like the Baptist Bowling Brigade. Every week, for a Bible study, they meet at the bowling alley. They roll a ball and read a verse; they roll another ball and read another verse. “We’re going to read through the entire Gospel of John in three years.”

Some people look like Christians as long as they can benefit from Christianity.

- As long as Christianity helps ease their pain or plate their table they are for it.
- Once pain arrives...they desert it.

The first group says Christianity is moronic.
The second group says it's prosperous.
The third group it's in the way.

3. The Distracted Heart (7, 18-19)

7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

- **Note:** This isn't referring to thorn bushes.
 - **Info:** Some Galilean farmers would burn their fields. The problem, of course, was that the roots of the weeds were still under the grounds surface.

Jesus explains this in vs. 18:

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.

- This third group never actually denies the faith. Their lives eventually prove unfruitful.
- The first two groups walk away from Christianity...this one may still believe they're good with God.

This group hears and receives the Word better than groups 1 & 2. However, they eventually get distracted by 1) worry, 2) wealth, and 3) wanting something else.

A) Worry can distract away from the seed.

Stress strangles what they've heard.

- Your business...failing finances...family battles...leaky shower...cleaning the house...the kid's school...doctor's appointment...and of course the emails.

B) Wealth can distract away from the seed.

Randy Alcorn said, “90 percent of people pass the test of adversity, while 90 percent fail the test of prosperity.”

The problem is not with stuff, but with preoccupation with stuff.

It may be fine to get a new house, even a bigger house. You can do great ministry with a big house. **The house is not the problem the heart is.**

C) Wanting Something Else can distract away from the seed.

Stuff can choke out the seed.

- **The firecracker heart left Christ because of lions.**
- **The distracted heart gradually fades because of luxury.**
- **The firecracker heart leaves because of persecution.**
- **The distracted heart gradually fades because of problems.**

One pastor said, “I’ve seen very few people desert Christ because of bullets, but I’ve seen a lot fade from Christ because of the busyness.”

To the first group Christianity is moronic.

To the second group it’s prosperous.

To the third group Christianity *is in the way*. (of my hobbies, my weekends, my fun)

Fourth group says it’s *The Way*.

4. The Welcoming Heart (8, 20)

Look at vs. 8:

And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.

And then vs. 20 Jesus explains:

And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

This heart welcomes, embraces God's Word and produces a harvest.

- This heart sucks in God's Word through listening and reading.

Good Seed into a good heart produces good fruit.

In vs 3. & 9. Jesus is saying “If you have ears please hear me!!!” but then he teaches us that HOW we hear is determined by our hearts....

You can come to church your whole life...

You can hear a thousand sermons...

But you'll never really understand it until you understand Jesus....

Here is the texts message for us today: Fully embrace Jesus if you want to unlock the Sermons!

- He can't just be a distraction
- He can't be a life add on

- He can't just be an emotional high for you

Make Jesus your king today and then you will begin to learn about His kingdom!!!!