

**Isaiah 55:8-11**

<sup>8</sup> “For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways,”  
declares the Lord.

<sup>9</sup> “As the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

<sup>10</sup> As the rain and the snow  
come down from heaven,  
and do not return to it  
without watering the earth  
and making it bud and flourish,  
so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,  
<sup>11</sup> so is my word that goes out from my mouth:  
It will not return to me empty,  
but will accomplish what I desire  
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

**Mark 4:1-41****The Parable of the Sower**

**4** Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. **2** He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: **3** “Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. **4** As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. **5** Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. **6** But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. **7** Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. **8** Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times.”

**9** Then Jesus said, “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”

<sup>10</sup> When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. <sup>11</sup> He told them, “The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables <sup>12</sup> so that, ““they may be ever seeing but never perceiving,

and ever hearing but never understanding;  
otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!”

<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus said to them, “Don’t you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? <sup>14</sup> The farmer sows the word. <sup>15</sup> Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. <sup>16</sup> Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. <sup>17</sup> But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. <sup>18</sup> Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; <sup>19</sup> but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. <sup>20</sup> Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.”

### **A Lamp on a Stand**

<sup>21</sup> He said to them, “Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don’t you put it on its stand? <sup>22</sup> For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. <sup>23</sup> If anyone has ears to hear, let them hear.”

<sup>24</sup> “Consider carefully what you hear,” he continued. “With the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and even more. <sup>25</sup> Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.”

### **The Parable of the Growing Seed**

<sup>26</sup> He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. <sup>27</sup> Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. <sup>28</sup> All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. <sup>29</sup> As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

### **The Parable of the Mustard Seed**

<sup>30</sup> Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? <sup>31</sup> It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all

seeds on earth. <sup>32</sup> Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”

<sup>33</sup> With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. <sup>34</sup> He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

### **Jesus Calms the Storm**

<sup>35</sup> That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.” <sup>36</sup> Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. <sup>37</sup> A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. <sup>38</sup> Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”

<sup>39</sup> He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

<sup>40</sup> He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

<sup>41</sup> They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

It would be good to have your **Bibles opened** to **Mark Chapter 4** – we are looking at the whole chapter

There’s an **outline** for you to take **notes**. Let me **pray** first. Let’s pray...

### Intro-Parables/God’s Word

In **this chapter** – Jesus speaks in **parables**

What is a **parable**?

**[Slide-Parable]**

*A parable is a short relatable story drawn from everyday life (things like farming, family or business) which has a deeper spiritual or moral meaning. Usually parables use earthly situations to reveal heavenly meanings. Jesus often said “The Kingdom of God is like...” and then told a parable to demonstrate what the Kingdom of God is like.*

But why would Jesus speak in parables?

**[Slide-Why parables?]**

- A lot of Jesus’ teaching was in open air – not in the synagogue – so Jesus uses a story people can relate to something around them (like a farmer sowing seed in a field). Being in open air – people can walk away – but Jesus is the master teacher and is able to capture their attention and even add suspense to the story
- Jewish teachers and Jewish people were used to parables. In the Old Testament, the Prophet Nathan told a parable to King David – to show David’s sin (Bathsheba/Uriah) – 2 Samuel 12:1-7
- A parable – **makes a person think for themselves!** It forces a person to make their own deduction and to **discover the truth for themselves – if they really want to...**
- A parable was often only heard once – and **designed for people to ask themselves ‘who am I in the parable?’**

This whole chapter is about **God's Word**

So we'd better define **God's Word**

### [Slide-God's Word]

God's Word is:

- God's Word is **God's spoken message or revelation** – In the beginning, God spoke and created everything – God also **revealed to the prophets and the writers of the Bible** what He wanted us to know
- God's Word is the **Holy Scriptures - The Bible** – which is *God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness* (2 Timothy 3:16) – and is *a lamp to our feet and a light to guide us to follow God's way* (Psalm 119:105)
- God's Word is also **Jesus Himself** – John 1:1, 14 tells us “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... and that this Word became flesh {in the baby Jesus} and made his dwelling among us.*” – **It's like Jesus is a walking talking living Bible**

I want to make **four points** this morning about **God's Word**

**1<sup>st</sup> point** – **God's Word must be received well** – verses 1 to 20.

### [Slide-Point #1]

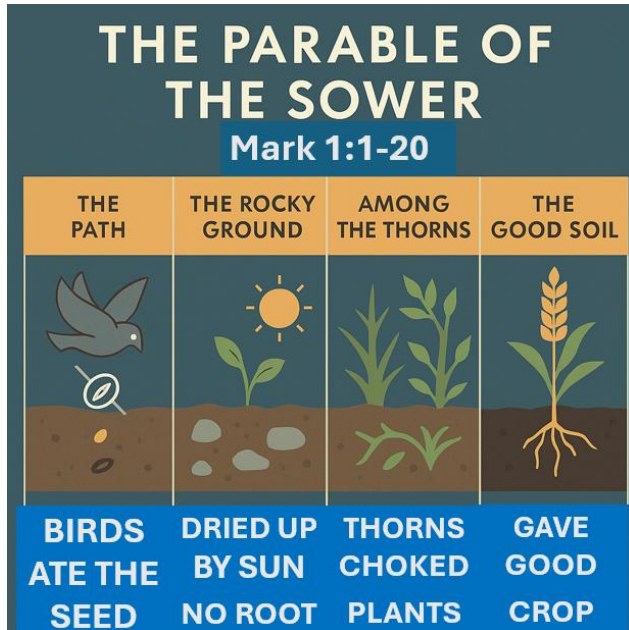
#### God's Word must be received well (Mark 4:1-20)

We pick up the story in **verse 1** – where the **crowd** is so **big** – **Jesus teaches standing in a boat!**

And Jesus tells a **parable** about a **man sowing His seed**

As the seed is sown – there are **4 types of soil**

**[Slide-Soils]**



1<sup>st</sup> soil – the **path** – which is compacted soil – means the seeds don't get very deep in the soil - and are eaten by the birds

2<sup>nd</sup> soil – **rocky ground** – only shallow soil – no root – as the plant grows, the sun scorches the plant and it withers

3<sup>rd</sup> soil – has **thorns growing** as well as the plant – the thorns choke the plant when it grows

4<sup>th</sup> soil – is **good soil** – the plant grew and produced a multiplying crop!

Now remember – it's a parable so the farmer, the seed and the soils have a deeper spiritual meaning!

### [Slide-Key]

The **seed** is **God's Word** – we get that from verses 14 and 15.

If Jesus' listeners don't know the seed is God's Word – they might be thinking the parable is about things like – how they can produce a better harvest – or how they might sow kindness – or how they sow more obedience to God – or how they sow more positivity in their life.

If we don't have the KEY to the parable – then we are stumped!

The **Farmer** is - **The Lord** (see Matthew 13:37) sowing His Word in us. And, by extension the Farmer - can be all preachers, teachers, evangelists or believers as they share/sow the Word of God.

The **four soils** – **represent the people/audience listening to Jesus' parable** – and represent **how receptive their hearts are**

When Jesus finished the parable and was alone with His disciples – they didn't fully understand it – so they ask Him about in verse 10

Jesus's answer reveals that parables aren't just "simple stories" — they both **reveal and conceal** the truth. Whether someone “gets it” or “doesn't get it” often reveals the condition of the heart of the person listening to the parable - which is the point of the four different soils.

Jesus is saying in verse 11: “God has revealed the truth about His kingdom to you — my disciples — but “Outsiders” are those who refuse to receive Jesus' message.

They hear the same parables, but they don't grasp the truth because their hearts are hard (like the bad soils in the parable)

It's not that Jesus is deliberately hiding understanding and hiding salvation from people — it's about people **refusing to hear and respond** — because they are not searching to really understand it!

In verse 12 - Jesus quotes from Isaiah 6:9-10 - where God tells Isaiah he'll preach to people who won't listen.

In Isaiah's time, the people had become so hard-hearted that they were refusing to listen to God.

Here in Mark, Jesus uses Isaiah's words to say: *"This is what's happening now, too. My parables expose people's hearts and most people are not going to listen to what I say or see what I am revealing – it's like they are deaf and blind to God's Word"*

In verses 15 to 20 – Jesus goes on to **explain what the type of people the four soils represent**

### **[Slide-1<sup>st</sup> Soil]**

**1<sup>st</sup> Soil - The Path (verse 15) – is the hard-hearted hearer**

Someone who hears God's Word or hears a Sermon – but their hearts are so hard the birds (Satan) snatch the word from them – and they dismiss God's Word – they might say things like ***"Christianity is a crutch"*** or ***"that's fine for you, but I'm not***



*religious*” or *“I’m not interested”*. We get these sort of comments when we deliver Bibles.

The type of people for this soil are: Atheists - or cynical people - or someone who has been hurt in the past and their heart is closed to God’s Word.

### [Slide-2<sup>nd</sup> Soil]

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Soil - The Rocky Ground (vv16-17) – **Shallow-Hearted Enthusiast**

Someone who gets excited at a youth camp - or church event - or a Christian concert. They respond emotionally and seem to be on fire for God — but when life gets hard and they have major problems in life; they walk away.

They initially have an emotional response but God’s Word is never fully rooted/established in their heart.

They might say *“God is awesome!”* ... then a few months later ... *“Yeah, I don’t really go to church anymore.”*

### [Slide-3<sup>rd</sup> Soil]

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Soil - Among the Thorns (vv18-19) – **The Distracted Disciple**

Someone who goes to church and believes in Jesus, but work or wealth or hobbies, or worry - slowly take over. Their faith is pushed to the background of their lives.

They are too busy for God and say things like *“I just don’t have time for Bible reading or prayer anymore —my life’s too hectic right now”*

## [Slide-4<sup>th</sup> Soil]

### 4<sup>th</sup> Soil – Good Soil (verse 20) – **Receptive and Fruitful Believer**

Someone who hears God's Word - treasures it - perseveres through trials - repents when needed - and quietly grows in godliness — bearing fruit in character, service, and witness.

Some examples of these type of people are: A faithful Christian who has served the Lord for decades - or a parent faithfully reading scripture with their children; - or a new believer with a teachable heart and a hunger/desire to grow.

### Application

The question for us is - which soil are we?

(pause)

Obviously – we should receive God's Word (the seed) like the good soil.

How do we become good soil?

## [Slide-How to become good soil]



### **1. Be Receptive – Open our Heart to God's Word**

Good soil is soft, not hard. We need hearts that are open to hearing God, not resistant or distracted.

**James 1:21** – *“Humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.”*

- Practicing humility and teachability.
- Being quick to listen and slow to speak or argue with Scripture.

## [Slide-part 2]

### 2. Go Deep – Let the Word Take Root

Good soil is deep, not shallow. We need depth in our faith—growing strong roots so we don't wither in trials.

**Colossians 2:6–7** – *“Continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him.”*

- Spending regular time in God's Word and prayer.
- Learning God's promises so you trust Him in hardship.

## [Slide-Part 3]

### 3. Weed the Garden – Remove Spiritual Obstacles

Good soil isn't crowded. Jesus warns against thorns like worry, riches, and desires choking the word.

**Hebrews 12:1** – *“Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.”*

- Asking: What competes with God's Word in my life?
- Prioritizing God over possessions, pleasures, or pressure.

## [Slide-Part 4]

### 4. Bear Fruit – Obey What We Hear

If soil is watered and given nutrients – it responds. Likewise, if we are the good soil, we respond – we don't just listen to the Word — we live out the Word and bless others.

**Luke 8:15** (parallel to Mark 4) – *“The seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.”*

- Ask ourselves: What is God calling me to *do* with His Word?
- And let our life show the change God is making in us.

### **Practical Application:**

- Pray before reading the Bible: *“Lord, soften my heart.”*
- Devote time each day to read, study and meditate on God’s Word
- Keep a spiritual journal to track what God teaches us.
- Regularly examine our heart for “rocks” or “thorns.”
- Join a Bible study or small group for accountability and depth.

### **[Slide-Point #2]**

**2<sup>nd</sup> point** – **God’s Word must be shared and not hidden** – verses 21 to 25.

### **God’s Word must be shared and not hidden (Mark 4:21-25)**

I think most of us – lost power during the week – with the severe weather we had. This had me – looking for a torch – only to find that batteries were either cactus or very weak.

I had to resort to candles for lighting.

Now it would be no good me putting the candle under my bed

It won’t show any light - and - I could set fire to the bed!

And that's Jesus point in this short parable

We don't hide the light under a bed – we put it up high to light up the whole room.

Likewise – we have this incredibly Good News in God's Word – that Jesus is the only way to be forgiven of our sins and to get to Heaven. This Good News has to be shared -like the light - and not hidden – and not kept to ourselves!

And Jesus gives a warning about how carefully we listen to God's Word in verse 24

- “*Consider carefully what you hear,*” he says “*With the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and even more*”

His point is – if we have a real hunger to learn from God's Word – we will keep getting more and more spiritual food – which we can pass on to others. The Bible is like a gold mine – you tap in to a seam of gold and it just keeps running to more and more gold.

### Application

For us

How about we - select someone this week to share God's Word with?

How about we - consider joining our Bible delivery team?

### **[Slide-Point #3]**

**3<sup>rd</sup> point** – **God's Word grows God's Kingdom in unexpected ways** – that's verses

26 to 34

**God's Word grows God's Kingdom in unexpected ways (Mark 4:26-34)**

Again, Jesus uses parables – two short ones

The first parable (vv26-29) says God's Kingdom is like a man scattering seeds – and the man can't explain how his crop grows but it grows!

The point is – we sow the seed of God's Word – and God makes it grow

Our responsibility is to just spread God's Word – the rest is up to God and the Holy Spirit.

Even more surprising is the second little parable (vv30-32) – about planting a really tiny mustard seed – which grows into one of the biggest garden plants.

The point is – when we sow God's Word – it can have the most unexpected affect and cause amazing growth

For example – one of our Mission Partners – Mick Alley – about 10 or so years ago – went to Kenya on Mission with a friend – just to support him. But Mick ended up – being led by the Holy Spirit to return to Kenya – and start his own ministry - and minister to the Samburu Warrior tribe.

He began his ministry on his own – and now 10 years later - over 1000 of the 3000 warriors in the Samburu tribe are Christians!

God's Kingdom grows in unexpected ways!

### Application

How can **WE** be instrumental in growing God's Kingdom?

- By inviting one person to church – it can lead to their whole family coming

- If we each invite one person – we double our congregation – and increase God’s Kingdom
- By being a Scripture teacher – allows you to share Jesus with up to 25 children in one hit – and grow God’s Kingdom!
- By praying for the people who have received a Bible through our Bible deliveries - to come to faith – we can grow God’s Kingdom

4<sup>th</sup> point – **God’s Word has amazing power** – that’s verses 35-41

**[Slide-Point #4]**

### God’s Word has amazing power (Mark 4:35-41)

Here we have Jesus and His disciples in a boat

A fierce storm has the disciples on edge – especially because Jesus is asleep in the back of the boat!

The disciples are so edgy that they accuse Jesus of not caring

One thing the disciples have forgotten is that they have Jesus in the boat with them!

Remember - Jesus is God’s Word in the flesh – and fully God as well as fully human

Once Jesus is woken – He simply speaks to the waves “**Quiet, Be Still!**”

God’s Word has power over nature!

The wind died down and storm was completely calm!

Here we see the amazing power of God’s Word!

## Application

For us...

- When we face storms in our lives – remember we are not alone – we have Jesus in the boat with us – we don't have to face these storms alone!
- Also, if God's Word is so powerful – then surely we should spend more time in His Word – His Word reforms and transforms us – and as we saw in our OT reading from Isaiah 55 – God's Word goes out and never returns to Him empty but **ALWAYS achieves His purposes**.

This means **we CAN claim all of God's promises for our lives**.

Also, God's Word performs miracles – **we CAN expect miracles**.

- And if God's Word is so powerful – then surely we should encourage others to get into God's Word – so it transforms their lives too

## Conclusion (Jeremiah 23:29)

I pray we can see

- God's Word must be received well
- God's Word must be shared and not hidden
- God's Word grows God's Kingdom in unexpected ways
- And God's Word has amazing power!

Let me finish with these words from Jeremiah 23:29:

**[Slide-Jeremiah 23:29]**



***“Is not my word like a fire,” says the Lord, “and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?”***

Let's be encouraged this morning that...

God's Word spreads like a bush-fire – and breaks open hearts that are rock-hard!

Let's pray...

*Father God,*

*We thank you for your Holy Word.*

*Help us to be good soil that receives your word well.*

*Help us to be diligent in sharing your Word and to be instruments in growing your Kingdom.*

*And help us to realize the amazing power of your Word to transform hearts and to bring about miracles!*

*In Jesus Name, we pray, AMEN.*