



---

GROWTH GROUP LENT 2020  
QUESTIONS JESUS ASKED:  
*DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND THIS PARABLE?*  
WEEK 1 – MARCH 1, 2020 - MARK 4:1-20

## GETTING TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER

1) Do you have a favorite parable that Jesus told? If so, what is it?

## SETTING THE CONTEXT

This week we begin our Lenten sermon series that will focus around the questions that Jesus asked. Throughout the gospels we find Jesus asking questions. Sometimes he asks questions as he is talking and sometimes he asks questions in response to questions that he had been asked by other people. In the Jewish tradition to be without questions was not a sign of a lack of faith, but a lack of depth. Questions were encouraged and as we watch Jesus teach, we see him asking questions in all sorts of situations.

Our text can be divided up into three sections. Verses 3-9 tells the parable of the sower and verses 14-20 explains the parable, and verses 10-13 tells us that only those in fellowship with Jesus understand the true meaning of the kingdom of God.

The word for parable has to do with “placing alongside something else for the purpose of clarification.” However, parables are not always simple and easy to understand. In this parable the farmer is determined that he will reap a bountiful harvest. He throws seed in every direction on his field and appears to be a little reckless in the way in which he disburses the seed.

In verse 3, it is interesting to note that the Greek word for “went out” to sow seed is the same word that Jesus used to proclaim his purpose, in Mark 1:38(let us go out). The abundant harvest, in verse 8, should remind us that the growth does not happen because of human activity, but because God is involved.



The difference between the “lost” seed and the seed that “bears fruit” has to do with “hearing in faith.” What indicates a person is a believer seems to revolve around both hearing and believing that Jesus brings the good news of God.

The telling of the parable brings up two central things about Christ’s message. People need to understand who Jesus is (verses 3-9) and they need to understand what discipleship is all about (verses 14-20). The parable teaches us that although the life of discipleship is not always easy, there is an abundant harvest that will happen, and our calling is to continue to scatter the seeds of faith.

## EXPLORING THE TEXT

### Read Mark 4:1-20

*1 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.” 10 When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. 11 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 12 so that, “they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!” 13 Then Jesus said to them, “Don’t you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? 14 The farmer sows the word. 15 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. 16 Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. 17 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. 18 Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 19 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. 20 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.”*

- 2) Why would the farmer scatter seed everywhere? Why wouldn’t the farmer be more cautious about where he was sowing the seed? What does this tell us about God?
- 3) Jesus quotes Isaiah 6:9-10, God has given up on His people because of their hard-heartedness. Jesus seems to say that hard-heartedness will keep people from understanding his kingdom. Who do you think Jesus is talking about in verse 12? How does our own personal hard-heartedness keep us from hearing from Jesus?
- 4) Jesus describes a number of different types of soils. Share about a time when you have felt like your life / faith resembled one of the soils that Jesus talks about (seed along the path, seed on rocky places, or seed amongst the thorns, or amongst the good soil).

- 5) Jesus mentions several things that can choke out God's word, or that can keep us from growing in Jesus. Can you think of other things in our world today that "choke out" God's word?
- 6) Jesus talks about having "ears to hear." What does he mean by that? Can you think of a recent time when you heard or read something "new" that challenged you to rethink something about your faith, or see some issue from a different perspective?
- 7) Not only does Jesus ask questions, but so do the disciples. They asked him about the parables. When you have a question about your faith, or you have a question about something you are reading in the Bible, who do you talk with?

## BRINGING IT HOME

- 8) Is there a place in your own life, where you could "go out" and scatter some seeds of faith?