

**Him, and they said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You."** Here is yet another ironic scene. Jesus own family thinks He has **"lost His senses"** and wants to come and take Him home. Yes, indeed they want to **stop His ministry**, reverse His popularity, and lock Him up at home. As forgiving as we may want to be with Jesus **"own people,"** this really is a rather **diabolical** deed. Consider the **insult** this is to the **Son of God**, and often times our **own families** bring our greatest **opposition**. But Jesus here makes the clear and valid point that our **Kingdom** relationships **trump** our natural **blood** relationships. Your heavenly family takes greater priority than your earthly family when it comes down to a forced controversy. This is not an **excuse** to shun our **responsibility to care for** our earthly family, but when they come between us and Christ, the choice is already made on our behalf, for He is our ultimate priority and our allegiance is to Him above all other things. Jesus answers, **"33 And answering them, He said, "Who are My mother and My brothers?" 34 And looking about on those who were sitting around Him, He said, "Behold, My mother and My brothers! 35 "For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother."** Notice here Jesus plainly telling us that those who truly worship God with lives of obedience and **"does the will of God,"** are indeed in a higher place than our own mother and brothers. Now so far in Mark we have seen that Jesus has been approved by God the Father who called Him His beloved Son, and validated by the Holy Spirit who descended upon Him. He has been given authority over sickness, disease, Satan and demons, and is Himself the ruler and proprietor over God's worship as the Lord of the Sabbath Himself. He has appointed by God as the Savior and Christ, and yet the religious leaders in **Galilee** and in **Jerusalem** have rejected Him. Now sadly even His **earthly family** is struggling to recognize Him for who He is. Well the **good news** is we know that His **mother** and **brothers** do eventually come to **faith in Him** (1 Cor 9:5), but the leaders of Judaism sadly not only reject Him, but **plot His murder** and see Him to a bloody Roman Cross.

**Mark 4:1-9** - 1 And He began to teach again by the sea. And such a very great multitude gathered to Him that He got into a boat in the sea and sat down; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. 2 And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teaching, 3 "Listen to this! Behold, the sower went out to sow; 4 and it came about that as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 "And other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. 6 "And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. 7 "And other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. 8

"And other seeds fell into the good soil and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold." 9 And He was saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Here again a great crowd has gathered to hear Jesus teach, and He finds an interesting way to accommodate them. **"1 And He began to teach again by the sea. And such a very great multitude gathered to Him that He got into a boat in the sea and sat down; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land."** Here see that the Lord was diligent to keep teaching the people. What is amazing here is, as the **opposition** to the Lord **grows**, He begins a form of teaching that by design **separates** the **wheat** and the **chaff**. **"2 And He was teaching them many things in parables."** The Lord begins to employ **parables** in His teaching which are analogies or extended short stories using familiar practices or objects to elucidate unknown or complex spiritual truths. The root meaning or parable is to **"place alongside,"** they make comparisons by placing something alongside for illustration or explanation. These **parables** had the purpose of revealing the truth to believers and **hide it** from **unbelievers**. In this sense when Jesus taught parables, they were either a blessing or a judgment for unbelief. The **Parable of the Sower** is one of His most well-known parables, **"2 And He was teaching them many things in parables and was saying to them in His teaching, 3 "Listen to this! Behold, the sower went out to sow; 4 and it came about that as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 "And other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. 6 "And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. 7 "And other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. 8 "And other seeds fell into the good soil and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.""** A profound short story indeed about a man sowing His field and reaping a crop. But Jesus is now focused on revealing the truth only to those who believe, and so the riddle like parables can only be understood sufficiently by private interpretation. **"9 And He was saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear.""** With many now beginning to question and oppose Jesus, His message became purposefully hidden and only fully explained to His disciples in private. **"10 And as soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables. 11 And He was saying to them, "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God; but those who are outside get everything in parables, 12 in order that while seeing, they may see and not perceive; and while hearing, they may hear and not understand lest they return and be forgiven.""** And here the Lord explains clearly that only His

disciples are “**given**” understanding into the “**mystery of the Kingdom of God.**” Moreover, He explains that “**those who are outside get everything in parables, 12 in order that while seeing, they may see and not perceive; and while hearing, they may hear and not understand lest they return and be forgiven.**” Jesus explains that not only are the disciples given understanding of the mystery, but the crowds in **Israel** are given parables **without** the **meaning** as **judgment** from **God**. Here He quotes **Isaiah** to explain that Isaiah’s prophecy is being fulfilled in the **blinding** and **hardening** of **Israel**, as Paul also points out in Romans 11:7-10. The explanation by Jesus is a clearer in Matthew’s account.

**Matthew 13:10-16** - 10 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" 11 And He answered and said to them, "**To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.** 12 "For whoever has, to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. 13 "Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 "And in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says,

'You will keep on hearing, but will not understand;  
And you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive;  
15 For the heart of this people has become dull,  
And with their ears they scarcely hear,  
And they have closed their eyes  
Lest they should see with their eyes,  
And hear with their ears,  
And understand with their heart and return,  
And I should heal them.'

16 "But **blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear.** NASB

Jesus is clearly saying that His disciples are **given knowledge** from **God** that others in the crowd are **not given**, and this because God has given them over to their own **blind eyes** and **deaf ears** which they have closed to Him. Woe to them! May it never be said of us! But what **comfort** in the words of Matthew 13:16, that the eyes and ears of the disciples are **blessed** because **God has chosen** to give them the **Kingdom**. And Jesus wants them to listen very carefully, so He calls them to attention. “**13 And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? And how will you understand all the parables?"** Now as the parables go, Jesus used these parables to illuminate the **spiritual world** of His **Kingdom** with **imagery** from the **natural world**. The image in the natural world would be set alongside the image in the spiritual world for a **comparison** and so explain

what the **“4:26 Kingdom of God is like.”** And this we see very clearly when He explains the **Parable of the Sower** to His disciples **privately**. **“14 "The sower sows the word. 15 "And these are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them. 16 "And in a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; 17 and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. 18 "And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, 19 and the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. 20 "And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it, and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.”**” And so the imagery of the Sower reveals how the Word of God which is the **“seed”** works in the **conversion of souls in salvation**, and what it looks like upon their conversion when it is **received** and **believed** and **acted upon**. The **first three** soils are examples of how the word falls on **hard, unbelieving** and **idolatrous hearts**, and only the **“good soil”** is an image of the crop which the **Sower** seeks to **reap**. It is not **“snatched away”** or **“falls away,”** or **“choked”** and **“unfruitful.”** Rather it **“bears fruit”** and increases as the Sower intended. So is the Kingdom of God as He seeks to reap a crop of **“fruit”** from His people. See in this marvelous riddle like parable how Jesus has illustrated what the Kingdom of God is like! And let us not get away without applying it to our own hearts and lives... are we that **“good soil”** in which the **Word** has **not only** grown up but **bears fruit**? Let us strive to make sure that we truly do believe and surrender to the will and Word of God, that our lives truly **bear His fruit**. Many places in the New Testament teach us about **spiritual fruitfulness** which God desires to **produce** in our faith filled lives such as John 15:4-10, Col 1:10, Gal 5:22-23, Phil 1:11, Tit 3:14, 2 Pet 1:8, to name a few. Jesus now continues with more parables.

**Mark 4:21-25** - 21 And He was saying to them, "A lamp is not brought to be put under a peck-measure, is it, or under a bed? Is it not brought to be put on the lampstand? 22 "For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it should come to light. 23 "If any man has ears to hear, let him hear." 24 And He was saying to them, "Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it shall be measured to you; and more shall be given you besides. 25 "For whoever has, to him shall more be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him."

This parable seems to be impressing upon the disciples who did hear, that spiritual fruitfulness looks like **sharing your faith** and shining light like a lamp in so doing. **“21 And He was saying to them, "A lamp is not brought to be put under a peck-measure, is it, or under a bed? Is it not brought to be put on the lampstand? 22 "For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it should come to light.”** In the same sense that a lamp in that day would be put on a lampstand to illuminate the darkness, so those who have received the **light** of the **Gospel** are not to conceal it, but rather are to **let it shine** so others can see it. Consider how relevant this would have been for Jesus own disciples as they were to go out and spread the news of the Kingdom to all the nations as Jesus would soon command them (Matt 28:19-21). But even so, **every Christian disciple** is given this responsibility to **“let our light shine”** (Matt 5:16) and to be spreaders of the message of the Gospel in our daily lives. And Jesus is very concerned that those who hear Him pay very **close attention** to what He says. **“23 "If any man has ears to hear, let him hear." 24 And He was saying to them, "Take care what you listen to.”** In regard to sharing our faith, and shining the light of the Gospel, the Lord stops to make sure that His disciples **listen closely**. And He tells them that those who are diligent to let that light shine, more light shall be given. Real faith in true disciples looks like increasing light whereas with lazy or false disciples the light not only decreases, but is taken away. **“By your standard of measure it shall be measured to you; and more shall be given you besides. 25 "For whoever has, to him shall more be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.”** By your **“standard of measure”** in letting your light shine, **“it shall be measured to you; and more shall be given you besides.”** Here the Lord exhorts all of His disciples to generous sharing of our faith. But He also warns that the lazy and unfruitful are in danger, **“25 and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.”** Let us see in this second parable the Lord impressing upon the disciples **how to apply the first one**. The Gospel light of truth is to be fruitfully born in the lives of the disciples by sharing that knowledge and **spreading it** far and wide, just like a **lamp** on a **lampstand**.

**Mark 4:26-29** - 26 And He was saying, "The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; 27 and goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts up and grows — how, he himself does not know. 28 "The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head. 29 "But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."