

How do we receive knowledge about the Kingdom of Heaven?

8/11/19

- What is the difference between hearing and listening?

Hearing is a physiological function of the brain. Your brain is ALWAYS hearing even while you sleep.

Many years ago, my father came up with a beautiful antique mantel clock. It was built around 1910 and the mechanism was in reasonable shape. We had it repaired and cleaned. I proudly placed it on a shelf in my home and kept it wound every couple of weeks.

In my home now there is a cuckoo clock that is loudly vocal every half and hour.

When I had guests in my home in Pa, often I would be asked to stop the clock because it kept people up at night. My first thought was that I don't hear anything. Same with our cuckoo clock here.

My brain hears it, knows what it is and dismisses it as normal.

How many times do you find yourself hearing something (probably from your spouse) but not knowing what they said?

Jesus said: *"Anyone with ears should listen and understand."*

Pray

Read: **Matthew 13:1-23**

- How many of you have heard a sermon on this passage of scripture before?
 - What is this parable about?
 - The sower?
 - The seed?
 - The soil?

Ok, so let's take a look at this parable, Jesus explanation of it and see what He's really saying. I think it will quickly become obvious what this is about.

1. The Elements of the Parable.

- a. There is a farmer and he is going out to plant by hand scattering.
- b. There is the seed that is very valuable to him and his family.
- c. The seed falls on four different type of soils.

2. Jesus describes what happens to the seed that falls on the different types of soil.

- a. The first three are not good while the final soil produces a bumper crop.

Typically, we read the parable and then skip to Jesus explanation.

Read: **13:18-23**

1. If you assume the parable is about the farmer/sower (it is sub titled "parable of the sower") then we view the parable like this.
 - a. If you are a believer in Christ and have the gospel message, then your job is to be the sower and scatter the seed everywhere so that as many as possible will be exposed to it.

- b. Ok, sounds good but Jesus himself tells us in **Matthew 7:6** to be careful how you handle things that are sacred. I would say the gospel is sacred.
- c. The farmer is scattering the seed by hand. It is not precise; it goes into places that it shouldn't and places he probably doesn't want it to go. After all the seed is very valuable.
- d. So, this is not about the sower and sermons should not be based on the farmer in this passage.

- a. God through us is indiscriminately scattering the Gospel in places that he knows it will have very little effect.
- b. The soils describe how each person receives knowledge about the Kingdom of God. Most of the time it has very little affect.
- c. The most logical challenge I heard when this is used is: "What kind of soil are you?"

2. If we assume it's about the seed, because that is what he is scattering and it is what is growing, then we have to view the parable like this.

- a. The seed is the message of salvation that is being scattered all around the world.
- b. It is tiny, contains life and when activated in the right person produces abundant fruit.
- c. The potential is there but it seemingly has no effect by it's random scattering. Only some of it returns a good crop.
- d. **Isaiah 55:10-11**. Jesus would have known this passage very well plus the fact he's the son of God. Therefore, the parable cannot be about the seed.

3. If we assume it's about the soils, because in reality Jesus explanation is about the reaction of the seed in different soils, then we have to view the parable like this.

While these are reasonable thought it is not what Jesus was talking about.

Matthew 13:3 starts out: "Listen or Behold".

- Who has that in their bible? Interesting! This is a translator's choice.
- Whether or not this word is there may not be important. But, It has been part of the scripture for 1900 years and only recently has it been removed because of older texts of scripture from a different part of the world.
- I believe it's a mistake because there is a theme that runs through this parable that is supported by this word.

The crowd is so large that Jesus gets into a boat and teaches the people from its safety. I can hear him saying in a loud voice: "**listen**" and then proceeding with the parable.

Look at verse 9. He ends the parable with: “*anyone with ears to hear should **listen** and understand.*”

We now hear in verse 10 the frustration in the disciple’s voices. “*Why do you use parables to talk to the people?*”

Jesus answer is very interesting. “*You are permitted to understand the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, but not the others.*”

Then before explaining the parable he gives its true explanation.

Listen to this:

“To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. (a description of the fertile soil) But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them. (a description of the other three soils that yield no fruit) 13 That is why I use these parables,

For they look, but they don’t really see.

They hear, but they don’t really listen or understand.”

- You know what I hear in this?

I hear Jesus saying why should I throw out something sacred to people who don’t care. If they really want to grasp what I’m saying they are going to listen, then greater understand will be given to them.

Read: **Matthew 13:14-15**

This parable is about how you receive the sacred Gospel of Jesus Christ.

- What is the condition of your heart?

Is it a hard foot path that nothing penetrates, is it rocky soil that when struggles come you abandon the message, or is the message choked out by concerns and worries of this world so that it has no effect on you.

All three of these are people who hear but are not really interested in listening. All three of these are people who chose to not allow the knowledge of the Kingdom to impact their lives. All three of these reveal the condition of a person’s heart who has been exposed to the knowledge of the Kingdom of God.

Paul says in Romans 1 that we have the ability to suppress the truth and the odds in the parable are three to one.

It’s their choice and God knows who they are but gives them the opportunity anyway.

Then we get to **Matthew 13:16**, remember he’s talking with the disciples, “*But blessed are your eyes because they see; and your ears because they hear.*”

Unlike the people on the shore, the disciples even though they were struggling, were seeing and listening.

- So, what is this parable about?

It’s about how you choose to receive the knowledge of the kingdom of God. Not only that but what you choose to do with that knowledge.

If you are willing to listen and understand you will place the seed in good soil and it will produce a crop maybe more than a 100 times more than what was planted.

That reproduction of the seed will be evidence of what is in your heart.

- The application for today is simple.

You can't listen and understand if you're not in communication with God through Jesus Christ. This is done through a healthy prayer life and regular study of God's Word.

- We need to listen and receive the knowledge of the kingdom of God.

If your struggling with that than show Jesus how serious you are by seeking out someone to study and pray with you on a regular basis.

*“Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.” . . .
“blessed are your eyes **because** they see; and your ears **because** they hear.”*

Amen.