



A BETTER WORD

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

A Study Through the Life of King Jesus | with Pastor Nick Gatzke

How You Hear

Mark 4:1–20

THE BIG IDEA

The seed is always good. What changes is the soil — so take care how you hear, because God's word bears fruit only in a heart prepared to receive it.

SERMON SUMMARY

Do we let God's word go in one ear and out the other? Jesus sits in a boat and teaches an enormous crowd a parable about a sower, then tells his disciples that some will hear without ever understanding. That sounds harsh until you catch the echo of Isaiah 6, where the same judgment fell on a people who had spent five chapters rejecting God. In Mark, the religious leaders have called Jesus demon-possessed and his own family has called him crazy.

The seed is the word of God, and it is always good seed. What differs is the soil. The path is a heart packed hard by busyness and self-absorption, where the word simply bounces off. The rocky ground is an emotional response with no root, withering the moment following Jesus costs something. The thorns are the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches, choking a divided heart. And the good soil hears, accepts, and bears fruit thirty, sixty, a hundredfold!

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Jesus bookends the parable with commands: "Listen" (v. 3), "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (v. 9), "Pay attention to what you hear" (v. 24). What does that repetition tell you about where the emphasis falls — on the sower, the seed, or the soil?
2. Verses 11–12 quote Isaiah 6:9–10. Read Isaiah 1–6 for the setting. Why does Jesus teach so that some "may indeed hear but not understand"? How does the context in Isaiah keep this from sounding arbitrary?
3. The path is beaten hard by traffic, and Satan snatches the word away (v. 15). How does ordinary busyness — not hostility, just a full calendar — function as spiritual hardness? Where do you see it in your own life?
4. Rocky soil produces immediate joy and no root (vv. 16–17). What is the difference between an emotional response to Jesus and genuine conversion? What does it look like to anchor your life in God's word rather than merely feel it?
5. The thorns are "the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things" (v. 19). Read Matthew 6:24. Which thorn is growing fastest in your soil right now — status, power, comfort, or money — and what would it take to pull it out?

LIVING IT OUT

The real surprise in this parable is not that some soil fails. It is the size of the harvest where the word takes root: thirty, sixty, a hundredfold. That is how the kingdom grows — not by force, not by wealth, not by coercion, but by the word taking root in a prepared heart. And against that kingdom nothing will stand.

Heart Check: Which soil describes you this season, honestly? Are you too busy to think about the meaning of your life? Are you living off the last emotional high? Is there something you love that is quietly choking out what God has said?

This Week: Guard one unhurried block of time in God's word each day this week — same time, protected like an appointment. And when you read, do not stop at understanding: write down one thing you will actually do, then do it.

REFLECTION & PRAYER

“Those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.”

— **Mark 4:20**

Ask God to break up the hard ground in you, to give your faith roots that hold when believing costs something, and to pull out whatever is choking his word — then thank him for a harvest you could never earn.

Your Prayer:

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