

# The fruitful hearer

## Introduction

Facts about your ears.

1. They're always work even when sleeping. Your brain just processes the sounds differently than when your awake.
2. Ears help for balance. Vertigo is a common side effect from inner ear infection
3. Ears are self-cleaning, as ear wax forms a barrier and is sticky trapping debris and protecting your ears
4. Your ears have the smallest bones in the body

You and I use our ears to listen and hear.

Jesus said He who has ears to hear, let Him hear.

Hearing biologically is not the problem, but responding **appropriately to hearing Gods** word is a spiritual issue

Do you hear God's truth and **simply reject it**

**It's shocking and tragic** that most hearers reject the gospel.

IN Mark we see chap3 vs 22-30 the Jewish leaders reject the Messiah, and thus rejection **their King which** includes therefore **the rejection of the gospel.**

Jesus speaks in parables as a judicial judgment.

They rejected the truth and so the truth of the kingdom would now be hidden from them.

Jesus then explain through the parable of the soils why some hearers reject Him and the gospel

Those who reject it reject it **due to their own heart condition.** Vs 14-19

- Some hearers' hearts have **hardened hearts** and Satan takes away the word sown in their hearts
- Some hearers have **shallow hearts**, respond initially with joy, yet when hardship arises, they fall away.

- Some have **crowded hearts** in which worldliness chokes the gospel and they bear no fruit.

But some hearers accept God's word due to **God's divine surgery** in their hearts.(vs 20)

Their hearts of stone have divinely been transformed into hearts of flesh and they have become a fruitful hearer,

To them Jesus reveals the secret of the kingdom, that which was hidden apart from divine revelation.(God the Son revealing it to them)

They are called good soil because they hear accept and bear fruit. VS 20.

Jesus commands both believers and unbelievers to listen or hear **vs 3 & 9**.

The unbeliever's hears **the gospel and do not bear fruit**

In vs **23** , **Jesus** repeats the same instruction to the believers that were following Him..

*If anyone has ears to hear let him hear?*

Its only true believers who can **truly listen and can be obedient** to the word of God.

Good soil refers to those **who hear the gospel, receive it and bear fruit**. (vs 20).

Their hearts and minds have been prepared by God to respond to the gospel in this manner.

The Divine truth finds a **home in their hearts**, have the ability to submit to it and **bear fruit by putting it into practice and proclaiming it**.

The parable of the soils emphasizes the importance of being **a fruitful hearer** by distinguishing the **good soil from the bad**.

In vs 21-34 Jesus then addresses his disciples who are identified as those who both perceive divine truth and are equipped to proclaim that truth to others.

But what characterizes a fruitful hearer?

What does their lives look like?

# Proposition

Jesus uses these parables to identify four characteristics of fruitful hearers.

Four characteristics of fruitful hearers.

1. Fruitful hearers witness obediently
2. Fruitful hearers work expectantly
3. Fruitful hearers wait dependently
4. Fruitful hearers walk confidently

## Fruitful hearers witness obediently

*<sup>21</sup> And he said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand? <sup>22</sup> For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. <sup>23</sup> If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." Mark 4:21–23 (ESV)*

### Explanation

In this passage Jesus highlights the importance of **bearing the fruit of being a faithful witness**.

The parable of the soils **focuses on the recipients of the gospel** and distinguishes between **those who reject the gospel** (the King and His Kingdom as well) and those who **genuinely embrace it (and therefore gain entrance into the Kingdom and its truths)**.

Vs 21-23 highlights then the **responsibilities of the faithful hearers as evangelists**.

Those **who receive the gospel**, accept it are **called to obediently proclaim** the message of salvation

**"Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand?"**

Terracotta lamps consisted of **a small pitcher filled with oil** and a wick placed on top.

To give light the lamp itself needed to be filled and the oil replenished.

To maximize the **radiance**, these lamps would-be put-on **lamp** stands or shelves so that their glow would radiate throughout the room.

In the OT the Lamp represented various things:

- was a symbol for God.

*29 For you are my lamp, O LORD, and my God lightens my darkness. 2 Samuel 22:29 (ESV)*

- symbol for the Messianic king

*19 Yet the LORD was not willing to destroy Judah, for the sake of David his servant, since he promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever. 2 Kings 8:19 (ESV)*

- Symbol for Gods Word the Torah- the truth

*105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Psalm 119:105 (ESV)*

However, in this passage of Mark the Lamp is the subject that is coming.

Normally a lamp would be the object that you bring, but here its the lamp that is in a sense was bringing itself.

The grammar emphasises the Lamp as being brought continuously not for the purpose of being places under the roman measuring bucket but rather so as to be seen.

Mark 1:7 speaks of one that would come after John.

The Lamp here represents the secret of the kingdom(The hidden form of the kingdom in the hearts of believers that will later be revealed), which is Christ(as Savior and Lord/king of the believers heart).

The issue is that Jesus Christ should not be hidden, but should be revealed.

He is veiled to unbelievers (2Cor 4:3) but unveiled for believers 2 Cor 4:6.

The following verses illustrate what we are saying.

***3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 2 Corinthians 4:3–4 (ESV)***

**<sup>5</sup> For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup> For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:5–6 (ESV)**

The point is simply that those who receive the light of God shone into their hearts to see Christ for who He is, the light of the gospel of Christ are not to conceal it, rather they are to let it shine forth for others to see.

They are to be proclaimers of who Christ is and what He came to do.

Jesus instructed his disciples to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom since they may have wondered because of Jesus change in teaching method.

He was now speaking in parables which served to veil the truth from those outside and was a form of divine judgment as well as mercy upon His hearers.

They are not only veiled from the truth of Christ by Satan, but also by Christ method of teaching.

His hearers had rejected Christ, and the finality of their decision cut them off from any further truth by speaking in unexplained parables.

But Jesus intension was not that the gospel be permanently obscured.

*mark 4:22 For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light.*

In other words, there was a time in which the truth of Christ was hidden and obscured from obstinate rejectors.

However, there was a coming time period when the hidden things were to be revealed and the secret thing (Jesus Christ) disclosed to the world.

With the return of Christ, there will also come the physical revealing of the Kingdom of Christ on earth in the Millennial kingdom

IN the OT the law was merely a shadow of the good things to come, pointing towards Christ.(Heb 10:1)

The era of unveiling ministry started with the apostles and their preaching ministry and continued with the great commission.

You and I are called to be faithful witnesses about Jesus and the gospel which provides access into the kingdom of Christ.(Col 1:13,14).

As we proclaim Him, God does the heart and unveiling for those whom He had chosen to save.

This means you have been saved to bear fruit and one of those fruits is a lifestyle of revealing Christ to others

## Application

1. Don't hide the gospel from unbelievers.
2. Pray for the opportunity, prepare for the opportunity and then proclaim when you have the opportunity.
3. Practically we have been making gospel tracts that we can encourage you to take freely and use when you shop or at a petrol station to use them
4. Parents make it your job to explain the gospel to your children.
5. Grandparents discuss the gospel with your grand children.
6. Don't hide the truth of the gospel when you know there is hell waiting for those who reject the gospel.
7. Don't let your family be part of the unreached people groups
8. At work, identify who are unbelievers and the pray for them, share with them after work, over lunch break etc. when you are allowed according to work rules.

## Fruitful hearers work expectantly

*<sup>24</sup> And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. <sup>25</sup> For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away." Mark 4:24–*

25 (ESV)

**24 And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear:**

Jesus commands his followers to **pay close attention continuously** to what they hear.

**The way you respond to Christ now will determine how God responds to you later.**

Entry into the kingdom of **God depends upon hearing** the gospel.

- This means there **should be a person sharing** the gospel and the gospel
- This means **one must use words**
- The words **should be the gospel.**
- There needs to be a hearer, whose heart has been prepared by God. John 6:44

**The truths Jesus explained** had to be established in their minds.

In the same way you and I **should pay close attention to the** gospel.

Application: Pay attention to things like:

- The **gospel requires a clear understanding** of God’s Holiness, justice and expectations of us.
- There needs to **be heartfelt conviction** of sin and knowing the consequences of our own sinfulness
- The fact that the **gospel is not based on human** works or human effort.
- The gospel is **based on what the God-man, Jesus did, through His life, death and resurrection**
- To the difference **between true repentance** and **false repentance**, and the difference between **saving faith and dead faith**

These are just a few things you and I **are called to pay attention to.**

Become an expert in knowing the **definitions of the terms and gathering** in your mind an **arsenal of illustrations** to illustrate the gospel.

He then emphasizes the importance **of serious dedication** to the task because of the promise of eternal rewards for faithfulness.

**: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you.**

At harvest time the farmer could expect to get back from the field only what he put into it. He would reap what he had sown.

If he was lazy or negligent, his harvest would be minimal.

If He was diligent and faithful, he could expect a good crop.

Those who faithfully preach the gospel can expect to be rewarded eternally by God.

Obedying Christ commands in His kingdom determines God's eternal rewards for you.

**it will be measured to you**

The grammar is what we would term the divine passive, meaning: God will measure it out and add it to you.

*[ESV] Rev. 22:12 ¶ "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.*

This is judgment language which implies reward for the believers service.

**still more will be added to you.**

God will bless their efforts even far beyond their level of effort

<sup>25</sup> **For to the one who has, more will be given.**

For implies a reason and connects it with the previous verse as well as the parable of the soils.

**the one who has** = the one who has the capacity to receive the word

Fruitful response depends upon pre-existing capacity to receive the word.

Vs 11&12 contrasts those inside with those outside.

**more will be given.**

Those inside are the ones who has , they will grow in spiritual insight and are blessed with more truth, and eventually eternal reward.



Believers are **blessed by God with all heavenly blessings**(Eph 1:3), not only that their blessed with **continual exposure to God's** truth which brings with it even more blessings, their **blessed with being part of God's family**, life **of soul restoration**, **indwelling HS**, **illumination of the Scriptures**, hope, joy, peace despite trials , wisdom...the list goes on and on.

### **The one who has not**

Those outsiders will lose any benefit they would have gain through exposure to God's word- the gospel.

**and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away."**

Jesus also warned his listeners, that **false converts** **may claim to have spiritual life** but in reality, they **don't possess it.**

The parallel statement in Luke states:

*[ESV] Luke 8:18 "Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he **thinks that he has** will be taken away."*

On Judgment day with no foundation, their houses will come crashing down.

The **emptiness of their superficial faith will be exposed** and the Lord will declare:

*[ESV] Matt. 7:23 "And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'*

Jesus words served as a **warning to every unbeliever exposed to the truths of the gospel** yet who reject it because of their sinful heart conditions. Satan, the flesh or the world will take away those truths, choke it or make it unfruitful.(vs 15-19)

### **In summary**

#### **Fruitful hearers work expectantly**

- You can expect eternal reward
- You can expect to grow, and to be blessed by God's word
- You can also expect more of God and His will revealed through the pages of Scripture that will continue to shape you more and more into His image.

Therefore serve with hope (Future expectation of good based on the promises of God)

Expose yourself to the **different ministries of** grace: Church gatherings, the equipping of the saints and to faithful **service. It will bring its own reward**

Those who have been attending these **events: do they not bless you?**

Is it not often such a struggle to come to these things, yet you always walk away from these **things glad that you have come....so come.**

It is like a farmer that **prepares the food for the sheep**, presents the food, **yet half the sheep choose** not to be there where they could have been fed. Don't be one of those sheep.

Let this not be the picture of your life.

## **Fruitful hearers wait dependently**

*<sup>26</sup> And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. <sup>27</sup> He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. <sup>28</sup> The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. <sup>29</sup> But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come." Mark 4:26–29 (ESV)*

A 3<sup>rd</sup> characteristic of a fruitful hearer is that they have **learned to wait** and depend upon the Lord.

They know that only **the Lord can bring results and spiritual life.**

*<sup>8</sup> The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. **So, it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.**" John 3:8 (ESV)*

Jesus draws another analogy from a farming perspective to illustrate his point.

This parable **complements the parable of the soils** by looking at **how the seed grows.**

Jesus compares this with **the kingdom of God**, which is a **reference to sphere of salvation**, which advances through gospel proclamation in the hearts of man = the man(evangelist) that scatters seed(gospel) on the ground(heart).

**“The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground.**

**A farmer will scatter seed on the** ground and then go to bed and sleep.

He does not understand what brings it to life, but he waits and while he waits the seed in the ground comes to life.

**28 The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.**

The point is here that the **sower is not involved in the mysterious** process by which the seed is transformed into a living plant.

Likewise, in the **kingdom of Christ, the evangelist, or believer**(sower) distributes the **message of the gospel(seed)**.

Some of the hearers (the good soil= receptive hearts) **respond to the gospel** in saving faith and exhibit spiritual life.

This **regeneration and transformation is** the work of the HS.

*[ESV] John 3:5-8 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born<sup>a</sup> of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is<sup>b</sup> flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.<sup>c</sup> Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You<sup>d</sup> must be born<sup>e</sup> again.’<sup>f</sup> The wind<sup>g</sup> blows<sup>h</sup> where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”*

**Human ingenuity, emotional** manipulation, man centered techniques and market driven strategies **cannot create new life in** the heart of sinners.

Regeneration is **only by the spirit of God.**

The point is simply this.

Just as the **farmer is not the power behind regeneration** of the seed, so the **evangelist is not the** power behind the regeneration of souls.

Jesus disciples may have **been concerned that the task of saving** sinners rested on their shoulders.

They were responsible to **faithfully preach the gospel** message, but they could wait and trust God with the results

***29 But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.” Mark 4:26–29 (ESV)***

Even though human beings have no **role to play in regeneration**, they still have the privileged **blessing of enjoying** the spiritual harvest.

This includes added fellowship as new believers become a part of the family of God

*[ESV] 1Th. 2:19 For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?*

### **Application**

In sharing there is a part that you play: **faithfully proclaim or sharing of the gospel.**

But there is also a part in which **you praying, and waiting depending totally** upon God to bring about the heart transformation.

This takes time and this **calls for your patient trust upon the** Lord.

Sometimes years.

“taking the initiative to sharing the” gospel in the power of the HS and leaving the results to God.

## **FRUITFUL HEARERS WALK CONFIDENTLY**

*30 And he said, “With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? 31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, 32 yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.” 33 With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. 34 He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained*

everything. Mark 4:30–34 (ESV)

A 4<sup>th</sup> characteristic is that fruitful hearers proclaim the gospel with confidence.

The kingdom expands as more believers are added through salvation and more believers yield to the lordship of Christ.

Christ is at the center of this expansion

Because God blesses the word and creates spiritual life, believers can fulfill the call to proclaim the gospel knowing they are part of a movement that will not fail.

*[ESV] Matt. 16:18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

The disciples may have felt overwhelmed with the task.

So, Jesus gives the parable of the mustard seed to illustrate how from small beginnings His kingdom grows to a massive kingdom

The mustard seed is not the smallest in the world, but it was of the plants grown for agricultural purposes in 1<sup>st</sup> century Israel the smallest seed.

Jesus was limiting his illustration to what his audience would have known.

The mustard seed then represents something that is very small.

So, Jesus is contrasting the difference between the beginning and end manifestation of the kingdom of God.

Mark's readers were much nearer to the beginning than the end.

***32 yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."***

Mustard seeds in Israel could grow as high as 15 feet and had branches that birds could rest in.

What appears to be the smallest is never the less the greatest.

The disciples were not highly educated members of Israel's religious or social elite.

They would have been fearful, slow to believe and spiritually weak.

When Jesus was arrested in Mark 14:50 they fled.

After Jesus rose from the dead there were a mere 120 followers in Jerusalem(Acts 1:15) and another 500 in Galilee(1 Cor 15:6)

These were the small beginnings of the church that would grow to hundreds of millions more.

And after Jesus takes His body the church to be with Him 1Thes 4, then will come an time called the tribulation period.

Even during the tribulation period the Kingdom of God will be growing adding more and more inhabitants under the Lordship of Christ.

*<sup>9</sup> After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, <sup>10</sup> and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" Revelation 7:9–10 (ESV)*

*<sup>13</sup> Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" <sup>14</sup> I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Revelation 7:13–14 (ESV)*

So if you simply add the body of Christ, which comprises the church believers(2000 + years) to great multitude of tribulation saints that no one can number, you come to grasp something of the nature of Gods kingdom in the parable of the mustard seed with small beginnings that grow into a massive tree

***puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."***

The mustard tree is described as having large branches which provided shelter for birds for shade and nesting.

The kingdom will provide strength, shelter and rest for its inhabitants.

We see this reality in the church **which is a pillar and support of the truth** , but also a vehicle for **sheltering the church pilgrims** on route to the celestial city.

The church is part of Christ **kingdom, which provides protection**, rest and shelter for the wearied believers facing the trials in a sin infested world.

In spite of being **so few the disciples** proclaimed the gospel in adversity.

Mark concludes.

***<sup>33</sup> With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. <sup>34</sup> He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.***

The unbelief of **the crowds was judged by** Jesus as He obscured the **truth and taught** only in unexplained parables.

*<sup>2</sup> I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, Psalm 78:2 (ESV)*

Ps 78:2 **anticipated the rejection of the Messiah and His response.**

John 12:35-40 **records similar words** from Jesus drawn from Is 6.

Jesus followers consisted **of true hearers** that embrace the gospel.

What was **hidden from unbelievers** Jesus was explaining **privately to His own** disciples.

Believers **still share the same privilege** in that the HS indwells and illuminates the hearts of all that belong to him.

*[ESV] 1Cor. 2:10-14 ¶ these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, **but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.** And we impart this in words not taught*

by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. ¶ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

[ESV] 1John 2:27 But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.

Thus every believer has the privilege of knowing and understanding the truth reality that enables them to be fruitful hearers.

Application

You and I can know that despite the chaos the churches are in, that despite the multitude of false teachers, that despite the world going down the cesspool of sin, that despite persecution and trials, the kingdom of God is growing steadily and faithfully.

The contrast between the beginning and the end should give you hope and excitement to faithfully serve him and be an important vital part of His body in this era.

## IN conclusion

Four characteristics of fruitful hearers.

5. Fruitful hearers witness obediently, they don't hide the gospel but proclaim it
6. Fruitful hearers work expectantly, they pay attention to the truths taught, serve diligently with the hope of future reward
7. Fruitful hearers wait dependently they do their best yet patiently and consistently depend upon God for the results.
8. Fruitful hearers walk confidently knowing that the kingdom is still growing and in the end people from every tongue, tribe and nation will be before the throne worshipping and proclaiming the Savior.