

What Do We Do with This?

Mark 4:21-25

- We live in an incredible time in church history.
 - With smartphones, tablets, and the internet, we have immediate access to more biblical knowledge than anyone could have dreamed of a generation ago.
 - For a small investment, you can have more resources for Bible study in your pocket than you could ever use.
 - Even without those tools, we are so fortunate to live in a time and place where we have open access to God's Word.
 - Most of us have more than one Bible in the house, and we can come to church any time we want.
 - Between church services, we can listen to messages from some of the greatest preachers, both from this generation and the one before!
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- We have spent the first few months of this year trying to really sink our teeth into what the Bible has to teach us by diving into the book of Mark.
 - We have seen that Mark is writing to give us a balanced picture of who Jesus is.
 - One of the key elements we are seeing is the idea of the "kingdom of God".
 - Ranny reminded us last week that we see this idea popping out almost from the very beginning, with **Mark 1:15** telling us to repent and believe the gospel because the kingdom of God has come near.
 - We have seen Jesus demonstrate the power of the kingdom through healing and teaching and casting out demons, and it has been causing some problems with the religious leaders in Jesus' day.

- Now, Jesus is starting to teach about what that kingdom looks like, but instead of just coming out and saying exactly what he means all the time, he uses parables.
- Parables are earthly stories that help explain spiritual realities.
- They take something from normal, everyday life, and show you how that points to a truth about God.
- Just a quick note about this section: Although other Gospel writers may have these in a different order or at different times, remember two things: Jesus probably repeated himself and taught similar concepts multiple times, and also, Mark is interested in arranging his gospel thematically, not chronologically.
- We saw that last week as Jesus told the parable about the farmer who went out to sow his seed.
- When Jesus was with the crowds, he simply told the story about the sower going out to sow his seed and it fell on four different types of soil, and only one actually grew.
- When he was with his disciples, he explained that the farmer was God, the seed was the word of God, and the soils represented the hearts of those who hear.
- Here's what he said about the soil that produced fruit...look at **Mark 4:20**.
- The fruitful soil was the soil where the people heard what God was saying and accepted it.
- Jesus is going to build on that in this morning's passage, and he is going to answer for us the question of, "What are we supposed to do with all of this that we are learning?"
- We are going to summarize it in two words: share and study

- Read **verses 21-25** with me.
- So, as we grow in our understanding of who God is, who we are, and what he has done for us, what do we do?
- **First, we...**

1) Share

- Jesus uses a clear example from our lives to help us see that our responsibility is to share the truth of who he is and what his kingdom is all about.

I love this example, because I love light.

Almost every Christmas, I get some kind of flashlight or new headlamp or something.

In fact, check this one out. Bret, can you turn off the lights for me? I want everyone to see how great this light is.

Do you see how bright it is? No? Oh, right...you can't because it's in here.

Now, isn't that better?

- My dad didn't buy me this flashlight so I would put it somewhere that no one could see it; he bought it so I could use it to light up dark places!
- That's the first point Jesus is making about what we are to do with what we know of him—Don't stick him in a box; let him shine out so he can light up the world around you!
There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. (John 1:9, NASB95)
- That's why we are putting so much emphasis on helping you learn to share what Jesus has done for you!

- We believe he is able to enlighten the lives around you, showing people what it really true and helping them to see their need for him.
 - That's one of the key principles of the book you should be receiving today:

*"God has sovereignly placed you in this world at this time with the abilities and gifts you have to bring glory to him and show the joy of the gospel to others"*¹
 - Take what Jesus has taught you, and let the whole world know about it!
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- Ah, but wait! If you are sharp and you have been with us so far in our study, you might be noticing a contradiction here.
 - Jesus has been doing all kinds of miracles, but if you remember, on some occasions, he is telling the people he healed not to tell anyone.
 - Same with the demons he casts out—he forbids them from saying anything about who he is.
 - Now, we have Jesus teaching in parables, which can be kinda confusing without the explanations.
 - So, why does Jesus turn right around and say that we shouldn't hide the truth about him and his kingdom?
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- That gets into **verse 22**.
 - Remember that in those days, most people thought that the kingdom of God was first an earthly kingdom.
 - In other words, when Jesus started preaching and teaching, people thought the next step was for him to lead a military insurrection against Rome and set up as king in Jerusalem, bringing in this new empire.

¹ Reid, Alvin L. *Sharing Jesus without Freaking Out*. Nashville: B&H Academic (2017). 119.

- They were all too eager to throw off the Romans, so Jesus had to be careful to help them see that their conceptions of his plan were different than what he was doing.
- That's why he employs parables, so that only those who God is truly drawing to himself would understand. Jump back up to **verse 10-12** to see that.
- That's why he tells the demons to be quiet and instructs those healed not to tell anyone.
- Until he took the step of ushering in the kingdom through his death and resurrection, there was too much danger of being misunderstood.
- That's why those things were hidden for a season, but guess what: now we know the true nature of the kingdom.
- We know that it will one day be fully revealed as Jesus does come back and set up an earthly kingdom, but we understand that the kingdom starts today with what he has done in our hearts.
- It isn't our job to conceal it anymore; it's our job to share it!
- There is another application point Jesus gives about how we are to respond to what he is teaching.
- **Not only are we called to share, but we are also called to...**

2) Study

- Read back over **verses 24-25**.
- These verses are a little trickier to understand, but let's try to put them in their context and see what we can draw out.
- Look at the first statement Jesus makes in **verse 24** - "*Take care what you listen to.*"
- Twice in this chapter, including in the previous verse, Jesus has said something about listening, hasn't he?

- Another version translates this as, "*Pay attention to what you hear.*"
 - That gives us a little better picture of what Jesus is saying.
 - He is throwing out incredibly important truths about us, God, and his kingdom.
 - We need to be paying close attention to what we hear.
 - We don't need to take them lightly.
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- What does that have to do with standards of measure?
 - In this context, Jesus seems to be teaching us that our experience of the benefits of God's kingdom will be connected to how seriously we pay attention to what he says.
 - Let me give you an example: In the previous passage, you heard about the good soil, a heart that accepted the word of God and bears fruit by living a life that is pleasing to God.
 - Maybe you want that to be true of you.
 - However, you have a problem with pornography. Elsewhere, in **Matthew 5:27-28**, Jesus teaches that lusting after someone who isn't your spouse is a sin and that citizens of the kingdom don't behave that way.
 - If you are unwilling to pay attention to that teaching, your life won't ever be fruitful!
 - The same can be said of anything the Bible teaches us about living godly lives. If we won't listen and obey what God is teaching us, then we won't experience the blessing walking closely with God as a faithful citizen of the kingdom.
 - In fact, the last part of **verse 25** has a strong warning: if we fail to heed God's word at all, if we refuse to listen to him, we will lose any sense of what God is doing.
 - Here's what's awesome, though: the reverse is true.

- As we learn to live in grace, allowing God to shape us into citizens of his kingdom, we receive more and more of the blessing of living in his kingdom.
 - We develop greater peace and joy that carries us through the difficult days of life.
 - We deepen our sense of hope in the fact that Jesus is coming again to make all this right.
 - We reflect Christ in greater ways, sharing him with more around us and having the privilege of seeing more people come into the kingdom.
 - We keep moving into a stronger relationship with him as he gives us more and more and more of himself.
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- Pay attention to what you hear!
 - That's why we provide you space on the bulletin to take notes on what God says to you during messages.
 - That's why we have the YouVersion outline, where you can take additional notes, save them, and share these passages with friends.
 - That's why you need to develop the daily discipline of time in God's Word.
 - If you need help with any of that, please see me after the service!
 - I want nothing more than for every person in this room to know Christ's fullness more one month from now than they do today.
 - Don't lose what you have; study, pay attention, respond, and see God bear fruit through your life like you could never expect.