

**Mark 4.21-25 - Listening like your life depends on it**

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Main Point – Jesus is the light – share his word, listen to, and grow in it.

Whenever you watch a murder mystery, it's important to listen well.

Whether it's(SLIDE) Agatha Christie's, Murder on the Orient Express, or the popular Knives Out movies, it's important to pay attention.

If you don't listen well, you'll miss key details n' on working out who the killer was.

Mind you, even when I listen well, I still don't normally get it right.-----

But in another movie, Die Hard 3, John McLane (Bruce Willis) is a down-n'-out former police detective.(SLIDE)

A cryptic terrorist forces McLane to play a cruel game of 'Simon says', threatening to detonate another bomb, if McLane and Zeus, Samuel L Jackson, don't solve the riddles, and solve them in time.

Like when the terrorist says, 'Do I have your attention?'-----

"When I was going to St. Ives, I met a man with seven wives. Every wife had seven sacks, every sack had seven cats, every cat had seven kittens. Kittens, cats, sacks, and wives, how many were going to St. Ives?"-----

Only the guy was going to St Ives.----

It's important to listen carefully.

And McLane and Zeus need to repeatedly listen carefully to save people's lives, even children's lives.-----

But what about us, and in real life?-----

Well, we need to listen carefully to God's word, & the words of Jesus.

In fact, we need to listen, as if our life depends on it.-----**(SLIDE)**

We're in this 6 week series on some of the parables of Jesus & particularly thinking about how we respond to the words of Jesus.

**Last week** we looked at the **Parable of the Sower**.

We heard how the sower sows the seed, the word.(SLIDE)

And like that seed lands on different soils, there are different responses.

So too when people hear the word about Jesus, people respond in different ways.

Some reject the message.

Some initially respond with joy, but quickly fall away in distress or persecution.

Others respond positively, but the weeds come – the worries of life, the deceitfulness of wealth, n' desires for other things, choke it.

Yet there are some, like good soil, who hear the word, and respond by growing and bearing fruit.

And as Neil said, we can have confidence in the word – it will bear fruit.-----

And remember how the parables have a dual effect?

They can relate truths to life, be helpful word-pictures that draw you in.

But usually, parables take real effort to hear, and you need to seek understanding, which many don't.

Jesus has already said, 'Listen!' v3(SLIDE), anyone who has ears, 'listen'[v9].

We need to listen and seek understanding, so that we may come to Jesus, and find forgiveness, life, and be fruitful.-----

With that background we come to v21.

Having finished talking about seed Jesus goes on to speak about where to put your lamp.

**And this my first point, The Need to shine Light.(SLIDE)**

The old KJV said, 'Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick?'

But the original word is more a lamp, an oil lamp.

Picture something like this(SLIDE), similar to a kerosene lantern.

And you don't cover or hide it, if you have a light source in a dark room, you put it up - for all to see, for the light to shine.

Lights n' lamps are made to shine, intended to shine.(**SLIDE**)-----

However, the original Greek language here doesn't say, 'is a lamp brought in'.

It's not 'a lamp', but 'the lamp'.

And the lamp comes, rather than being brought.

This is intriguing, and is likely Jesus' way of referring to himself.

Jesus is the lamp, the light personified who comes.

**John ch1** says,(**SLIDE**), Jesus 'is, 'the true light that gives light to everyone'.[v9]

In **John 8 Jesus** says, "I am the light of the world, whoever follows me will never walk in darkness".-----[v12]

And this corresponds with what the OT says of God.

**Psalm 27(SLIDE)** – 'The Lord is my light and my salvation— whom should I fear?'

When God rescued King from his enemies he sung,

'Lord, you are my lamp; the Lord illuminates my darkness.' (**2 Sam 22.29**)

But it's even used to refer to the Messiah, the promised son of David King, in **Psalm 132(SLIDE)**

So Lord God is the lamp. And the Lord Jesus Christ is the lamp, the light.-----

But then Jesus also said that his people are light, **Matt 5(SLIDE)**

So we need to shine.-----

Coming back to Mark 4 and **v22**, who Jesus was n' why he came was largely hidden, when he walked on earth.

His disciples were slow to grasp who Jesus was and why he came.

But they were to speak and make known what they knew.

As Jesus says in **Matthew 10**, when he sends out the 12.(**SLIDE**)

What I tell you in the dark, speak in the light.

What you hear in a whisper proclaim from the rooftops.----

The truth of Jesus must not remain hidden.-----

Then after Jesus died n' rose again and the disciples received the Spirit, they got it.

They understood why he came and why he died.

The truth was temporarily concealed in parables, but Jesus wanted his first followers to reveal the truth about him.-----

Before Jesus returned to heaven, he left his disciples with a mission, didn't he?----

The mission of making disciples (**Matt 28.18-20.SLIDE**), by sharing the good news about Jesus.

That message that Jesus is the Saviour and Lord who died and rose again,

to save us from sin and shame, death and judgement - All who trust him.

Jesus has left his followers with the mission of speaking his message.-----

So the light, the truth about Jesus, needs to be revealed n' made known.-----

Every generation, and we too, have been left with the task of making it known.-----

As Neil said last week – for the harvest you have to sow – get the word out there, and keep sharing.

We know the truth about God.

We know Jesus is the light of the world, and the Lord who saves. And that message is momentous.

It brings people from death to life, from darkness to light.

It is life changing.

It is the most significant news in the whole world. It must be spoken.

Do you believe that?-----

V22 is also saying, what is hidden to unbelievers now, will become clear for all to see when Jesus returns.

Who we are in Christ, will one day be revealed.

The fact that he is the light of the world will one day be revealed.

And when he returns it will be too late for people to turn to him and be saved from eternal darkness.-----[Matt 25.30,46]

That's why in love, we speak.-----

We are weak, and imperfect sinners.

But out of love for others, and out of love for Jesus and his glory, we speak.

It's his purpose for us.-----

God wants us to explain the truth about Jesus. We ought to share it.-----

Life now and how to find fulfilment and God, hope and heaven, may seem a confusing mess to people.(**SLIDE**)

But we know the truth, we see clearly, the other side of the tapestry so to speak;  
so we can reveal it and explain it.(**SLIDE**)

Knowing God will do what we can't - open hearts, and use our stumbling efforts.----

But actually talking about Jesus can be tough.

It can be so tough and discouraging that after trying a few times we can give up.

But as **Becky Pippert** says in the **Empowered** evangelism course our growth groups did a few years back, (**SLIDE**) it's all about relationships.

It's about asking questions and really listening.-----

It can start by asking: Why do you do what you do? And What do you love about it?

Then if it's a doctor, you could ask, How do you give hope to a terminal patient?

Then, What hope would it give you if we knew God was real and there is life beyond this life?

To an artist, ask, What's the source of beauty do you think?

Could there be a master artist, a creator God, who made us to recognize & enjoy beauty?

To the sport-lover – Was there ever a time you couldn't play? How'd you feel?

Have you found acceptance outside of your performance?

What difference would it make to know a God whose love for us doesn't depend on our performance?----

Or ask anyone, Have you heard anything about Jesus before? Who do you think he was?----

Then after listening you will likely have an opportunity to speak of the irresistible Jesus, the supremely good one, the loving, soul-satisfying, life-giving Lord.

Similarly, **Sam Chan says in(SLIDE) How to talk about Jesus without being that guy,**

Why not ask:

What are you hoping for in life?

Do you have a faith?

What do you believe about God?

What's the best thing about being a Muslim?

Where do you want to be in 10 years time?

What happens if you don't find what you're looking for?-----

Can you think of one person now, and one or two questions you could ask them?-----

Listen to what they share, and love them.-----

Then tell your friends the better story of where to find life:

If your friends are burdened by guilt and need forgiveness, tell them the story of Jesus and the tax collector (Lk 18.14).

If your friend is burdened by shame and needs restoration, tell them the story of Jesus cleansing the bleeding woman (Lk 8.48)

If your friend is enslaved by the worship of idols, tell them the story of Jesus inviting himself to Zaccheaus' home and setting him free from the power of wealth (Lk 19).

If your friend feels far from God, tell them how God the Father welcomes us as his children into his home (Lk 15).

If you friend is restless & exhausted, tell them Jesus will give them rest (Mt 11.28).

If your friend longs for lasting satisfaction, tell them the story of Jesus with the woman at the well (John 4).

If your friends' lives are fractured, dysfunctional and broken, tell them how Jesus grants peace to the troubled sinful woman who washes his feet with her tears, hair and perfume (Lk 7.48-50).-----

Jesus can shine light into people's darkness, hopelessness and sinfulness.-----

The true word of the light he brings must shine out.

The truth about Jesus, must be spoken.

So pray for love, faith and courage to speak it, and to shine for Jesus.-----

But when it's spoken, and heard, it must be listened to.

### **Point 2, The Need to Listen, and Respond.**

Jesus says, 'if anyone has ears, let him hear'.

And because people are slow to listen and understand, he says it again,

to emphasise how important it is – 'Pay attention to what you hear'----

My wife **Kirsti is a primary teacher**, and she will often come home from school and share with me about her day.

And how often, I hear about how kids at school have not listened.(**SLIDE**)

Kids zone out, they distract others, they have short attention spans.

Even when directly, personally asked to do something, they can not listen & disobey.

Remember, for Jews, the Hebrew word for listen includes obeying.

The listening and obeying overlaps.

But it's not just kids. **I fail to consistently listen** to my wife, to my kids, and to God.

I forget. I don't always pay attention.-----

Really listening is something we can all struggle with, and fail to do.

Are you a good listener?-----(**SLIDE**)

And how are you going at listening to God's word?-----(**SLIDE**)

Are you listening when Jesus says through the Parable of the Sower, when the heat of suffering comes, don't fall away?

Are you listening when Jesus warns you about worries, and wealth, and worldly pleasures?

Are you listening when Jesus says, the word needs to bear fruit in our lives?-----

Fruit in faith, and hope and love(**SLIDE**)– love for God and love for others.[Mk 12.30-31]-----

If we don't give attention to the words of Jesus it will impact our fate.

We're not saved by our fruit, but the fruit is evidence of our faith.

We need to listen to Jesus like our lives depend on it.

Because our lives do depend on it.

Our lives and eternal destiny depend on our careful listening and responding.----

We enter relationship with God by believing the news about Jesus we hear, and letting his word change our lives.

As a parent I remember coming down to talk to my kids at their level,(**SLIDE**)

as I take hold of their hands, look them in the eye, and speak.

We need to give that sort of full attention to Jesus, as he speaks.

Trusting and obeying.-----

It matters!

As Jesus goes on to say in **v24**, 'By the measure you use it will be measured to you – and more'.

In the context of Mark ch4, the Parable of the Sower, the repeated calls to listen; and what's said next, the kingdom growing as the Gospel saves people, it's all about how we hear n' respond.

So v24 is not saying, love others and God will love you.

It's not firstly a message about morality - Just be good n' do good, and you'll get a good life.

Jesus is saying, you need to listen well.

If you are receptive to Jesus' words, if you believe and trust what he says, God will be receptive to you.

If we hear and accept the Gospel with eagerness and joy,

If you believe and act on Jesus' words,

you will be received into God's Kingdom,  
and you will bear fruit in living for him.

And **v25**, if you've believed the Word of God, the words of Jesus and-about-Jesus,  
you'll receive more.

More faith, more joy, more knowledge; more strength to obey, and love, and serve;  
and persevere.-----

And then abundantly more in the life to come.-----

So How can you bear fruit?-----

How can you say 'No' to that sin or selfishness?

How can you persevere with that difficult person?

Endure that pain or illness, or loneliness?

Or just get through this year at school?----

How can you love others when you feel so weak and at capacity?-----

Or speak of Jesus when you feel so anxious?-----

It's only as God's words sink into your soul and change you, encourage you, bear fruit in you.

We all need to let Jesus' words in the Gospel, break on us, enter us, change us.

We need to open our minds and hearts when his word comes knocking.-----

All of the Christian life revolves around The Word.

We cannot be passive!

Whether you've been trusting n' following Jesus 3 years or 30 years, we all need to listen.

Engage with what God's word says.

Don't be passive, don't think it doesn't matter,

It's too important – your life depends on it.-----

And if you think what Jesus says is too hard, well it is.----

But while we are weak, while we fail to listen, are slow to believe and riddled with sin, when  
we turn to Jesus, we're forgiven, and given the Spirit.

And the Holy Spirit helps us to listen, and changes us to be more like Jesus.

So will you cry out for the Spirit's help in your weakness?-----

### **Will you take steps to get into the word, and soak in the word?**

Maybe that could involve Listening to a podcast, or audio bible in the car?

Or to more Christian music?

Reading and discussing the bible for 5mins with your kids after dinner?

Setting an alarm 10 mins early, to spend 5 mins reading through a Gospel,  
then 5 mins reflecting and praying in response?

Or maybe you could ask a friend to catch up and read the bible with you once a week?-----

What can you do to hear God's word, and let Christ by his Spirit speak to you?-----

10 years ago a man called **Zac Veron** shared how a small idea reignited a passion for  
spending time in God's Word.

He says, "Read your Bible" is a constant mantra [in] evangelical churches. Bible reading is  
important. God's Word is our supreme authority in life. Yet... Why is it that so few church  
attenders read their Bible regularly and what can be done about it?

Zac shares, I have been reading the Bible for the best part of 45 years. I know what it says...  
Recently I have felt that my reading of the Bible was not as rewarding and rich an  
experience as I remember it used to be. Around about the same time a friend of mine shared  
with me how rich and rewarding his own Bible reading was.

What was the difference? He was reflecting on what he was reading more than I was. He  
was spending more time digesting the riches of the text than I was.

What was the essential difference? He was underlining the text as he read it and then  
journaling what the Lord was telling him through the text.(SLIDE)

He read the text, highlighted a key verse, wrote down significant points. Then he dwelt on what application for his life sprung from the text, wrote those down, and then prayed over what God has laid on his heart through the journaling process.

Journaling! I dismissed the idea outright [in the past]. Now that I've tried it, I've become a passionate advocate. I have found that once again I'm feeling that I'm being transformed by the renewing of my mind (Rom 12:2), and as I reflect on what God is saying in his Word in a refreshed way, the Lord is giving me renewed insight (2 Tim 2:7)... [and] continuing [the] process of the transformation of my life.

Journaling is not for everyone, but it might be just what you need right now.

<https://growingfaith.com.au/articles/how-i-rediscovered-a-passion-for-bible-reading>

How are you going at listening carefully to God's words?

What do you want to change so you can listen better to your Lord?-----

And as we do, we'll not only be saved, but live fruitful lives for him.

And we'll want to share n' shine-out the life-bringing good news of Jesus.(**SLIDE**)-----

Jesus is the light, don't hide the good news about him.

Let it satisfy your soul, and flow out from your heart and lips.

Let's pray.