

## “Do You Hear Me Now?”

*Series: Jesus and His Gospel: Studies in Mark – Part II*

*Mark 4:21-25*

**Introduction:** Take your Bible and turn to Mark 4, Mark chapter 4.

As I did some research last night for a good illustration to open up my sermon with this morning I came across the Mosquito ringtone. A few years ago a high pitched, mosquito sounding buzz was designed as a ringtone for cell phones. The ringtone is not simply intended to be annoying, but it is designed to be heard by young people and not by adults. The general theory is that adults generally cannot hear a frequency of sound above 16 kHz, but young people under the age of 25 can generally hear frequencies up to 19 kHz. And so the mosquito ringtone was developed so that teens could text in class and not get busted. Oh the depths to which we will slump simply to avoid missing a friend's all important text telling us about the latest funny thing that was said in English class.

So, we decided to run a little science experiment at home last night to see if the theory proved true. What we found out is that our kids have good hearing – though they will not be having a cell phone in class anytime in the next decade – and they better not be texting their friends! It also turns out that if you are going to try to use the mosquito ringtone you would have a pretty good chance of getting away with it if I was your teacher – my wife, not so much – but me – you would be fine. In fact, according to our scientific experiment last night you could probably use your regular ringtone and apparently I wouldn't hear it! Now, please don't feel sorry for me about this. There is definitely some advantage to not being able to hear as well as others. I mean I get to claim that I didn't hear something and it probably was actually true – it wasn't just selective hearing – Julie is still not convinced, but I am working on her!

For the great crowd in Mark 4 it seemed as though Jesus was talking in a high frequency that they just couldn't hear. You remember from our time in the first 20 verses last week that in the face of the different responses Jesus was seeing to his ministry he responded by starting to teach in parables. The first parable we considered last week was the parable of the sower, the soil, and the seeds. Jesus' disciples were not sure what all Jesus meant by this parable and so they asked him later about what it meant, and before he gives the explanation he tells them this in verse 11 – *read 4:11-12*. So the parables were intended to cloud the person and work of Jesus from those who had already made it clear that they had rejected Him and His message. But the thought of these verses must have struck Jesus' disciples with a plaguing question. If the parables are intent on shrouding the Messiah in the face of unbelief, then why bother proclaiming the message at all? As followers of Jesus they would eventually be sent to those who were outside to give them the message of the glorious Gospel of Jesus. But if Jesus has resorted to parables to further darken their already darkened understanding, then why bother? Shouldn't the disciples just keep the

truth that has been revealed to them as the inside crowd a secret? Shouldn't they too just keep the message about Jesus to themselves?

As we come to verses 21-25 Jesus has finished explaining the parable of the sower to his inner disciples and the presumption in the text is that he is back with the crowd speaking to them in yet another parable. Mark has already told us that he spoke to them in many parables and only some of them are recorded here for us. And so, in light of the parable of the sowers and its explanation Jesus goes on to speak to them with another parable. He says this in verse 21 – *read 21-25.*

Lest the disciples should take from verses 11-12 that God does not want outsiders to hear and repent and be forgiven, Jesus makes a two things clear about his revelation through this parable.

### 1. The Light came to be Seen – vs. 21

- a. He makes known that the light came to be seen. The parable is in the form of a rhetorical question which demands a negative answer. So Jesus says, is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand? The obvious answer is no – you bring a lamp into a house without electricity, like the houses of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century would have been, in order to put the light somewhere in the room where it could give light to all in the room. It is an everyday situation that Jesus is here using to make known a deeper truth that is like this one.
- b. That deeper truth can be found by looking at the grammatical makeup of verse 21, not all of which can be detected in the English. Mark uses the word “lamp” as the subject of the sentence rather than as the object of the sentence. The light comes into the room. The verb translated as brought in most of our English Bibles is the Greek word for “to come”, but it is in the passive so it is translated as brought. And Mark literally says here, “the lamp” not just “a lamp.” Now, in Matthew and Luke’s use of this parable they tell the parable differently and it functions differently in their narrative and so they don’t say “the lamp” but they just say “a lamp.”
- c. Mark is communicating something by how he gives us this parable. The lamp is the subject rather than the object and it is *the* lamp instead of just *a* lamp. This parable about a lamp points to Jesus as the lamp. Jesus is the lamp that has come into the room of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish world. And like any lamp that was brought into a room during that day, he was not brought into the world to be put under a basket or a couch. A lamp was brought into the room to be put on a stand – to be seen by all in the room. A dark room is lit up by a lamp and what was previously unknown or unseen is now known and seen.
- d. When I attended Clearwater Christian College I had the privilege of working for Security. What this basically meant at the time was that you got to be a part of a two member team that wore a uniform and acted official from 4pm to 7am. Often my shifts would fall during the night – the 8-midnight shift or the 12-3 shift. As part of our duties we were to make regular checks of the campus to make sure

that everything was secure. Traversing the pitch black parts of campus your best friend quickly became your flashlight. Now, it would have been ludicrous for me as a security guard working the night shift to take my flashlight and put a black sock around the end of it so that it gave out very little light. This would defeat the whole purpose of the light. It wouldn't be allowed to shine in the dark and illuminate whatever was out there.

- e. This is Jesus' point. He is the lamp and as the lamp he has come to be seen. He has taught in parables and will continue to do so. And in those parables there is an element of which Jesus is masking the truth from those who refuse to believe. But since he is the lamp we must not be mistaken here and think that since he is masking his truth in parables then he must not want to be seen or heard. No, he is the lamp and lamps are meant to be seen.
2. **The Light came to Reveal – vs. 22**
- a. Then verse 22 carries the idea further when it says that nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. Jesus may be referring to himself here in that his secrecy through teaching in parables is only temporary and soon everything will be revealed, but I think more of what Jesus is saying is that as the light he has come to reveal all things. He has come to be seen and he has come to reveal. Jesus has been brought into the darkness of the world to make known the things that were previously unknown and to bring the secret things to light. I think this is the sense of Jesus' words here, because this is exactly what he says about himself throughout John's Gospel. He states that as the light of the world he came to reveal that which had been previously unknown, especially the sins of mankind.
  - b. The sins of mankind
    - i. So, in John 3 we are told that God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world and then the text says this in verse 18:
      - 1. <sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. <sup>19</sup> And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. <sup>20</sup> For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. <sup>21</sup> But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God." (John 3:18-21 ESV)
    - ii. Those who do wicked thing hate the light and do not come to the light because then their wicked ways will be exposed. Just like as a security guard, as I walked around on my duties wielding my mighty flashlight, if there were any students or outside intruders doing something they shouldn't be when they saw the light coming they would scatter or hide so as to not be revealed. The same is true in a universal sense with Jesus. He is the light – he is not just carrying a light. It is in his very nature and

person and work to be revealing things that were previously hidden – especially sins. Jesus expounds on this thought in John 15:

1. <sup>22</sup> If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. <sup>23</sup> Whoever hates me hates my Father also. <sup>24</sup> If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. (John 15:22-24 ESV)
- iii. So, Jesus is explicitly the light of the world through his words and through his works. If he had not spoken as he did and if he had not done as he did then mankind would not have been guilty of sin, but now because He has exposed our sin through his words and his works, we have no excuse. So, as the lamp, Jesus entered the world to be seen and to reveal. His presence as the pure light of God has made known the impurities of man and for this mankind hates Jesus. But Jesus did not just come as the light to reveal mankind's sinfulness, but also to illuminate the way of salvation.
- c. The way of salvation
  - i. So in John 12 the text tells us:
    1. <sup>44</sup> And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. <sup>45</sup> And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. <sup>46</sup> I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. <sup>47</sup> If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. <sup>48</sup> The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. (John 12:44-48)
  - ii. Jesus did not just come as light to make known our darkness, but to lead us out of the darkness and into the light. We do not have to follow him out of the darkness – we can remain in our sin if we so choose, but we do not have to. He has come into the world as the lamp so that he would be set on the lampstand and show the sinfulness of our own hearts and the hope of freedom from darkness through belief in Him.
  - iii. So, in this parable in Mark 4 Jesus is pointing to the fact that He is the light and as the light he has come into the room of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish world to be seen and to reveal. Even though he is speaking in parables to those who are outside his intent in coming into the world is to be seen and to reveal. He has come to make known to mankind their own sinfulness and he has come to make known to mankind the way of escape from the darkness. And this reality – that Jesus has come to be seen and to reveal mankind's sinfulness and the way of salvation – this reality leads us to verses 23-25 in which there is the clarion call to listen to what he is saying. This is the point of the parable and these following verses. Jesus

has come to be heard. Though he speaks in parables to further cloud those who have made clear their unbelief, he – as the light – has come to be seen and heard.

- iv. And so, in verses 23 and 24 Christ uses the word for hearing 3 times and the command to pay careful attention to something once. In other words, simply because some of his teaching is now in parables, this does not get the hearers off the hook. They are still responsible to listen, and not just to listen, but to hear. And it is in this that we see the point of the passage. Christ must be heard! Those who are confronted with his words and his works are now called to listen to Jesus.
- v. The story is told by Laura Bush of a time when her husband was serving as president and they went and visited his parent's home and stayed overnight. The next morning President Bush woke up at 6am and went downstairs for a cup of coffee. As he and his parents sat in the living room drinking their coffee the president put his feet upon the coffee table. Immediately his mother barked out an order for him to put his feet down which was quickly met by his father coming to his defense. "Barbara, he's the president of the United States – he can put his feet on our table." "And Barbara said, 'I don't care. I don't want his feet on my table.'" The president promptly did as he was told, for as Laura Bush observed, "Even Presidents have to listen to their mothers."
- vi. The very nature of the relationship between the President and his mother caused him to listen to her and obey her command. What we see here in the parable is that the nature of Jesus as seen through his words and his works demands all of his listeners to hear him. Christ must be heard! They must not have hearts like the pathway where Satan easily steals the words of his teaching. They must not have hearts like the rocky soil where they sprout up in excitement at the ministry of Jesus, but as soon as they face opposition to their belief in Jesus they wilt and wither. They must not have hearts like the weedy soil where they believe in him and receive his word, but then the cares and concerns of this world crowd out their faith and they produce no fruit. No, they must have hearts that are like the fourth soil that when it receives the word it produces a great harvest. Christ's intention with this parable of the light is to make known that everyone must listen – and by this he means receive Him and His message and enter into His Kingdom. Though the message seems obscured by the parables, he is calling those who would be true followers to seek out understanding and they will receive it. If you do not put the light under a basket then it will shine in the room of your life and it will reveal your own sinfulness and it will show you the way of salvation because Jesus came to bring us from darkness into light. But for this to happen – Christ must be heard!

### 3. Future Judgment is Based on Current Hearing – vs. 23-25

- a. Notice that this call of Christ to listen to him is a current call for current hearing. Jesus says – If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. And by the way, this last phrase – let him hear – is not just a polite “let him hear if it is convenient for him”. No, it is an active imperative so the sense is more – listen up! Then in verse 24 he tells them again to pay attention to what they are hearing. The verb for pay attention is the verb for “to see” and in a context like this the idea is a command for the crowd to not simply let words cross their physical ears, but to look into those words, consider them, mull them over, pay attention to them, and make changes in accordance with them.
- b. Those of us who are parents know what this is like with our kids. Who of us haven’t been in the middle of explaining something very important to our children when all of a sudden we realize that while yes they are looking at me and yes my words are crossing their ear drums, but there is definitely a disconnect between their ear drum and their brain. I’m talking and they are hearing, but they are definitely not listening. And so in the middle of our sermonette to our children about how their messy room is a danger to them becoming productive and responsible adults we throw in a “are you listening to me?” Hey, pay attention – look at me when I am talking to you. This is exactly what Jesus is doing here, only in a much more serious way. He is drawing unique attention to these words of his – the seed of the Gospel that must be received into the listening heart, not just the listening ear.
- c. This current hearing is of utmost importance because future judgment is based upon current hearing. So Jesus has told them that if they have ears to hear, they need to listen now. He tells them again at the beginning of verse 24 that they need to pay attention to what they are hearing right now. And then he illustrates the importance with a kind of proverb about future judgment. He tells them that the measure they use to listen now will be the measure used for judgment in the future. If we listen with great measure then we will be blessed to receive much in the future. If we don’t listen and don’t receive then even what we think we have will be taken away.
- d. The spiritual principle is that future judgment is based upon current hearing. So, if you bring a tablespoon and receive Jesus’ words to that level, it will be to that level that you receive. If you bring a basket it will be to that level that you will receive. If you bring an empty dump truck it will be to that level that you receive. Jesus cannot put a dump truck load into the table spoon, nor will he put only a basket full into the empty dump truck. He will fill to capacity whatever his hearers bring to him with which to receive and pay attention to His words. His hearers will be judged in the future by how they hear in the present. So, in verse 24 the hearing and the measuring is present, but then the rest of the verbs are future passives. So, with the measure you right now use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. These are future passives – it will be measured and it will be added. You do not earn this in any sense other than simply coming to hear and receive – and Jesus promises that you will receive. But if you decide that Jesus’ words just aren’t that important – as many in Jesus’ own

day did – then that is how you will be judged in the future. You will not receive anything, and even what you think you have will be taken away from you.

- e. So, the point here is that your current hearing determines your future judgment. You will either pay attention and receive or you will not pay attention and not receive. This is the negative side to the positive of verses 21-22. Jesus has come into the world as the lamp and the light. He intends to be seen and he has come to reveal sin and to show mankind the way of salvation. But mankind does not have to listen, and many of them will not. In fact, most people in Jesus' own day heard him with their ears, but chose to not pay attention to these words. They were attracted to him by the great works he was doing and by the authority with which he taught, but most of them were not ready to actually receive those words and follow Him. And so the positive intention of Christ for all to see and hear is met by the hardened ears of mankind in which many will chose not to hear and understand. And this current hearing determines future judgment.
- f. And so the question rests upon you this morning. Have you heard the words of Jesus? Most certainly they have passed through your ears. But just because you have heard them does not mean that you have received them. Heed the warning of Christ here. Do not let your current hearing determine your future judgment in which that which you think you had is taken away.
- g. Certainly this is a message from the text for those of you who are not Christians. Maybe you have come with a friend or neighbor or family member this morning and you have heard about this Jesus and have heard of some of His message of the Gospel, but you are not a follower of Jesus. This passage is calling you to heed his message. One day you will stand before God and be accountable to him for what you have done with His words. And so the message this morning is – pay attention! Hear Jesus and heed his words. If you haven't yet recognized your own sinfulness and your need for forgiveness – then may today be the day that you heed His words. If you haven't yet believed that Jesus is who He said he is and you haven't yet placed your heart's trust in Him, then may today be the day that you pay attention to His words and repent and believe in Jesus.
- h. This message from the text is also for those of who are religious but not followers of Jesus. You see, Jesus was speaking to a large crowd who probably heard these parables and thought – oh, that was a nice lesson, and Jesus is such a nice man, and he does such great things, and I profit so much from just being around him and his disciples. And yet, on that Day of Judgment their current hearing will be exposed for what it was – nothing more than deafness. They weren't really listening to Jesus, they were just hearing his words. Maybe that is you. Maybe you have heard a lot of his words and this whole church deal is just part of your life and it makes you feel good and you enjoy the people, but you don't really heed Jesus' words. You're not really interested in Him as Lord. Sure, you'll take this and that of his message, but overall you still want to be in charge. On that Last Day our level of hearing will be exposed by Christ's judgment, and His words will stand in judgment over us. What will the verdict be for you? Will more be added

to you because you gladly heard and received his words now, or will what you think you had be taken away because you didn't really receive and hear now?

- i. But there is also something here for those of us who are absolutely convinced that by God's grace we have been saved and we are followers of Jesus Christ. For those of us who evaluate our hearts and know that God has softened our soil and we are producing fruit in our life because the seed of the Gospel has taken root in us – we must see in these verses a call to examine our stewardship. Jesus is not here talking about levels of salvation in that if we bring a greater measure to receive his words then we have a greater level of salvation, but if we bring a lesser measure then we will still suffer in part for our sin, but will also be saved in part. That is a heretical non-gospel of salvation by works where how we do something determines our level of salvation.
- j. But there is here in verses 24-25 a call to examine our stewardship. There is a hint here, as in many other texts in Jesus' teaching, of levels of blessing and reward. If we as disciples of Jesus receive little we will be blessed with little, and if we receive much we will be blessed with much. Discipleship has as an inherent element hearing and stewardship. Listening to and receiving the message of the Gospel is the way into this eternal blessing, but it is also the key to being a fruitful and faithful disciple. There is effort to be made in order to be a faithful disciple who uses what he has been given. God is not going to just keep giving you more and more if you are not using what He has given. And so you may say, I am not growing in my faith. I feel stagnant and apathetic. I feel as though God is distant and I am no longer learning like I used to. There are a few possible answers to why this may be happening in your heart, but one of those answers is that you may not be using what you have been given. Maybe the truth you know isn't being put into practice in your life and your Lord is not going to give you more to mismanage.
- k. When I was between my Freshman and Sophomore years of college I went home and worked as much as possible so that I could have the money I needed for college. I got a temp job with a contractor helping him build a golf course. Now, for those of you who have worked with Temporary employment companies, you know that it doesn't always draw the best of workers. For the most part, there is a reason they can only get hired temporarily. Occasionally, it is people who are just around for a temporary time and so they can only hold a temporary job. As I worked that summer helping to build that golf course I noticed that the job was pretty easy to grasp. The boss told you what to do and you were expected to do it. The funny thing was, not everyone did that. Some worked a little, and some didn't seem to work much at all. We all heard the words of the boss, but we didn't all pay attention to the boss. As the project was nearing completion they didn't need all 20 or so of us that had been working throughout the summer and so they called three or four of us aside and told us that we should come back to work the next day. The rest of the temporary crew was dismissed to never return. Those three or four who were kept were those who had paid attention to the words of the boss and had actually worked in accordance to them. Faithfulness to

the task was met with more responsibility and more was entrusted to those who did what they were told.

1. I wonder, are you comfortable with your level of heeding the words of your Lord in your life? If you were the Lord and you had a task to accomplish would you pick you to do that task because of your proven faithfulness? If you were Jesus and you were looking at Newton Bible Church would you look at your life and entrust more truth and more spiritual responsibility because of proven faithfulness and good stewardship? Now, notice I did not say if you were Jesus and you looked at the life of the person sitting in front or behind you – leave that with the Lord. But this morning we must examine our own lives. We must see them as Christ sees them, and we must pay attention to His Words.

**Conclusion:** I am so glad that it is not simply our past listening that determines these things. The command in the text is to currently – right now – pay attention to your Lord. Heed his words and let his light shine in your life. In what ways does this need to happen for you? Let's pray!