

Open Line Bible Study Lesson Eleven February 13, 2018

Scripture Texts: Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-10, Luke 8:4-15

Tonight's Subject: The Challenge, (What did those hear that did not hear)

We are moving toward our question,

“what did the people hear- that did not hear- what JESUS wanted them to hear”.

We are putting each piece of the parable together little by little. I want to start tonight with clarifying something that any of us could presume that isn't in the story. What is this? L 8:9 is the only variation of the parable story that the disciples actually ask Jesus specifically about the sower parable. In Mk 4:10 the disciples ask JESUS about parables in general. In M 13:10 the disciples want to know why the crowds are spoken to in parables. Thus the emphasis is more about the people rather than the parable. So don't read into the story line that the disciples simply and exclusively ask JESUS why He told the people the sower story through the means of a parable. They did ask that in Luke but not M or Mk. This was referred to in lesson 7, Jan 9th. But we need to further consider this. Consider Mk's version. The disciples ask about parables but JESUS turns the focus and answer back to the sower parable. The disciples did not do that, JESUS did. In this story they have not yet realized how important the sower parable is. They know parables are important and they know they don't understand them very well BUT THEY DON'T KNOW THAT THE SOWER PARABLE IS THE PRIMARY PARABLE THEY MUST UNDERSTAND! Jesus emphasizes this in His response in Mk 4:13. We spoke about that verse in the first few lessons. The new information here is that JESUS is giving more information to the disciples than they had really asked. The disciples desire to know about the parables but Jesus' answer is to tell them in so many words, “you had better find out about the parable of the sower first and then other parables will be clearer in their meaning.”

From M 13:10 we have established already the probability that the question the disciples ask JESUS comes both from them and those who have asked the disciples to enquire of JESUS why He teaches in parables. As well, there are those who are motivated to ask this question b/c they are offended at the way JESUS teaches. I'll explain the following terms as most would not be clear without further explanation. We can derive from the gospels that some persons realized JESUS spoke in parable code, secret code, careful code, non-confrontational code (sometimes), Spirit code, private code, non-incrimination code, etc. All these made little sense to persons who presumed upon JESUS what they thought He must do IF HE WAS THE MESSIAH. They thought, “JESUS, in order to make it crystal clear to as many Jewish citizens as possible who you really are we have expectations you must fulfill”.

We often don't see this conflict in the story lines but it's very present. So the question in M 13:10 is motivated to some degree by enquirers who are thinking, “Don't you want the masses to know the truth JESUS?” Here are two examples of this struggle and temptation JESUS faced that often go unnoticed

today. They are J 2:23-25 & J 7:1-5. Let's read these and briefly discuss them. Now you should see how the question in M 13:10 is influenced by the same attitude as what we find in John's gospel.

The question is also in part the futile effort of the disciples to help JESUS out in HIS mission! They have paid little attention to the sower parable themselves when they first heard it 3 to 5 times or more. To this point, what JESUS has stated about the heart makes little sense to them. So, the disciples have this human inspired notion that if JESUS would just speak more clearly then everyone would sign up to help JESUS accomplish His mission, whatever that is. Even JESUS basic mission is not clearly seen by many persons who claim to be His followers. HOW MERCIFUL IS OUR LORD IN RESPONSE TO OUR INSENSITIVITY TO HIS GREATER PURPOSES. So, some of the disciples are gullible enough to believe the way JESUS teaches is why persons cannot hear Him rather than knowing the state of the listener's heart is the issue blocking why they cannot hear JESUS! Let that sink in, especially when you encounter attitudes from anyone who implies that resistance to the gospel is the sole failure of the person sharing the truth. JESUS dealt with this glaring form of blindness throughout His ministry. So have I and we will all continue to sometimes face this issue. The LORD certainly understands!

Before we go further into M 13, we must dismiss another mythical presumption the best of us can have when studying these story lines. Here goes..... After reading the story line a few times, one can reach the wrong conclusion that JESUS stated one thing to one group and another thing to a second group. Thus when some persons realized this they didn't appreciate JESUS not telling all of them the exact same thing. When this notion is seriously considered it quickly falls apart. While it is completely possible to say two different things to two different groups at two different times that is NOT what is being referred to here! What has happened in this case is that JESUS has taught one group of persons and THE PERSONS HAVE HEARD WHATEVER THEY HEARD and then they place the responsibility of that on JESUS. They become so preoccupied with what they don't like or understand that JESUS said they haven't stopped long enough to ask themselves, "Why is it that two or more different opposing interpretations are being heard from JESUS teaching?" Many Christian leaders have dealt with this. When the dispute is dissected by reasonable persons, one of their first discoveries is the realization that the accusation of wrong comments by someone is highly unlikely or impossible if the conversation was in the same place witnessed by numerous persons who didn't hear the same thing said.

We've all heard the comment, "Were you in the same place that I was in? They (or whomever) didn't say that or did say that, etc." SO KEEP THIS IN MIND. The complaint is coming from those who all heard JESUS speak the same thing but they didn't understand it in the same way. In their blindness and immaturity the offended party never stops and asks "Am I hearing or interpreting the teaching correctly?" Our adversary has been working the same way throughout history. That will continue until we see through this darkness more clearly. Therefore do not presume the issue with JESUS is that He said two different things to different groups who have misunderstood his intentions in having done so. No, JESUS spoke to 1 group who didn't hear his message correctly and they have assumed JESUS is at fault in their displeasure of His teaching.

We must also recognize the following principle at work in this story line. The more significant the message is and its influence on persons listening the greater the possibility is that our adversary will resist the message attempting to pervert what the listener has heard. At any time we see someone not understanding the teaching of JESUS and worse, misunderstanding His words and taking offense at truth, realize what is happening in this situation. Satan brings offense to those whose hearts are not ready to further repent at the deeper challenge the LORD has given them. There are many reasons we may fail to see all the many nuggets of truth found in the story lines of Scripture. But here is one that the adversary has used to take advantage of one of JESUS' great strengths. Let me explain.

A lot of what has been referred to in this lesson is often missed by us simply b/c JESUS didn't take the time to specifically address it then or ever or (the greatest probability) the gospel writers were not compelled to address it as they recounted the stories from JESUS' ministry in what became the gospels. Jesus lived in perfect character and displayed immeasurable patience, love and mercy toward the innumerable times the disciples were guilty of missing JESUS point. So our LORD never constantly confronted the blindness of His students or every level of obvious hypocrisy he detected. Neither should we when we recognize some level of immaturity or ulterior motivation in people. That said, Satan takes the gracious manner in how our LORD operates and uses the LORD's silence against us when we read these stories. We can fail to see behind the story line as JESUS did. Just b/c JESUS didn't address it doesn't mean the problem or resistance or hypocrisy wasn't there. One of my common mistakes in my earlier ministry years was allowing myself to be overwhelmed at how blind and insensitive people could be to the work of HOLY SPIRIT or the interruption and resistance of the devil. I asked myself and others a 1000 times how people could be so blind as to what is happening here. Eventually, I learned the following truth. We should not focus our time on praying that persons would first see the works of the FATHER or Satan but instead we should pray for persons to know the truth of JESUS message in order that HIS works would be seen and that darkness would be understood.

In other words, I wanted persons to see the darkness and the light without being certain the people were walking in the light first! The only way persons will recognize the light and darkness most of the time is to be certain they are first walking in the light of CHRIST all the time! JESUS knew this and lived by this principle. He knew that as long as people didn't get HIM right they would not get anything else right either. They failed to understand the sower parable b/c they FAILED TO RECEIVE THE SOWER HIMSELF first from the story. Jesus saw through all the limitations, sin and darkness that motivated so many questions He was asked. Keep this in mind as you study the story line. Now we get to the main question. HOW DID THESE PERSONS NOT HEAR THE WONDROUS TRUTHS JESUS SHARED WITH THEM? We've established it wasn't two messages from JESUS in two different places or two messages from JESUS in the same place. No, the issue is the audience. WHY?