

Scripture Texts: Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20, Luke 8:4-15

**Tonight's Subject: The Story, The Challenge, The Question**

After last week's emphasis on what the word "listen" can mean it is likely that the HOLY SPIRIT has brought even more insight to you as the WORD is pondered and you compare what the LORD has taught you in the past. We could continue to press into the word "listen". It's not that I don't want to but here is something to keep considering. It is not possible for any of us to thoroughly know everything any scripture can teach us! This is to the glory of GOD that the revelations never end from the working of the WORD of GOD and what HOLY SPIRIT will show us as we are ready or need to see into the WORD more deeply. I will add that we can always listen and that as each day passes it is more crucial we listen with deeper insight into the WORD. May the LORD grant you understanding of these truths into your spiritual man as you "Seek 1<sup>st</sup> the Kingdom of GOD".

Let's go forward in M's story line. If you look at v. 18, Jesus begins explaining the parable to the disciples. Now here is something to ponder few ever consider. Notice v.18, Jesus states, "listen then to what the parable of the sower means:." Did you see the word again "listen"? Notice that Jesus tells the general audience to listen and we can assume some really heard the story but most did not. We can safely conclude such due to the very way JESUS tells the parable. According to the story only 1 in 4 persons or hearts were ready to receive the WORD! While JESUS isn't referring to a literal % that only 25% will hear Him, we can also use the WORD to safely conclude that "few there be that find it. (Life)" M7:14. So few, in the general audience really listened to the story. Then JESUS tells the disciples to "listen" in M's version! This is significant! Are we listening? Where M records JESUS telling disciples to listen, Mk and L do not refer to this. Are we listening now? Mk places the emphasis on everyone listening to JESUS. But M places the emphasis on the disciples listening to JESUS. From the text in M JESUS discloses that He knew the audience could not hear like the disciples could hear. So when JESUS tells those who are unlearned, uncommitted or underdeveloped in the faith journey, in HIS mercy, HE knows they will not hear, heed and obey to a great depth what HE is saying. But HE still loves them to point them to the truth EVEN KNOWING MOST will not heed His counsel. However, when JESUS speaks to the disciples to "listen" in M, HE is expecting more out of them b/c more has been given to them to enable them to actually hear the truth at a deeper understanding and application! So, please understand disciple! We have ears to hear & eyes to see unlike those unredeemed. When JESUS tells a disciple to listen, ask HIM for the use of the ability to listen with the gift of hearing and seeing you have been given in CHRIST! YOU can hear at a deeper level, the level of spirit and truth!

## The Challenge

If you have ears to hear, are you using those ears to hear? So let's make application of that as Disciples and Intercessors when the Gospel is being shared and we are involved in the process. Keep the listening factor in mind. You, the disciple are listening at a different frequency than others. Then there are other believers who will hear even more than we will for various reasons. We are all hearing the same words stated but not hearing the same truth shared by HOLY SPIRIT's activity in the words spoken by a person. Understand this to pray more effectively as the gospel is shared. We have to consider the following. Lord, what do you want the uncommitted to hear? What do you want me the disciple to hear? What do you want other disciples present to hear? We also have to realize HOLY SPIRIT may direct us to specifically pray for a given person in the setting we are in. They could be Christian or not and we may have limited information about them. We must pray they hear what they must listen to in the gospel shared. We must learn and keep it in mind HOLY SPIRIT is not going to say the exact same thing to everyone in the same message. He can do that but isn't bound to that limitation. Thus we have to remember we are all hearing the LORD at different levels in our faith journey. There are those in your midst who probably don't have the maturity to even know they should pray to listen with "ears" given them by the LORD's grace. As much as possible, cover those persons in prayer to listen. Very important here! Consider L8:18. L states this as a general principle to be practiced in the disciple's life. L doesn't directly tie this statement into the sower parable but it comes soon after. "Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him." We must ask the LORD's mercy on those who cannot or will not hear the truth at the level they need to heed the truth. The teaching of Christ in L8:18 will come to pass eventually but it is the heart of GOD to not have to bring immediate judgment on those who are resistant, stuck, etc. The main point we need to see here is our need to work with HOLY SPIRIT in what He is doing in the moment. I've often heard stories through the years about local churches that had assigned intercessors praying while the pastor or others preached. This increased the effective connection of truth to listener. There is no gospel communicator who is effective without an army of intercessors working behind the scenes! Why some Christians cannot accept this baffles me! They believe one key leader can do it all without anyone else doing anything. We all have a part to pray when the gospel is shared. If you can thank the LORD tonight that you are saved you can also thank the LORD for someone who shared with you HIS truth AND YOU CAN THANK THE LORD for someone who prayed for you to hear the truth with open ears, eyes and a prepared heart! I will go deeper with this later but we must learn to pray for each person in every audience knowing there are persons there who fit into all four groups JESUS describes in the sower parable.

## The Question

When the disciples ask about this parable, M tells us they want to know why JESUS speaks to people in parables. (v.10). Mk tells us the disciples and others ask JESUS about the parables. (Mk 4:10). L tells us the disciples wanted to know what this parable meant. (L8:9) DO YOU SEE A PATTERN HERE related to Christian maturity? In M, the primary concern is with other people. In Mk, the primary concern is questions about parables. In L, the primary concern is their desire to understand the parable themselves. These series of questions by the disciples parallel the common sequence of our focus through the process of discipleship. The question in M reveals first how we could be too focused on others in ways that often reveal our self-righteousness. We want to know about others to the neglect of knowing about ourselves. Peter wanted to know about John more than he should have in John 21. The disciples possibly were doing the same thing in this question to JESUS. We cannot be certain of their motivation in the question but it is worth considering. The question in Mk reveals second we are too focused on the meaning of parables, doctrines, timelines and truth to the neglect of complete application of those truths to our lives. We can explain truth to others but not necessarily apply those truths to our own situations. The LORD has revealed to me how I struggled with this! We all do this but many never see their own blindness and thus continue to repeat the same mistakes. I know those who have Revelation all figured out but cannot love and support those around them who have struggles in their life. The Father longs to develop loving disciples who know truth rather than knowledgeable disciples who do not love. Do you see the imbalance in that? The question in L reveals third that such questions imply the disciples are starting to see their own need of grace more deeply. Their concern is now for themselves in the right manner. They are admitting they don't know it all and must be taught and moved beyond their present faith condition. We are all challenged by this 3 step process. I've pastored many persons who stay in the first stage all their lives. Some move on to the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage and only a few move into the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage. Can we pray the HOLY SPIRIT will move us to the 3<sup>rd</sup> level of faith and humility?