

Mark 4:1-20 **1** Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. **2** He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: **3** "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. **4** As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. **5** Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. **6** But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. **7** Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. **8** Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times." **9** Then Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." **10** When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. **11** He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables **12 so that, *"they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!"*** **13** Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? **14** The farmer sows the word. **15** Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. **16** Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. **17** But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. **18** Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; **19** but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. **20** Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop--thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown."

Last week we talked about some indicators of areas of our lives that we have not surrendered to God.

We looked at a set of questions where we were bound to find a few deficits as none of us is perfected I know I had a few problems For those of you who had a perfect score kudos and could you pick up a few leaves the next time you're walking around on the surface of my swimming pool...but for the rest of us...

In review:

Does it bother you when you are not in control? Yes or No
Does it bother you when things don't go your way? Yes or No
Do you have trouble asking for help? Yes or No
Do you get impatient when people don't do things right? Yes or No
Does it upset you when you don't get good service? Yes or No
Do you try to change people? Yes or No
Do you look for approval or thanks from others? Yes or No
Do you try to keep other people happy? Yes or No
Do you reject those who mistreat you? Yes or No

These were indicators of areas where we try to be god...but shouldn't.

We talked about placing our lives in Christ not just Christ in our lives.

...and the difficulty of surrender.

The natural world makes it very natural to approach life from a Me first perspective... then other people in the interest of making friends and influencing other people... and if God then God

Was followers of Christ we are re-oriented by the Holy Spirit to place God first then other people second then ourselves last when we have surrendered our will to God's will.

In the natural world this feels wrong...so wrong in fact that our human will defies the re-orientation and as we begin growing in Christ Satan the enemy of God uses our will to interrupt this process of surrender leading to growth and rebirth through the Spirit.

Our will is the battleground on which the kingdom of God is won or lost in our lives

Remember that the Kingdom of God is God ruling sovereign in our hearts and lives.

So, what weakens us for this battle?

Satan sows fear and doubt into our hearts seeking to break our trust in the Lord.

Fear that God's promise is insufficient

God promises "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

This fear leads to faithlessness and faithlessness to fear and fear...

Trusting God and placing our lives in Him doesn't mean that things will always go the way we want them to or the way we think they should.

God will challenge us in order to grow our faith but the enemy will use doubt to stall what God is doing in us if we allow him to.

This might never happen to you but it certainly has to me.

The story of Bubba...

I can come up with several more examples but it gets pretty disappointing to look at several of them at the same time.

So it is easy to stumble when things go badly and to go back to “me first” again and the enemy of God will absolutely tempt us to do exactly this.

We take our eyes off of God at the very time we need to see Him more clearly and we gain absolutely nothing...well maybe a learning experience...maybe

Ironic that these times of difficulty are the times that His power His love and His mercy are most visible...the times that we want to look away.

When I call up a friend on the phone my first question is usually “what are you doing?”

Jesus is my friend...but sometimes I forget to ask Him the question; “what are you doing?”

Perhaps one of the most important things we can do in our lives is to ask God “what are you doing through this?”

Understand that there will be many times and events where we will not get an answer but what we do by asking is seek to better align ourselves with His will.

It is especially important to wait patiently on understanding and to recognize that it is a ‘gift’ of God and not a human ‘right’

Just as God’s love for us is unconditional our faith in Him should not ever rely on Him revealing His plans to us.

We need to just remain thankful that we are invited into His plan and consider understanding a bonus.

If we allow God to be first in our lives we allow Him to cultivate in us a relationship with Him.

Through this relationship we come to know God

Remember that we are not human beings having a spiritual experience but rather spiritual beings having a human experience.

The human way of knowledge is that experience leads to evidence leads to belief leads to human knowledge

Experience

Evidence

Belief

Knowledge

The Spirit's way of knowledge begins with belief by faith in God leading to experience of God leading to knowledge of God leading to wisdom

Belief/Faith

Experience

Knowing

Wisdom

Remember that faith is the beginning of our walk with God not the result or end point of it.

God's revelations are a wonderful gift so continue to seek God's hand in all things in joy and in sorrow in nature and in spirit in you and in me.

Experience is seeing the many elements of the world

Knowledge is extending your learning beyond your immediate experience and seeing single events from more than one perspective

Intelligence is in perceiving the interactions and the patterns

Wisdom is seeing God in the beginning middle and at the end of it all.

Ps 111:10 - Show Context **The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom**; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.

Pr 1:7 - Show Context **The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge**, but fools despise **wisdom** and discipline.

Pr 9:10 - Show Context **The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom**, and knowledge **of the Holy One** is understanding.