

Pay Attention
Mark 4:21-25

You and I are a privileged people. I think we can say that with a bit of confidence if we just take a moment to think about where we really are. We're here, alive to start, breathing. This is a day of God's new mercies and compassions and grace that are flooding us as Lance even already mentioned in our announcement time. We have the opportunity to sing and approach God, not just with our praises and singing, but also with our prayers, going to the throne of grace. We have the chance to come together as brothers and sisters and have encouragement, be united in fellowship and joy. We have tons of privileges, tons of blessings. We can call ourselves adopted, redeemed, forgiven, now in the family of God, no longer outsiders, but now drawn near and close to Him.

We're privileged people. But, perhaps, a privilege that comes to us, that we can neglect often, is the privilege of the word of God. We have the privilege of God making Himself known to us. We have His very word in front of us, and not just as a book that we can read in our language, but something that we actually give time and attention to as a church; something that we set aside - the importance of this hearing from what God has said. We're privileged. We are privileged to have the creator of all things... The God who saved us has, actually, delivered to us His word and what He says. What a privilege! But with this privilege as with many privileges, there is immense responsibility. There is a huge responsibility with what God has given to us in His word. We must respond to this privilege. We cannot take it lightly. And that's exactly where we're going to find Jesus addressing His disciples in Mark chapter 4 today.

If you're not already there, let's go to Mark 4 and read our verses, this small passage for the morning in Mark 4:21-25; "And he said to them, 'Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand? For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.' And he said to them, 'Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.'" This morning, we're jumping back into not just the

life and ministry and teaching of Jesus Christ, but we're jumping right back into His teaching specifically in parables.

We just started this the last time we were in Mark, and we saw the beginnings of this in our last twenty verses of chapter 4. This is where we saw the parable, the well-known parable, of the sower, the seed, and the soils. That's what we examined this last time as Jesus began to teach in parables, and we were reminded why Jesus was teaching in parables. He, actually, explains it and tells it to us. In verses 10-12, we saw the explanation of this. There was a twofold purpose in why Jesus shifts. Why He changes to start teaching in these stories with a point. Why does He shift? And it's twofold. One is to continue to instruct His followers. He wants to continue to teach His disciples and to give them more information, knowledge, and understanding, regarding the kingdom of God. So, He does this with pictures and illustrations in these parables, but at the same time, He wants to hide and conceal this message from those that are on the outside, from those that we've already seen so far in the gospel of Mark that don't embrace Christ, that don't follow Him, that have not placed their faith and life in Him. We've seen already just how He encountered this at the end of chapter 3, those spiritual and religious leaders of the day, the ones that everyone looked up to, who were accusing Jesus of working with Satan, the masses, the crowds, that were coming to Him, streaming to Jesus just for the show, just to be entertained, to see one more miracle, to have some other way of Jesus helping them in their present condition. And then His own family... His own family that was trying to rescue Jesus, claiming that He was crazy, He was a madman, out of His mind.

All these different responses coming and flowing, and Jesus speaks in parables now. He speaks in parables to those that have rejected Him. They have already made up their mind; these parables would not help them. They would not give them further instruction. It would be a veil. It'd be hidden from their eyes. It'd be a blinding element. But for those who had, followed Him, for those that were committed to Him, these parables instructed and continued to build up what they already knew about the kingdom as Jesus was preaching. This's what we learned about why He teaches in parables. But also we saw a parable itself with a farmer sowing seed and a bunch of different soils and how they responded, and this was Jesus' perfect illustration to explain why things were happening the way they were. We were reminded how the disciples were probably confused at this point in His

ministry. They themselves were completely convinced in who Christ was. They saw His authority, and they thought there's no other explanation. This guy is the Messiah. But that wasn't the case, as we saw, with the enthusiasts, the religious leaders, the family members of Jesus that did not feel that way. Thus Jesus tells the story of the soils and explains how, the reason, you have all these different responses is not because there's something wrong with the farmer and the seed. There's nothing wrong with the word of God that's going out. It's the soils. It's the soils that are receiving this. It's the people. It's the people that Jesus is ministering to and their receptivity to His message, to His ministry and His life. Thus the parable of the soils, as this showed and explained to His disciples what was taking place.

This morning, we approach these two short little parables. They're almost proverbs they're so small and tiny, and they come right on top of each other, and they're a little enigmatic. They're a little obscure in some ways. So many commentators and many people say this is a little random. Mark just didn't know where to put these so he just put them right here. He said I got to put it somewhere in this book, so I'll just insert it right here in between some other parables, and that'll fit just nicely. We, obviously, know better because we have a higher view of Scripture, understanding that the Holy Spirit was working through Mark and, actually, instructing and helping him to place these things in an orderly way that was fit for God's purpose. So, we come to these parables knowing that there is an intentionality behind them, and they serve a good purpose. We will find two parables this morning.

And we'll jump into the first parable in verses 21-23, and that is a parable of revelation - a parable of revelation. In this... out the gate, since there is such confusion and misunderstanding regarding what is happening in these short amount of verses, I want to explain to you what Jesus is doing. The key to understanding our text this morning is to provide it as a balance with what Jesus's already said back in verses 10-12. If you look back up to chapter 4:10-12, we saw Jesus explaining this amazing privilege the disciples had. Look at verse 10; "And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. And he said to them, 'To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God...'" Amazing privilege - awesome to think of people on earth at that time, fishermen, just your ordinary citizens, that were inside, that had this privileged position to not just be with Christ and follow Him, but to have this known to them. It had been manifested. It had been made known to them, the secret of the kingdom of

God. Incredible privilege, amazing position that these people had, these disciples, as Jesus was explaining the situation of the parable of the soil.

Seeing how everyone else is responding, it's tempting for the disciples at this point to think this is awesome. This is great. We're so privileged. We have the secret of the kingdom of God. We're on the inside. Everyone else is on the outside. We are the privileged ones, and we get to keep this to ourselves. Jesus, this morning, is addressing them and saying that's not the case. You are not on the inside. You are not given the secrets of the kingdom of God to sit there and keep it as a little secret club yourself. That's not the case, and that's where these two parables come in this morning as we get into this first parable of revelation. We'll see the picture that forms - the picture of revelation in verse 21 - the picture of revelation. It's a simple picture, really. "And he said to them, 'Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand?' " It's, really, two different questions. What do you do with a lamp? Well, one option is you put it under something. You put it under a bed. You put it under a basket that holds grain or something like that. And there's a clear response to that. Is that what you do with a lamp? Absolutely not. In a society without electricity, and how much they depended upon things like fire and lamps and this form of light for them at nighttime, this was pretty critical and obvious for them. No. Where does a lamp go? It goes on a stand. You elevate it. You give it that opportunity, that spot, that placement, in the house or wherever, so that it can actually light up the room and shine forth. A lamp is not meant to be stashed away and hidden. It is meant to shine forth and reveal. It is meant to reveal.

Jesus is speaking to this inner group and using this simple picture with His disciples (and still viewing this inner group of disciples and those that were actually His followers) and saying this is the case with the lamp, is it not? You want a lamp to be exposed. You want a lamp to be out. You want a lamp to be able to light up a room or a region of sorts, and everyone would think, well, yeah. Of course. Absolutely. That's the case, and Jesus's making this connection to His own ministry, His own teaching. This is what He was doing. He was coming as that lamp. He was coming as that light. He was coming not to go hide under a bed. He was coming not to do everything in secret, He was coming to reveal. He was coming to show forth. John 8:12 reminds us; "...Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of

life.” Jesus was the light. He came to reveal. He came to make known. And how did He do that? Well, a major way that He did that was through His preaching, through His teaching. In His ministry, He spoke. God had revealed Himself in many different ways and manners to the people throughout the ages, to Israel, in certain ways, even through talking animals, and different supernatural elements, and then through prophets. He rose up prophets and would speak through them to His people.

And now, God had sent forth His Son, His Son, to be the light, His Son, to speak and to give truth and to reveal and expose. This is how John’s gospel begins; “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” This is Jesus the incarnate Word of God, the Word of God in flesh, like you or I. Jesus coming to bring light, coming to reveal, coming to be on a stand, to light up and give manifestation to the room. Jesus is the true light, and as we understand, the way that He was lighting was through His speaking and revealing of God’s Word. This is how God’s word is pictured as well. Psalm 119:105 you’re familiar with; “Your word is a lamp [Your word is a lamp] to my feet and a light to my path.” This is the point. The Word of God is meant to actually go forth. It’s meant to shine. It’s meant to expose. It’s meant to reveal, and that’s what Jesus’s saying in this picture. Him and His ministry, He has brought forth - His teaching, His interactions, all this has been a lamp, not under a bed or a basket, but on a stand to reveal and to shine, to give access and understanding and knowledge to these disciples to the kingdom of God. This is the simple picture He uses.

And then He moves on to give an explanation of this, and we find this in verse 22, the plan, the plan of revelation. So, we see the picture of how revelation works. It’s simple. God wants to reveal something, so He speaks. He uses prophets. In this case, He’s using His Son. He speaks forth, and it is as a lamp; when the speaking goes forth, it lights up. And the plan for this is revealed in verse 22; “For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light.” There’s a direct connection that is being made here. You see the words hidden and secret, and we’ve seen the word secret just before in our passage in verse 11. Once again, what did Jesus tell His disciples? “To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of

God...” The secret has gone forth and while these disciples may be tempted to think we have the secret and no one else does. We are special. We are the lucky ones. Jesus says not so fast. That secret that you have, that which is hidden, that has been made known to you and you’re so blessed and privileged to have, is not to end with you. It’s not to be completely concealed and stay that way, forever. No. It’s meant to be manifested, made known as He says clearly, “...nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light.”

When a parent hides a gift from a child for their birthday or Christmas, they usually reveal it on their birthday or Christmas. They don’t hide the gift until they’re twenty-one and say I guess you never found it. Well, that’s too bad, unlucky for you. No, there’s a hiding for a purpose of revealing at a later time. If there’s a secret surprise party for someone, it’s secret until the time, the day, the evening, of the party when it’s revealed and made known. This is why people would hide things and why secrets are kept - for the purpose of being revealed and made known. The same thing is true with the teaching of Jesus. This teaching regarding the kingdom, this teaching that He’s bringing and giving and now exposing in terms of parables to His disciples (that is just amazing privileges for them), this is to be made known. It was formerly concealed. It was formerly hidden even more so in the Old Testament. The prophets longed to understand more of this. They longed to understand. How would God visit Israel? How would God set up His kingdom? Who was this Messiah that was going to come and be the King over all? They would’ve loved to know these things, and Jesus says the time has come that these things are being made known, and they are supposed to actually be revealed. They don’t stop with you. This isn’t Me gathering My select few, and only you will be the ones that ever know, and then you’ll die with this secret. No. The secret and this hidden amazing truths of the kingdom is meant to go forth. It’s meant to go out. Just as a farmer in this parable that we just saw, he’s sowing his seed everywhere. The word goes forth everywhere, no matter what the soil type. He’s not being exclusive and only dropping seed in certain spots. He’s throwing it everywhere. In the same way, Jesus’s saying these truths, these secrets, are meant to be revealed. They’re meant to go forth. There’s a purpose behind it.

This will continue in the life and ministry of Jesus. He will not stop preaching. He will even have Judas among the twelve of the disciples, and what will He do with Judas? Will He ignore him? Is He going to shun him

the rest of these three years? No. He will continue loving him, continue teaching and ministering to him as well as the rest. Jesus doesn't stop. He makes these secrets known, and He will teach, and He will continue to minister. In the same way, in a couple chapters, we'll see Jesus send out His disciples, and He'll say now it's your turn. Go! Go into Israel and tell all the people that the kingdom of God is at hand. Take this message forth. It's not supposed to stay just with them. This is something that is meant to go forth, be made known, be revealed as any hidden object or secret ought to be. And, finally, when we jump to the end and Jesus's completed His mission and task on the earth, when He dies on the cross, when He is buried, and when He does come back to life and speaks His final words to His disciples before He ascends into heaven, it's clear. Go! Go tell people - not say lucky you, you're the ones that get to stay here in Galilee and enjoy telling all these old stories about what I did. No. Go forth. Explain. Reveal this. People need to know. There's a purpose in this revelation. There's a plan for this revelation that is... that it would, actually, be known.

So, while chapter 4:10-11 might have the disciples thinking we're the select few on the inside with the special knowledge that no one else has, Jesus balances it with this parable saying yet you must take this information and you're accountable to do something with it. You're responsible for what you know. This knowledge that you have is a wonderful and privileged thing, but it does not stop with you. It needs to go forth. It must, and it will as we see in the book of Acts and beyond. The gospel will go forth into people groups that we never could've even imagined, and it continues to do so even today. In verse 23, Jesus gives the final call here and the purpose of revelation - the purpose of revelation. In verse 23 He states, "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." This is the point. It has to go forth. It has to go forth. Do the disciples know who has ears to hear? They don't. They're not Jesus. Does that matter? No. They must go forth. They must speak His truth. God makes Himself known, and there's a reason why God makes Himself known - so that people can then declare that, proclaim it, worship Him. And more people might be brought into that task and that joy of worshipping the one true God. The disciples might think but we don't know, and we don't know who has ears to hear. And how do we go about this? And what if people respond like some of the people You told us about, some on the path, some that're the rocky shallow soil? What about the ones that are going to get chocked out by weeds? We shouldn't even bother with them right? No. God has made Himself known so that you might turn around and declare that as

well, and it doesn't matter how people respond. That's not on you because you have the seed, and the seed doesn't change. You throw it. You throw the seed and let people respond the way they respond. The disciples were not in some special, secret club where they got to keep it all to themselves. The word of God was made known so that they could take it and publish it, send it forth.

You and I are privileged. You and I know the word of God. We have it right in front of us. We have this amazing privilege of actually knowing English and having an English Bible; many of us having the wonderful ability to read and to write and to learn, and we can actually look at this whenever we want. We're exposed to the word of God. Why? Why is that? ...to keep it to yourself? ...to puff up your knowledge, and to talk to others about how much you know? No. It's to speak it forth. You understand. You have been exposed to who God is. You learn and know; therefore, you must speak and tell others. This is the purpose and plan of revelation. God reveals Himself so that it might be sent forth and made known. This is what the disciples needed to understand. They had heard the teaching. They will continue to hear the teaching, and they have to do something with it. They have to make it known and speak it forth. This is not just the purpose, here, of speaking and the responsibility to proclaim the word of God as they are understanding it, but also, we see that they are called to respond to the word of God.

And so, the next parable we see is a parable of response - a parable of response. We've seen how revelation works, as a lamp lighting up a room and revealing the things that were hidden. This is the point of why revelation happens. This is how it works. Now, we see the call to respond to this. Verses 24-25; "And he said to them, 'Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.' " First, we see the proper response in the beginning of verse 24. It almost mirrors how we just ended the last parable. Recall the words of the last parable; "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." This message is to go forth for anyone with "...ears to hear..." And now Jesus, speaking strictly and specifically to His disciples, says, "Pay attention to what you hear..." You are not off the hook. You might look back at the story of the farmer going out and throwing his seed and say that's us. We're the good soil. We've actually responded, and we're going to bear fruit, and this is us, and we're good. We're safe. We're secure.

This is awesome and amazing. And Jesus says even you, even those that're the good soil, even those that are the ones bearing fruit, you must pay attention. You must pay attention to what you hear. You have already heard some, and you will continue to hear, and you must pay attention to that. There is a responsibility; you must, actually, respond to that which you are hearing. They would eventually take this revelation to the world. This is only one opportunity that they would get to live with the Messiah, and they must hang on every word and pay attention.

What does it mean to pay attention? We think of Peter picking up on this concept in 2 Peter 1 and bringing it into our day - 2 Peter 1:19; "And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place..." It's like he's adopting the same inner imagery that Jesus's using; "...a lamp shining in a dark place..." That's the word of God. That's what we have, and Peter says, "...you will do well to pay attention..." to this. You don't take this lightly. You don't casually interact with this. You pay attention to it. We think of the ways that people pay attention and how it's not so good. You think of the student that's half asleep in class, that's doodling on their paper, not paying attention at all. You think of the child that just can't even look their parent in the eye, they're so distracted, while their parent's trying to teach them. You think of the office employee that doesn't even read through an email - so lazy - can't get through it. You don't pay attention to these very things you get. And yet, so many people treat God's word in this way. Called to pay attention to what we hear - pay attention to the word of God - and yet, there is such casual treatment still today in the church. We have the full picture. We're so privileged. We have the Old and New Testament. We've seen the revelation of these prophecies come to fulfillment in Jesus. We have the apostles teaching to the churches that continues to teach us. We have all this and yet what do we do? We fail to pay attention. We draw back. We're distracted. We lose heart. There's no desire. Or, maybe, when we do try to pay attention, it falls short. We're more thinking about how this affects someone else, not ourselves. Or, we're looking for that one little thing that's just for us. We're kind of putting ourselves at the center of whatever it is we're hearing from this message or the Bible or what it says when we're reading, and we're wrapping ourselves up in it, and we're failing to just simply pay attention to what is being said.

Pay attention to the word of God. What does that look like? Joshua 1:8 gives us a good example; “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it.” You want to do the word of God? You want to be a doer and, actually, follow through on this? “...you [must] meditate on it day and night...” This is not a casual approach. This isn’t hearing it once and walking away. This is a continual thinking - considering what you’ve heard. The disciples were commanded here to pay attention to every word that Jesus was teaching. They needed to continue to think about it and talk about it with each other and meditate on these things. How much more so for you and I, as we have Scripture in front of us. This must be our meditation. This must be our best thought as we continue through the day starting from the morning and ending in the evening and throughout the day. With the aim of being a doer of the word, as James 1:22 states, we’re not just hearing only. Right? “...be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” Paying attention involves this necessity to actually meditate for the purpose of practicing. We ponder the word of God that we might practice the very word of God. This is what Jesus is calling His disciples to.

Notice the principle that gets brought up here as we move through this - the proportional response. Jesus gives this parable for us here, the picture that we find, says, “Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you.” We have this picture of a measure, “...the measure you use...,” a reference to a different size of a bowl or basket that one might use to go get grain from the market. It’s pretty simple. You have a small bowl, a small basket, you’re going to have a small amount of grain; a larger bowl, a larger basket, and you’ll have a larger amount of grain. It’s simple, and normally people think of this concept and they attach it, right away, to Matthew 7:1-2, the familiar verses; “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.” So, careful how you treat other people, careful how you go about interacting with them, because it’ll be brought back right on you. And that’s the common understanding of this parable. But, yet, Jesus is using the same picture, but in a different context here. This is in the context of hearing the word of God. This is in the context of responding to the word of God. You can take whatever measure you’d like to the word of God. You could come with your small bowl, your small basket, and walk away with barely

anything; or you can come with a larger measure to the word of God, wanting more, desiring more, with a larger appetite and submission to what God has to say and walk away with more understanding of who God is and how to implement that into your life.

What measure are you using when you approach the word? What measure are you using? It's too common and too often that people approach the word of God with the intention or the measure of getting into the word for the sake of giving it to someone else. They need to hear this, and I'm going to find that verse that's perfect for them. Or, I'm just going through a time where I just need some inspiration, so I'm going to get my one little verse that speaks right to me, that makes me feel good. I need the butterflies, and I'm going to get that from this ancient book, some butterflies that make me feel good and inspired today. There's this approach to I just want to know more, and it's interesting, and I kind of like these intellectual things, so I'll read all kinds of things including the Bible, and that's fun. It's fun to have more information and knowledge. All those fall short. That is a low measure. That is a little measure to take to the word of God. What measure should you take? How should you approach that word of God? How about Moses in Exodus 33:18? "Please show me your glory." Speaking to God, "...show me your glory." How about the Psalmist in Psalm 119:18? "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law." What a difference in approach, coming to the word of God with a genuine dependence upon God, an actual desire to hear from God, an actual desire to implement what you hear and to make it known, approaching the word of God and asking God for help, asking Him to open our eyes.

For, if there's ever a time where we feel like the word just isn't cutting it, it's not good enough, it's not really helping, or it's not really fixing my life, the problem is with us, and it's with whatever measure we've brought to the word. We have not come humbly. We have not come submitted. We have not come asking God for help and the Spirit to open our eyes and understand this. The choice is yours. There's nothing wrong with Scripture. There's nothing wrong with the word of God. Just as the farmer was casting the seed, there's nothing wrong with the word. It's on us, and this is the proportion - you will get out of the word that which you put into it. So, if you want to put your little effort, your little time, your little thoughts, your little energy, into understanding the word of God, then you'll get the little yield that you put in. But if you truly want to devour and understand what

God has spoken to us, that energy, that massive time, and whatever you put into it, that'll be your reward, the reward that you can have. This is the principle that's at play. Notice how he says, "...still more will be added to you" at the end of verse 24. That's the reward; "...still more will be added to you." If you come with this large measure, you will receive more - and the disciples will receive more as they would respond and pay attention to Jesus' teaching.

We see how this picture then results in the principle played out for us, the principle of response - the principle of response. Verse 25; "For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away." The one who has is a reference to those who are on the inside, as He already said in verse 11, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God..." You are the ones that have this privileged position of understanding and knowing and comprehending the truths of the kingdom. You are the ones who have, and if you continue to hear and pay attention, more will be given to you. But on the reverse, the one who has not, referring to those who have been opposed to Jesus, to those who are on the outside as described in verse 11 for us, "...but for those outside everything is in parables [everything is in parables] ..." What would happen to them, those who don't have, as they don't pay attention and they don't embrace the word? Even what they have "...will be taken away." This will show itself over time as Jesus will continue to teach and speak in parables and bring forth this message. You will see a distancing of Himself between these religious leaders and these people that had rejected Him; while the disciples will pay attention and draw nearer and nearer to what He has said, and more revelation will be given to them, more understanding, more knowledge, and more practicing of the word of God. This is the principle.

This is the principle for you and I when it comes to the word of God. You have a responsibility, I have a responsibility, when we approach God's word. We are a privileged people. We have fellowship with one another. We approach His throne in prayer. We have access because of His grace. We've been saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, and when it comes to the word of God, we actually have an understanding of who God is that we worship, but with that is a responsibility. We will get out of it what we put into it, and so many Christians live on this low level of only coming back, crawling back, to the word when they finally hit rock bottom rather than recognizing that they could be pouring themselves into what God has told us, and in that,

God would reward them richly. They would find more understanding, more knowledge, more intimacy, with their Savior if they would simply take the time, energy, effort, to understand His word, to draw near to it. This is the principle that exposes itself in our day, and this is what Jesus was teaching to His disciples - you're not the select in-crowd that gets to stay that way and remain special. You have a responsibility to take what I said and tell it to other people and to actually respond to the very things I'm telling you, so that you can get more and more and more understanding and more revelation.