The Gift of Hearing and the Gift of Listening - How people receive the message of the gospel differently.

Understanding Context:

1. **Matthew 13** is one of the great chapters in the Bible and contains a series of seven parables of Jesus Christ.
2. Parables are mysterious, and the underlying truths are sometimes difficult to fully understand.
3. In this great chapter of seven parables, we're immediately struck with the disciples asking, ***"Why do you speak to the people in parables?"***
4. As with all Scripture, we need to understand the larger context.
5. We're coming here to a new phase of the Gospel of Matthew.
6. In ***Chapter 13***, we see why Matthew brings these seven parables to us: this kingdom, which is advancing, is misunderstood.
7. The immediate context here in ***Matthew 13*** is a large crowd. \
8. ***Verse 1: "That same day, Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake, such large crowds gathered around Him that He got into a boat and sat in it while all the people stood on the shore. And then He told them about many things in parables, saying, 'A farmer went out to sow his seed.'"***
9. So, He got into a boat and separated Himself from the crowd.
10. It is a symbol, in a way, of the problem between Jesus and the crowds.
11. They're not understanding or accepting His message, so He's going to speak to them in parables.
12. He concludes ***Verse 9:*** "***He who has ears, let him hear."***
13. I think the disciples probably thought it was a missed opportunity.
14. ***"Here are all these people, a huge crowd, and you give them this? parable, the seed and the soils, and then you don't even explain it; Why do you speak to the people in parables?"***

What is a Parable?

1. A parable is an analogy from the physical world that helps us understand the spiritual world, according to Christ.
2. He gives us these illustrations to help us understand the spiritual truths
3. So what do these parables teach us about the Kingdom?
4. Well, they teach that the kingdom advances in a mixed setting.
5. We're surrounded by unbelief as we make our way through the tangled mess of this world.
6. Then onto the parable of the mustard seed and the yeast.
7. Two parables, which teach the same thing, namely, that the Kingdom starts small and grows larger and larger, but there's a difference.
8. With the mustard seed, the growth is obvious and evident.
9. The yeast is hidden, and it permeates and moves through***.***
10. ***"The Kingdom of Heaven is like yeast, which a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it permeated through the dough."***
11. It explains human history, and my life too, that the Kingdom can come in small, and after a while, dominate, and yet, that whole advance is hidden and mysterious.

12. Finally, the dragnet parable: "***The kingdom of heaven is like a net let down until late; it catches all kinds of fish. And when the net is full, the fishermen sit down and collect the good fish in baskets, then they throw the bad away."***
13. The kingdom ends on judgment day, when there will be a separation between those who are transformed by God and those who have not.
14. Seven parables, when understood, illuminate the kingdom.

So why did Christ teach in Parables?

The first answer is that Jesus taught in parables to fulfill prophecy:

1. He fulfills prophecy from Isaiah and Psalms.
2. In ***verse 13*** and following, ***"This is why I speak to them in parables, though seeing, they do not see. Though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah. You'll be ever-hearing but never understanding; you'll be ever-seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise, they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn, and I would heal them."***
3. ***Matthew 13: 35: "So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet. I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden, since the creation of the world."***
4. ***Psalm 78:2 "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old."***

Secondly, Jesus taught in parables that he might conceal and judge:

1. What do I mean by that?
2. **Verses 13-15,** ***"This is why I speak to them in parables. Though seeing, they do not see, though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah. You will be ever-hearing but never understanding; you will be ever-seeing but never perceiving. For this, people's hearts have become calloused. They hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise, they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn, and I would heal them."***
3. This is a quote from ***Isaiah 6: "And the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord,"*** **then God says, "Whom** ***shall I send? And who will go for us?"*** **Isaiah says,** ***"Here am I, Lord, send me."***
4. Jesus is saying, "***You didn't understand the simple, plain message. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Therefore, I will speak to you a little bit more obliquely. And there's going to be a division between insiders and outsiders."***
5. This distinction is very strong in ***Mark 4:11-12: "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside, everything is said in parables, so that they may be ever-seeing, but never perceiving, and ever-hearing, but never understanding. Otherwise, they might turn and be forgiven."***
6. Jesus used parables not only to illustrate truth and illuminate the mysteries of His kingdom but also as a kind of spiritual test.

The third reason is to reveal spiritual truth and to bless His disciples:

1. It's that incredible, two-edged sword.
2. The same words become a source of revelation, insight, and windows that let light in about the kingdom so that we can see the truth.

3. In ***verses 10 through 12,*** the disciples came to Him and asked, "***Why do you speak to the people in parables?"***
4. ***Verse 11: "The knowledge of the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven has been given to you, but not to them."***
5. ***Verse 12: "Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has, will be taken from him."***
6. In Jesus' time, and really in our time as well, and throughout history, there have been things called ***"mystery religions".***
7. We can look back on 20 centuries of yeast spreading through dough, and we've seen fulfillment.

The fourth reason is that He wants to make you spiritually hungry:

1. "***Blessed are those who are spiritually hungry, for theirs is everything." "I'll give you the secrets if you just come and ask me."***
2. If you don't understand anything in the Bible, come to Christ on your knees in your quiet time, and say, "***Lord Jesus, teach me the truth."***
3. These seven parables are like seven gems, each one of them teaching something about the Kingdom.

The parable of the Sower found in *Matthew 13:*

1. So, let me ask you this: regarding the Kingdom, what precedes, advances, and is central, and without which the Kingdom cannot grow?
2. Simply, it is the sound of the Word of God.
3. This Kingdom cannot grow without the proclamation of the Word.
4. ***Romans 10:17: "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."***
5. The very faith on which His Kingdom is based comes from hearing the Word of God.
6. Time magazine article
7. As Christians, it is through hearing and understanding the Word of God that we enter the Kingdom of heaven.
8. It is through speech, through the proclaimed word, that faith springs up in the heart, and people enter the Kingdom.
9. Therefore, the Creator of speech is standing here today and saying to each one of us, "***he who has ears to hear, let him hear***."
10. This parable that Jesus tells, what we call the ***Parable of the Seed and the Soils,*** is perhaps His most important parable.
11. Jesus said in ***Mark 4:13,*** when his disciples came to ask him what the parable meant, he said, "***Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?"***
12. Jesus, it seems, is giving importance to this one above the others.
13. I believe the vital issue of the eternity of your soul depends on the issues raised in this parable.
14. Jesus begins in ***verse 3: "The Sower went out to sow."***
15. The seed is the message of the kingdom.
16. We have no control over the seed which is sown; we couldn't create it.
17. The work of the Christian, therefore, is not to manufacture a message or to create a synthetic seed, but to take the revelation of God, the seed, and proclaim it exactly as He has given it.

18. Too often today, that seed is being unwisely distorted

The Different Soils:

1. The focus of this parable is on the four different kinds of soil, each one representing a human heart, and how he or she receives the message.
2. We have four different responses.
3. **Verse 4:** ***"As he was scattering the seeds, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up."***
4. The soil is hard; it's packed by constant traffic; it's like pavement.
5. Secondly, you've got rocky soil and on top of it, a thin layer of topsoil.
6. The third kind of soil is thorny soil.
7. This is fertile soil for growth, but the problem is that the seed is competing with other plants, and so there's a struggle going on for the nutrients, for sunlight, and for water in the soil.
8. Finally, we've got the good soil.
9. It's remarkable what Jesus says about the good soil; it's rich and fertile.
10. The seed bears 100, 60, or 30 times that which was sown.

Now we need the explanation:

The first soil type is the hardened unbeliever.

1. Look at ***verse 19: "When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart."***
2. It's the hardening power of sin skillfully worked by the devil.
3. Story of a marathon runner
4. ***2 Corinthians 4:4: "The God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God."***
5. What are the eternal consequences of this?
6. ***Revelation 21:8 says that the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters, all liars, their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur.***

The second kind of soil is what I would call the shallow:

1. ***Verses 20–21: "The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy, but since he has no root, he lasts only a short time."***
2. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he falls away.
3. ***Jesus said, in Luke 8:13, "Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root; they believe for a while, but in the time of testing, they fall away."***
4. So, is it possible therefore to believe for a while and then fall away?
5. ***James 2:19 speaks of a faith which does not justify; we could call it demon faith. "You believe that there is one God. Good. Even the demons believe that, and they shudder."***
6. The Bible says, ***"You will know them by their fruit"***
7. So how can we tell the difference?
8. Story of Jonathan Edwards
9. But there is only one thing: perseverance over time through all kinds of tests that's fruit-bearing for years and years.

10. Martin Lloyd-Jones told a story about calling people to an immediate outward, visible response to the Word.
11. Jesus said I'm the vine and you are the branches – we are grafted in.
12. In ***Romans 5:3-5, it says, "But we rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance. Perseverance, character, and hope. And hope does not disappoint us because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us."***
13. The trial comes, and it makes the genuine believer even stronger, even more hopeful, but it also makes the false believer fall away.

Application:

1. I want you to assess yourself.
2. We haven't gotten a chance to speak about the thorny soil or the fruitful soil, but you understand this parable.
3. Who are you?
4. So, I pray that God would soften your heart; I pray that you would be open to the Word and not blow it off, but accept it as not the word of man, but the Word of God, which can save you.
5. If you are the shallow soil, pray that you would be brought into a living, deeply rooted relationship with Christ.
6. And I thank the Lord for all of you who are rooted in Christ and are growing in your faith

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