

# THE MYSTERY

## Mark 4:1-9

1

1 He began to teach again by the sea. And such a very large crowd gathered to Him that He got into a boat in the sea and sat down; and the whole crowd was by the sea on the land. 2 And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teaching, 3 "Listen to this! Behold, the sower went out to sow; 4 as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 "Other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. 6 "And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. 7 "Other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. 8 "Other seeds fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold." 9 And He was saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

This is probably one of the more well-known parables that Christ taught, the parable of the Sower and the Seed. Sermons have been preached by, I'm sure, every preacher who has ever filled the pulpit, so to quickly sum it up, Christ is using the parallel of how seed is planted and the types of ground it falls on to illustrate how different people respond to God's Word. And make no mistake, regardless of how you feel about God and His Bible, you do have a response, whether it's positive or negative. No, our lesson isn't taken from these first 9 verses, rather we are going to look at the discussion Christ has with His disciples following the teaching of the parable. In...

## Mark 4:10-12

2

10 And as soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables. 11 And He was saying to them, "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God; but those who are outside get everything in parables, 12 in order that while seeing, they may see and not perceive; and while hearing, they may hear and not understand lest they return and be forgiven. "

It is this concept of seeing and perceiving that we want to explore for a bit. Christ said that there are those that will see, see the Word for what it is, for what it does for us, and they will understand its message and be forgiven through the grace and mercy of God, our creator, and our faithful obedience to His Word, the Gospel, but then, there will be those that will see and have no perception of understanding of that Word or glimmer of belief in it.

So then...

3

1) What is the difference?

2) What is this mystery?

4

The mystery first, Paul writes...

## Rom 11:25

5

25 For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation,

God wants us to know what this mystery is. He gave to man everything man needs to both understand this mystery and to live a faithful life. Paul makes a statement to Timothy...

## 2 Tim 3:10-15

6

10 Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, 11 persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra;

what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me! **12** Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. **13** But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. **14** You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them,

He uses his own experiences to show Timothy that if he chooses to follow after God through Christ in faith. He tells him to endure, persevere, to continue in the faith, the things he has learned and believed, the mystery of God.

Paul then says in the passage we just looked at from Romans that if we are uninformed of this mystery, then we will feel wise in our own estimation. The point is that there are only two ways in this world, God's way or man's. But notice what is said in...

**Jer 10:23**

**7**

**23** I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself; Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.

This passage is sometimes misunderstood. The impact of it is not necessarily found in this life. The question is...

**8**

### ***Does God Care?***

What our career is, who we marry, whether we are rich or poor, these are not the concerns God has for us. God wants us to be faithful, obedient, and loving towards Him and by extension to each other. He calls us to be His children. This passage isn't talking about man's inability to make the decisions of this world, though that is often seen, rather, it is talking about man's inability to lead himself to salvation and righteousness in his relationship with God.

Now, we might feel wise and intelligent in our own estimation, but God tells us that it is not in man to guide his own footsteps in the ways of righteousness. That said, it would then seem to indicate that knowledge of the mystery would be both relevant and important since according to God, man does not have the capability to be his own guide. I marvel at the gross audacity of the man who thinks that he can do a better job of determining his way than can God. But let's be fair and come back to the question we just discussed, does God really care to guide us in our daily lives, to determine what we will do as a career, who we marry, or where we live, the answer is yes, but only in the broadest sense, in as far as the decisions that we make concerning those things don't violate the Law God has set in place, we make the decisions of our lives with His blessings. But God obviously cares for us otherwise He would not have given us the mystery of his kingdom. God has revealed that mystery...

**Rom 16:25-27**

**9**

**25** Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, **26** but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; **27** to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.

In...

**1 Peter 1:10-12**

**10**

**10** As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, **11** seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of

Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. **12** It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things into which angels long to look. Even the angels didn't understand the mystery.

Understand what mystery? Let's see if we can understand this. In...

**Rom 6:23**

**11**

**23** For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Sin separates us from God, brings us death, physical and spiritual, and not even the angels understood how God would overcome the requirement of the Law, that death would be the just reward for sin. That is the mystery that the angels did not understand, the mystery that is revealed by God through the sufferings of Christ and His Death, Burial, and Resurrection. Christ paid the penalty that the Law required...

**1 John 2:1-3**

**12**

**1** My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; **2** and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. **3** And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.

Therein has the mystery been revealed, God has made known to all how they can overcome the penalty for their sin by giving it to Christ to pay the price and being reunited with God.

The mystery was what would God do to implement a way to save man? Christ is what God did. God manifested Himself in the form of Jesus, as man, lived a life perfectly within the confines of the Old Law, had no sin to atone for within Himself, so He gave Himself as the perfect sacrifice to pay the penalty for the sins of any who would come to Him in faithful obedience. Mystery solved. So, that is the mystery, in a nutshell, if you will.

**13**

2) What is the difference?

Let's look at some thoughts and ideas from God's Word...

**Ps 49:20**

**14**

**20** Man in his pomp, yet without understanding, Is like the beasts that perish.

The Psalmist here says the same thing that we read in Romans 11:25, it is only in arrogance and pride that man thinks he do what he wants, the way he wants to, and succeed.

We see that in this next Proverb...

**Prov 12:15**

**15**

**15** The way of a fool is right in his own eyes,

Who thinks he is always right, or that his conclusions are infallible, only a fool.

**Prov 18:2**

**16**

**2** A fool does not delight in understanding, But only in revealing his own mind.

This one becomes even more telling. The fool isn't interested in what anyone else has to say, but is adamant about getting their point understood and accepted.

Do you see the point that God is making?

He has made us to be creatures of free will, able to make the choices we want. But just because we have the ability and the right to choose, that does not necessarily mean that our choices will be the right ones. When we choose to follow our own way, to seek after the wisdom of man, to trust in emotion, education, or tradition we are no better than the beast of the field, without understanding. Where does your delight come from, seeking understanding or revealing our own mind? Remember...

**Ps 14:1** 17

**1** The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."

We looked at the first part of Prov. 12:15...

**Prov 12:15**

**15** The way of a fool is right in his own eyes,

Now look at the rest of the passage...

**Prov 12:15** 18

**15** The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, ***But a wise man is he who listens to counsel.***

This is not just any counsel, but God's counsel. Counsel in wisdom, understanding, and righteousness, the things that God's Word lead His followers into through Christ. Direction for our hearts that is eternally enduring, personal to my own needs resulting in glory and wisdom the rest of my days, which leads to eternal life, that is the counsel of God.

Remember...

**Ps 33:11** 19

**11** The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation.

I like the way the Psalmist says it here...

### ***"The plans of His heart"***

God wants us to succeed. He wants us to receive His salvation, and He wants us to live according to His will. That is why...

**Ps 73:23-24** 20

**23** Nevertheless I am continually with Thee; Thou hast taken hold of my right hand. **24** With Thy counsel Thou wilt guide me, And afterward receive me to glory.

He is with us always. Abiding with us and in us as we abide with and in Him, He is continually with the believer through the indwelling of His Word.

Therein is the import of His counsel, when we heed His Word...

**Prov 19:20** 21

**20** Listen to counsel and accept discipline, That you may be wise the rest of your days.

Christ defines for us the difference in...

**Mark 4:10-12** 22

**10** And as soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables. **11** And He was saying to them, "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God; but those who are outside get everything in parables, **12** in order that

while seeing, they may see and not perceive; and while hearing, they may hear and not understand lest they return and be forgiven.

The person who chooses to ignore the mystery of the Scheme of Redemption, chooses to place himself before God and is following his own path as opposed to God's. That person cannot find God or forgiveness, they have chosen to see but not perceive, listen but not hear, because they have chosen not to see the mystery of God, to hear His plan to bring man back into a covenant relationship, to understand the manifestation of His love in sending His Son to pay the price for our sin. How sad to go through life with such a lack of understanding.

The one who accepts God and His word is the wise man with understanding and that one will be forgiven and find a home in heaven.

**Ps 111:10**

**23**

**10** The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments;

Note now what the Psalmist says is the test of whether someone has understanding or not...

**24**

### ***Keeping His commandments***

We might like to think that we are all that and a bag of potato chips, but do we keep His commandments, all of His commandments, His way? That is the test.

The mystery has been solved. The Law is immutable and requires death as the penalty for sin. Christ paid that penalty, both physically and spiritually, so that any who believe in that mystery can be forgiven.

There is only one question left. Are you the fool Solomon speaks of in Proverbs, who trusts in his own intellect to get him through this life and into the next, or are you the wise man who trusts in God, the sacrifice of Christ, and the Word that was sent through the Holy Spirit to guide us into all righteousness.