

“Watch Out for The Thorns”

Mark 4:1-20

Sunday Evening, March 31, 2019

Introduction: Dottie has a lemon tree in our backyard. If every bud on the tree this year will be a lemon, we will have enough lemons to sell to H.E.B.

Our lemon tree is a Lisbon lemon tree which means it has a lot of thorns. Eureka lemon trees do not have thorns. On our lemon tree, you do not see the thorns unless you look for carefully for them. If you don't see them, they will do their damage.

Our spiritual life is the same. The devil has his “thorns” that will do their damage. The key is to know what they are and to watch out for them.

T.S. Look with me in Mark chapter 4 and see how Jesus explained it.

Text: Mark 4:1-20

- In Mark chapter 4, we see the method of Jesus's teaching changed.
 1. Jesus changed **where He taught**. Up to this point, most of Jesus teaching took place in the synagogue. Mark 4:1 says, “He began to teach by the sea.” Jesus expanded His teaching beyond the walls of the synagogue.

Application: If the Christian church only teaches inside the walls of the church the majority of those who need to hear the gospel will never hear it. And the majority of those who need to hear the gospel has become the majority. The church must get the gospel where the people are. Churches that do not do that will finally bury all their faithful members and there will nothing left but the buildings.

Illustration: John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist church, struggled to learn this lesson. His friend George Whitefield was preaching outdoors in Bristol, England to miners and common people. Thousands were being saved. He asked Wesley to come and help him. Wesley was more comfortable preaching inside the church and was reluctant to help Whitefield. Ultimately, Wesley decided to help

Whitefield and a great revival broke out in England. Both Wesley and Whitefield were banned from the Church in England for preaching outdoors.

2. Jesus changed not only where he taught but **how He taught**. He used parables to teach. These earthly stories that people could understand connected to the people. The gospels list 39 of Jesus' parables.

- **In Mark 4, there are 4 parables.**

1. The parable of the sower (v.1-20)
2. The parable of the lamp (v. 21-25).
3. The parable of the growing seed (v.26-29)
4. The parable of the mustard seed (v.30-32).

- **In Mark 4, there are 4 kinds of ground mentioned.**

1. Ground as hard as pavement (v.4). "wayside", "path"
2. "Stoney ground" or "rocky ground" (v.5)
3. "Ground full of thorns" (v.7)
4. "good ground" (v.8)

Time permits us to focus on only one of the grounds—the ground full of thorns (v.7 and explained in verse 18).

- This is the "ground you and I live on and live in.
- Jesus explains it in three phrases in verse 19.

1. **"The cares of the world"**

- Literally: the distractions of the times.
- Preoccupation with temporal things.

Illustration: The Bible says, “Friendship with the world is enmity with God” (James 4:4).

Illustration: I John 2:15-16 explain it very clearly.

Application: The distractions we face and the preoccupation with temporal things are Satan’s tools.

2. “The deceitfulness of riches”

- Money and material possessions will not satisfy the desires of the heart.
- They deceptively promise what they cannot give.
- They also blind those who pursue them to spiritual things.

3. “the desires for other things”

- Our greatest desire should be to know God better and love Him more.
- The more you know God the better you will love Him.

Illustration: The more you know some people the less you will like them. With God, it is the opposite. The more you know God the more you will love Him!

Application: The way to know God more is to spend time with Him.

Conclusion: Spending more time with God does not mean two-hour quiet times. It means that God is part of your life throughout the day in worship times yes, but in the practical things you encounter throughout the day.

