

MARK — Jesus The Extravagant Sower

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Secrets are a huge marketing technique. Jesus' secrets are free for everyone to hear, but they cost us everything to apply them.

Mark 4:1-20

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. He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times."

Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to **hear**, let them **hear**."

When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. 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 so that,

*“they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever **hearing** but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!”*

Then Jesus said to them, “Don’t you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? The farmer sows the **word**. 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. Others, like seed sown on rocky places, **hear** the **word** and at once receive it with joy. 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. Still others, like seed sown among thorns, **hear** the **word**; 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. Others, like seed sown on good soil, **hear** the **word**, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.”

The New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Mk 4:1–20.

What is the Secret?

The indiscriminate farmer sows the word everywhere.

The farmer doesn’t judge the soil but gives all soil types all of the seeds that were there. He was an indiscriminate, generous farmer.

So part of the secret must be the farmer.

What else is the secret? The seed is the word, and there is a lot of potential in this seed. And in good soil, it produces 30, 60, and 100 fold what it was sown. Each seed can produce up to 100 more seeds for every seed planted.

So part of the secret must be this supernatural seed.

And another part of this parable is the soil.

But there is a bump in the road:

“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!”*

Why is the truth hidden?

This is a hyperlink to Isaiah 6:

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”

And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

He said, “Go and tell this people:

*“ ‘Be ever hearing, but never understanding;
be ever seeing, but never perceiving.’*

*Make the heart of this people calloused;
make their ears dull
and close their eyes.*

*Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their hearts,
and turn and be healed.”*

Then I said, “For how long, Lord?”

And he answered:

*“Until the cities lie ruined
and without inhabitant,
until the houses are left deserted
and the fields ruined and ravaged,
until the Lord has sent everyone far away
and the land is utterly forsaken.*

*And though a tenth remains in the land,
it will again be laid waste.*

*But as the terebinth and oak
leave stumps when they are cut down,
so the holy seed will be the stump in the land.”*

*The New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan,
2011), Isa 6:8–13.*

Isaiah was called to preach his message to a hard hearted people who were sick from the head to the toe, who never listened and who could never understand. So as he preached, his message would harden the Israelites toward their own destruction.

But Jesus picks up Isaiah's ministry, preaching a word indiscriminately, but only those with ears to hear will take the secrets of the kingdom and apply it to their lives.

The Soil

Isaiah's Israel was for sure the soil of the path — but Jesus is showing the secrets to the kingdom and revealing that the "soul soil" is what's going to make the difference between Jesus' word growing or his word being taken away.

There is such a supernatural work in this seed; a supernatural mystery with a generous father behind it all, but it still works in partnership with our soul soil.

There is a response required. God is both generous and gentle. He sows indiscriminately to a mixed soil crowd, but a response is required

Come, all you who are thirsty,
come to the waters;
and you who have no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without cost.

Why spend money on what is not bread,
and your labor on what does not satisfy?
Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,
and you will delight in the richest of fare.

*Give ear and come to me;
listen, that you may live.
I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
my faithful love promised to David.*

The New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Isa 55:1–3.

To those who listen and give their ears to Jesus' word and receive that seed, The Father will make an everlasting covenant with that person.

The condition of our soul soil; our own agency is part of the secret.

Why Does it Matter?

If Jesus is the secret, and the supernatural seed, and our response, Why does it matter to us?

Because we would be able to partner with Jesus and share in his calling to sow the word.

Those who had been scattered [like seed] preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So there was great joy in that city.

The New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Acts 8:4–8.

We are called to be indiscriminate and not judge the soil, but stand back and witness the seed grow in our jobs, or campus, and where we are.

We as ENCS want to become more than good soil, we want to become his image bearers that are farmers sowing the seed.

- What kind of soil do you think your heart is today? Are you receiving the word and his forgiveness right now; or on a daily basis?
- What do you want to do about your soil?
- Will you listen and will you obey?