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Mark 4:1-20

Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. 2 And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: 3 "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it.

Mark 4:1-20

5 Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. 6 And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain.

Mark 4:1-20

8 And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold." 9 And he said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Mark 4:1-20

10 And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. 11 And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, 12 so that

""they may indeed see but not perceive,
and may indeed hear but not understand,
lest they should turn and be forgiven.'"

Mark 4:1-20

13 And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?

14 The sower sows the word. 15 And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. 16 And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy.

Mark 4:1-20

17 And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. 18 And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, 19 but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. 20 But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."

“

The word “parable” means something that is placed alongside something else for the purpose of clarification. The most common subject of Jesus’ parables is the kingdom of God, which he illustrated by episodes from everyday life—fishing and farming, housekeeping and family life, royalty and banquets. Jesus’ parables required of his hearers no special knowledge or vocabulary to understand. Parables may reflect daily life, but they are not simple and easily understood. Many of Jesus’ parables are confounding, knocking hearers off balance so that they must see things in a new light.

James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 127.

The Prodigal Sower

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The Prodigal Sower

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The Prodigal Sower

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Everything is in Parables

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The Sower Sows the Word

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Hear, Accept, Bear Fruit

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Responses to Jesus & the Gospel

1. **PATH:** Satan comes and takes away the word
2. **ROCKY GROUND:** It is received with joy but then falls away with tribulation or persecution
3. **THORNS:** "Choked" by cares for the world, deceitfulness of riches, desires for other things
4. **GOOD SOIL:** Hear the word and accept it and bear fruit

“ The parable of the sower is usually interpreted as a parable of soils, seeing the hardened ground, rocks, thorns, and good soil as examples of wrong or right discipleship. But the parable is more than a metaphor of human psychology or attitudinal states, as interesting as those are to us. **The parable represents the historical inbreaking of God’s kingdom in Jesus, the sower of the gospel. The astounding harvest in v. 8 is an important clue that the growth is not owing to human activity but to God’s providential power.** God is at work—hidden and unobserved—in Jesus and the gospel to produce a yield wholly disproportionate to human prospects and merit.

James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 129-130.

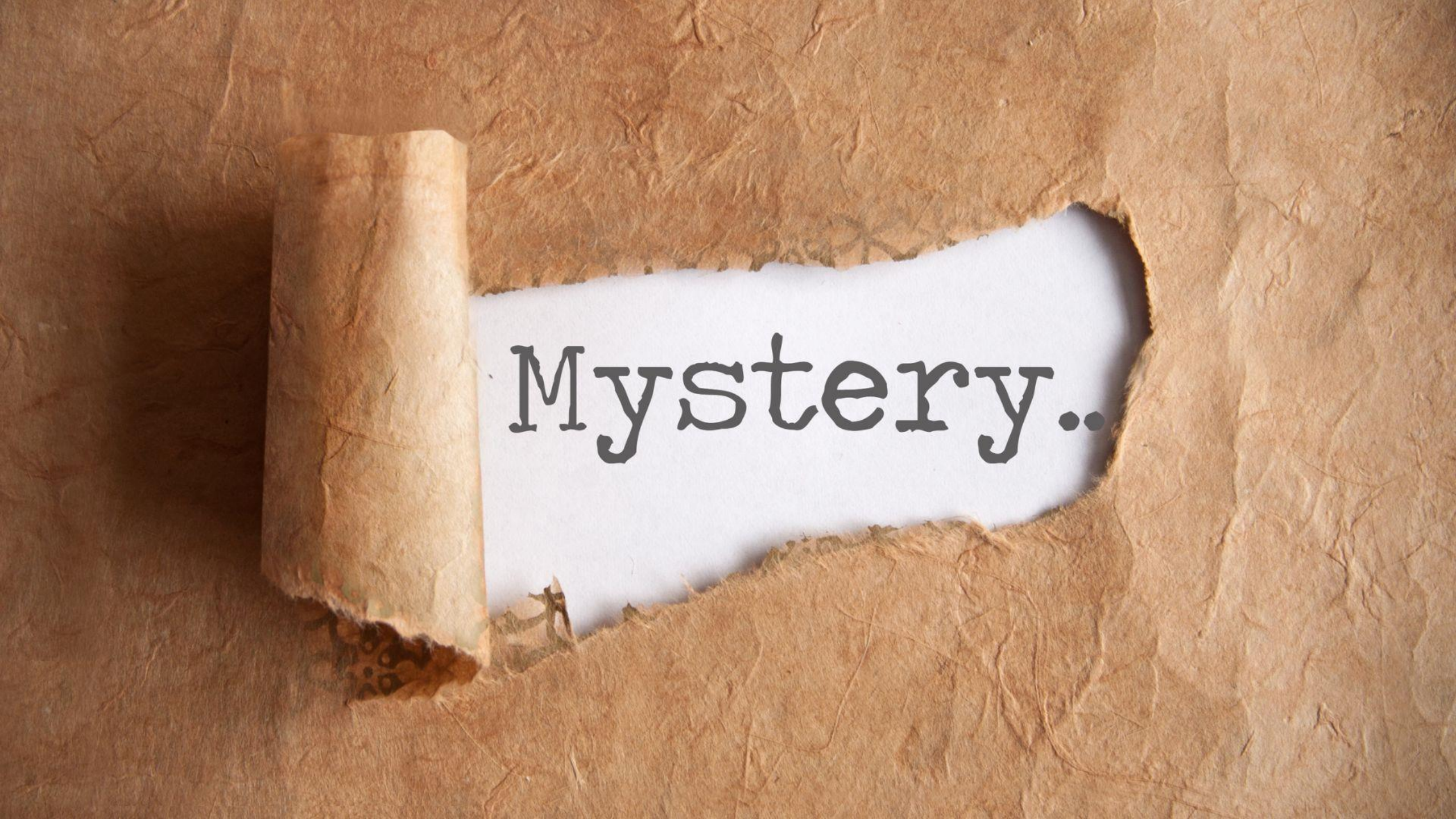


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He then said, 'Young man, you look very miserable.' Well, I did; but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made on my personal appearance from the pulpit before. However, it was a good blow struck. He continued: 'And you will always be miserable—miserable in life and miserable in death—if you do not obey my text. But if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved.'

Then he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist can, 'Young man, look to Jesus Christ.' There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that moment and sung with the most enthusiastic of them of the Precious Blood of Christ."

-Charles Spurgeon



Mystery..

The Secret of the Kingdom

11 And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables



The term mystery may convey to us something that cannot be explained or understood, but it has a different coloring in its biblical roots. It does not refer to something unknowable or esoteric but to something that can only be communicated by divine revelation. In Mark, it refers to a heavenly truth that is concealed from human understanding but is made known by God. It is "not a mystery in the sense that it is incomprehensible, but it is a 'secret' in that not everyone yet knows it."

David E. Garland, Mark, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 157.

God's Mysterious Ways

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

(Isaiah 55:8-9 ESV)



“

“Only if your god can outrage and challenge you will you know that you worship the real God and not a figment of your imagination. . . . If your god never disagrees with you, you might just be worshiping an idealized version of yourself.”



Tim Keller, Counterfeit Gods

God's Mysterious Ways

10 "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, 11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

(Isaiah 55:10-11 ESV)

“ Jesus precipitates a crisis among his hearers, dividing them along quite different lines...Insiders and outsiders, in other words, correspond to the seed sown on good and bad soil. Those who hear in faith (even if they do not fully comprehend) are given the mystery of the kingdom. The word of God causes fruit to grow and increase in them, thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times (v. 8)...**The difference between the lost seed and fruitful seed depends on hearing in faith.**

Faith faces mystery with clarity

God's Mysterious Ways

- Waiting / Unfulfilled Good Desires
- Suffering
- Obedience > Feelings

“

Parables are like stained glass windows in a cathedral, dull and lifeless from the outside but brilliant and radiant from within. Or to borrow an analogy from Jesus (1:17), they are like fishing. There is a hook hidden in the bait. The hook is the word of God, which is personified in Jesus. Parables cannot be understood apart from the one who tells them. Parables are not simply good advice, they are good news; for the life of Jesus is itself a parable, indeed the greatest parable.

James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 127.

Mystery Made Clear

6 "Seek the Lord while he may be found;

call upon him while he is near;

7 let the wicked forsake his way,

and the unrighteous man his thoughts;

let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion
on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

(Isaiah 55:6-7 ESV)





Gospel Response

Start:

Look to and trust Jesus Christ today.

Strengthen:

Allow clarity about God's character, purposes and mercy to work in your heart in the midst of the mystery.