

# JESUS

## #UNFILTERED

THE GOSPEL OF MARK  
MEET JESUS UNFILTERED



### MARK: Jesus Unfiltered

#### Grower - Mark 4:1-32

##### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*(Leaders, please use these questions as a guide for discussion. Please don't feel like you have to go through every one!)*

**Connect:** How might trusting in Jesus as the Strong Man shape any decisions you make this week?

#### Warm-Up

1. Have you ever had the experience of hearing words but not really taking them in?
2. Why is knowing God and knowing about his Kingdom such great news? How can we know these things?

#### Read Mark 4:1-23

3. What are the four different results from the seed being sown? What do these represent? What do the results tell us about the seed itself?
4. Why does Jesus use parables in his teaching? What is their purpose? How is this parable a 'parable of the parables'?
5. Are we ever at risk of responding to the word in the first three ways? What could cause you to have a hard or distracted heart?
6. How can we let our ears hear the Word? Is this different to just concentrating really hard? Why/How?
7. Is the kingdom of God meant to be a secret or revealed? How can we be part of the unfolding revelation of the kingdom on our frontlines and in the world today?

#### Read Mark 4:24-32

8. What does it mean to 'consider carefully what you hear' as mentioned in V24? Practically, how could you do this in your reading and hearing of scripture?
9. What is the encouragement and the warning in V24-25? What is the danger of not hearing and not responding to the word?
10. How does the kingdom grow both in the world and in our hearts? What is our role in this growth? How can we help or hinder this growth?
11. What does the harvest in V29 mean, and when will that come?
12. At first, the kingdom that Jesus brought had small beginnings and the type of kingdom was unexpected. What is the encouragement to both the disciples and us in V30-32?
13. How is your hearing of the Word of God at the moment?
14. Are there any distractions or competing voices that you need to kill in order to hear God more clearly? Practically, what's one thing that you could do to help achieve this in partnership with the Spirit?

**Apply:** How can you make sure you hear the word this week?

**PRAY:** *Heavenly Father, thank you that you have made yourself known to us through Jesus and through the Word. Help us to consider how we hear, that we may constantly grow in relationship with you and be part of growing your kingdom by making disciples wherever we are. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

**TITLE:** JESUS - Grower

**PASSAGE:** Mark 4:1-31

**LOCATION:** St John's Wishart 9AM

**BI:** The Kingdom of God has been made known, and will grow; therefore, watch how you listen

**STRUCTURE:**

- The Kingdom:
  - • Is Knowable (4:1-25)
  - • Is Growing (4:26-32)
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- I'm a bit of a political nerd. When it comes to political news stories, scandals, and spills - I get really excited and also maybe slightly deflated depending on the news.
  - But I love election night. Growing up at home it wouldn't be unheard of for me and my brother to have 4 different screens on at the same times watching all the different coverage from different stations, with different politicians on the panels.
  - And I always find it especially fascinating when the TV presenters have friends in high places who give them the inside scoop; you know the secret knowledge; the peak 'behind the scenes' in the party atmosphere or room.
  - There's something about this knowledge which I find enticing, or intriguing, or fascinating
  - But I don't think I'm the only one and I don't think this is limited to politics.
  - Magazines claim to have the inside scoop on celebrities and people flock to purchase them
  - People are intrigued with other people's lives and secrets..
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- But what if I told you the greatest secret ever?
  - It's a secret that is absolutely revolutionary, life altering, history changing, and eternity giving...
  - But what if I told you that this greatest mystery, the most amazing puzzle, the most phenomenal news isn't actually a secret at all?
  - You would listen up wouldn't you?
  - Well - I'm going to tell you right now...
  - The Kingdom of God, the way to salvation, the way to eternal life, the way to freedom, joy, and peace HAS Been made known and is growing. So what should we do in response to this? Listen up.
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- **Knowable**
  - As we saw last week, people were flocking to hear and see Jesus from every part of the area
  - News was getting out so much so that Jesus had to get into a boat to avoid being completely crowded by the crowds.
  - And so Jesus began and continued teaching them in parables. Now a parable is a story and this story has a deeper and more significant meaning.
  - However the parables also do two things at once - The parables reveal and they conceal. They disclose things and they hide things away. They make things known and they stop things from being made known.
  - The parable of the sower shows us how this works.●
    - To summarise this, a farmer sows seed but the seed falls into four areas. There are 3 not so good results - the seeds never bear fruit, and one really good result - the plant grows and produces heaps of fruit!
  - Then in V9 Jesus says, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."
  - Now what is this all about?
  - Well the disciples were asking the same thing.
  - And Jesus' response is a little perplexing. He essentially says that he uses parables so that some people will understand them and so that others won't understand them.

- V11: ““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, so that ““they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.””
- The secrets and the mystery of the Kingdom has been made known to the disciples and us! We can know God, we can know salvation - praise God!
- But for those outside, for the religious leaders, for those with hard hearts who don't turn to Jesus, they'll hear Jesus but not see him for who he is; They'll miss their opportunity to receive the forgiveness he offers.
- The parables reveal and conceal. They make the way to salvation known, and they hide the way to salvation. Why? As an act of judgement on those who already reject Jesus.
- It's not that Jesus doesn't want them to turn and believe - but it's that these people have already rejected Jesus.
- For those who have hardened their hearts, who have no root, who are distracted by the worries of this world and money - the parables are judgement.
- They'll see but never perceive, they'll hear but never fully comprehend...//
- So the parables conceal...but they also reveal
- V9 - "Then Jesus said, “He who has ears to hear, let them hear.”
- If you want to know Jesus. If you want to know the secrets of the Kingdom of God. If you want to be in relationship with God for eternity - listen up. Hear!
- And this isn't about an intellectual exercise or studying for a test, after all a lot of people have read the bible and the gospels and not believed, but this is about **how** we hear. This is about the condition of our heart.
- If people approach Jesus and the bible with a heart and life that is stubborn, hard, inflexible, callous, and unwilling to change, then the result will be that the word won't take root and will be taken away. We see this in V15
- If people respond with joy but don't mature in their relationship - when persecution comes then they will fall away. We see this in V17
- And if people hear the word but are distracted by worries, money, lusts and desires, then their faith will be choked will not be fruitful - V19
- This isn't about not being good enough. This isn't about not doing enough good works. This is about the condition of people's hearts towards Jesus.
- V20 - “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.”
- If people's hearts are soft, open, repentant, then they will produce fruit. They will grow and mature as disciples, grow more like Jesus, and go on to make more disciples who will go on to make even more disciples.
- The kingdom isn't meant to be hidden - it's to be revealed; shown off both in words and in people's actions and how do we do this? How do we make sure we respond like the good soil? We listen up.
- V23 - “If anyone has ears to hear, let them hear”
- So how is your heart?
- If I have a hard heart, one which is stubborn, inflexible, and unrepentant? Then I should be warned. Judgement is real. V25 says that even what I do have, will be taken away.
- But if my heart is open to Jesus, it longs to know Jesus more, if it is ready to be totally transformed by him..V25 also says “Whatever I have will be given more;”
- And that goes for all of us here and watching at home today
- How are your ears?
- *At the end of 2019 I went to a U2 concert at Suncorp stadium. And it was an amazing night!*

- *BUT there was only one real disappointment that I had and that it was deafeningly loud and I mean extremely loud!*
- *Leaving the stadium and even the next morning my hearing was slightly dulled and I had a bit of ringing in my ears. The sounds of the concert blasted and dulled my hearing.*
- And similarly if we aren't careful, our hearing of Jesus and his word can be blasted and dulled by the competing noise of the world!
- There are so many competing voices and so much noise, that we can forget to listen to Jesus.
- So occasionally it might be good to book ourselves in for a spiritual hearing test. Taking a moment to stop and consider how we are listening to Jesus.
- Maybe it could be good to ask a close friend to check in on you and keep you accountable - not just about the amount of reading you are doing but how you are hearing the Word; about the condition of your heart.
- If you aren't a follower of Jesus, today is a great day to check your heart and ears.
- Are you taking Jesus seriously? Is it time to take his word to heart and repent, be part of his kingdom?
- Hear again Jesus' words from V24 - "And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.""
- The Kingdom is knowable. Jesus is knowable. God is knowable. Listen up! Pay Attention..
- And if we listen - the fruits of the kingdom will grow in us.
- **Growing**
- In these next verses we have two parables - one of a farmer, the other of a mustard seed.
- First the farmer - V26: "And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."
- Now I relate to this man a lot. Not so much about the sowing of the seed but that I have no idea how a seed sprouts and grows.
- *When I was at college and staying at my sister's place, she had a basil plant.*
- *We didn't do much to it but water it and it gave us the basil...somehow it mysteriously continued to grow even though we had next to no ability with plants (though to be fair that's more me than my sister)*
- Well - Jesus is telling us that the Kingdom of God is a growing Kingdom! Like that basil plant - It's not a stagnant kingdom but a growing kingdom.
- How so? Both in individuals and in the world.
- When people first hear and respond to the Gospel, it may come from small beginnings.
- People may have gone down for that alter call, or prayed with a mature believer, or prayed all by themselves and asked Jesus for forgiveness and asked him to be the Lord and Saviour of their lives, or in any other way
- And people may be filled with so many questions, so much curiosity, probably many doubts.
- But in the midst of all of that, God is at work in our lives, transforming our hearts, maturing us in many different ways by his Holy Spirit - how exactly? That's a mystery.
- Eventually, even if we don't notice it, we will grow in maturity and become more and more like Jesus and will tell more people about Jesus.
- That's the way the kingdom of God grows in our lives. That's the way the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives - in ways we cannot know.
- So does that mean that we have no responsibility in this? Well no.
- Like any good farmer, we should be tending to our faith, nourishing it with all it needs - listening to Jesus with open hearts

- We should also be getting rid of and killing all the weeds that may hinder it, killing sin and pulling out the distractions in our lives.
- And at the same time praying to and asking God to help us grow in our lives and in our relationship with him, knowing that he gives the growth.
- But there is limited time. The harvest will come. Jesus will come again to judge...And for those who have repented and persevered, to those in the kingdom he will say 'well done good and faithful servant'.
- For those who have hard, unrepentant hearts, he will say 'depart from me'....//
- Another parable V30:
- And he said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."
- Mustard seeds are small. They are seemingly insignificant, and they don't seem like they are worth much.
- However, when they grow they can grow up to 3m tall and a meter or so wide. They are larger of most shrubs in the garden. They prove useful...
- So that's a nice story, that's some nice gardening information - but what does Jesus mean by this?
- The kingdom may seem insignificant at first. At least it may have done for the early church. Jesus' ministry started in a backwater town. He went to villages. When he gained popularity and a following, he went to different places, and the early church began with a crucified King.
- But from those small beginnings to 2000 years later, we can see millions of Christians around the globe and throughout history professing that Jesus Christ is Lord.
- HOWEVER, the work is still not complete! There are still people to be reached for the Gospel. There
- are people who need to know the good news in being part of the Kingdom!
- Look at us here at St John's Today.
- Haven't we seen some of that growth in the past 12 months? We aren't polished, we aren't glamorous, we aren't doing anything remarkable - but continuing to faithfully listen to Jesus and put his word into practice, and God is giving the growth!
- We are part of God's Kingdom that is still growing in the world.
- And yet there is still more to come! As we listen to his word and serve and give and invite people and tell others about Jesus - God will give the growth both in our lives and here in our church!
- Our role is to listen to Jesus. Have ears to hear. And to tell others about Jesus
- To continue on connecting people to God through Christ for God's glory.
- In this current moment, war is still rampant, cost of living is increasing, housing prices are rising, people are aging, medical bills increasing, mental health crisis continuing..
- And it is really quite brutal. If we want to, we can listen to all the news we want but it doesn't give any comfort, any hope, any stillness, any quietness, any life.
- BUT there is someone who we can listen to. He brings the good news of the Kingdom. He brings the good news of peace, of hope, of joy, of life eternal with God.
- And if we have ears to hear, we will hear. If we have open, and repentant hearts and lives that turn to and live for Jesus we can be part of this kingdom through Him.
- And as we hear the words of eternal life and grow in them, his kingdom of peace, and hope, and joy will grow in our lives by his Holy Spirit.
- Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.