

Good morning, church family.

Take your Bibles with me, if you will, and turn to Mark chapter 4. Mark chapter 4. And we're going to begin with the first 20 verses of chapter four, likely a very familiar parable to many of us, but it's going to be hopefully a little different than maybe what you've heard before, and show you how Mark is meaning to apply this parable in context here. So, the title of the message today is, Something is Different. So if you would stand with me in honor of the one who gave us this word and we will read chapter 4 verses 1 through 20 together. It says, and 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. And he was teaching them many things in parables and was saying to them in his teaching, listen to this. Behold, the sower went out to sow. And it happened that as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road and birds came and ate it up. An other seed fell on the rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depths of soil. And after the sun rose, it was scorched, and because it had no root, it withered away. An other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop." and other seeds fell into the good soil. And as they grew up and increased, they were yielding a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold. And he was saying, He who has ears to hear, let him hear. And when he was alone, his followers, along with the twelve, began asking him about the parables. And he was saying to them, to you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God. But to those who are outside, everything comes in parables, so that while seeing, they may see and not perceive, and while hearing, they may hear and not understand, lest they return and be forgiven. And he said to them, Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables? The sowers sow the word, and these are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown. When they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them. And in a similar way, these are the ones being sown in the rocky places. Those who, when hearing the word, immediately receive it with joy. And they have no root in themselves, but are only temporary. Then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. And others are those being sown among the thorns. These are the ones who have heard the word, but the worries of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for anything else enter in and choke the word and it becomes unfruitful. And those are the ones which were sown in the good soil. They who hear the word and accept it and are bearing fruit thirty, sixty, and even a hundredfold. This

is the word of the Lord.

Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, thank you so much for the opportunity to come together this morning to sing praises with the body. It's such a glorious privilege. I'm so thankful to hear the words echoing that encouragement back to me and to you in praise. And Lord, I pray that we will lean in and encourage one another today, pointing each other to Christ. I pray that this message would impact all of us, that you would remove any distractions from me, any hindrances, any nerves, or any stumbles of the tongue that would hinder the understanding of the text today. I pray that you'd be glorified in all things that we do, and the message to follow, and that you'd be glorified in us throughout this week as well. In your holy name I pray, amen. All right, you can be seated.

So, the title of the message this morning, as I mentioned, is Something is Different. Something is Different. And this particular chapter begins a little bit of a change in Mark. In Mark, up until now, in the first three chapters, we have seen a very distinct difference in Mark from the other gospel writers. He focuses more on action. than he does on teaching. So he wants to show who Jesus is by what he's doing, more so than what he's saying. Now there's been a few spots where he recorded some teaching, but overall, the first three chapters of Mark have been filled with the deeds of Christ more than the teachings of Christ. Now here we're going to switch gears a little bit, or Mark does, in chapter four. where he's going to give back-to-back-to-back parables. These likely were not all at the same time, the same occurrence. These were likely parables from different times that Mark has fashioned here together in his writing and his record of what Christ taught. And we'll kind of look at that as we go through. But in this particular case, Mark has done something different in that culture than what was normally the practice. Normally the practice in the Greek culture and the Roman culture was you were looked at more for your great rhetoric and your oratory skills and the way you spoke before you were looked at for your deeds. So you actually gained popularity by how well you could speak, how well you could articulate your ideas. That's why they had these big amphitheaters where the Greeks would come and debate and they would articulate their ideas and everything was about the word. how you, the spoken word. Well, Mark flips that on its head and says, this is what Jesus did to prove who he is. This is his authority. So we've looked at his authority established very well in the first three chapters. And now he's saying, because of who he is, here's some of his teachings. And so his teachings hold more authority for us by him flipping the script, if you will, on what was normal for the culture of that day. Now a parable, just to make sure we're all on the same page, is something that is placed alongside something for the purpose of clarification. So a parable is something that

is placed alongside something for the purpose of clarification. which means it has a very wide range of application. Parables were not just practiced by or used by Jesus. They were used in rabbinic teachings. They were used by the Romans. Parables were just the tone of the day when clarifying something. But it also means that there's not a stringent or strict literary requirement for a parable. In other words, it's kind of whatever story or comparison you choose to use can be a parable. So they're a little bit harder to translate, a little bit harder to understand. And the key to a parable, and we're gonna look at this later and I'll reinforce a little bit more, the key to a parable is you have to know the one presenting the parable to actually understand the meaning. Okay, an allegory someone can understand from outside, right? You can look at an allegory and go, okay, I can allegorize that, I can understand that. Parables are not allegories. Parables, you have to know the person speaking them or you will not understand it because they have a very specific intention and meaning in what they're clarifying, right? There's just, there's too much of a wide range. So that's a very key part of what we're going to talk about today. So in this Markin sandwich, you guys remember me talking about sandwiches? You guys remember that? Okay, so in the introductory to Mark, I mentioned that there's literary devices that Mark uses throughout his gospel, and one of them is called the Markin sandwich. Doesn't sound very appetizing, but it actually is a very good literary device. And so Mark writes a lot of what he does in threes. So he'll say something, He'll give something in the middle, usually just a couple verses, and then he'll say something else, and that's to be taken together as a sandwich, and the middle portion is what helps interpret the bread, if you will. So there's bread, meat, bread. Okay? And we'll talk more about that as we go. But I wanted you to get the idea of the context of what Mark is saying here so that we can make sure that we're on the same page in interpretation. Because if we don't understand it, we're going to get caught up in what happens a lot of times with this parable. Anybody ever heard a sermon on this parable? Probably all of us more than once, right? A lot of times, how many of us have heard this parable preached on a moralistic, pietistic, make sure you're the good soil, make sure you're not rocky, make sure you keep Satan away, make sure you don't have the thorns, and there's some good principles to learn there. I'm not saying there's not, but that's not the point of the text. The point of the text in Mark is to reveal that something is different about those who are with Christ. There's something different about those that Christ has chosen and commanded to follow him. We just left off at the end of chapter three, where Mark tells us that Jesus said, this is my family, not my blood relatives. And he says, this is the ones

who I've chosen to be part of me. Those who are sitting around him, referencing the disciples, not the crowd outside the building and not even my own blood family. The ones who are mine are on the inside and they're here with me. And so he's going to take this a step further and show us by this teaching. So let's dig in here together. We're going to start in verses 1 through 9. Point number one is the teaching. The teaching. So verses 1 through 9. I'm going to read this to you to us again. And 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. And he was teaching them many things and parables, and was saying to them in his teaching, Listen to this. Behold, the sower went out to sow. And it happened that as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up. And 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. And after the sun rose, it was scorched. And because it had no root, it withered away. Another seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. Another seeds fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they were yielding a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold. And he was saying, He who has ears to hear, let him hear." So back in verse 1, as we take this first nine verses, we're going to notice that a large crowd is around him again. So we left off at the end of chapter 3. A large crowd was around the house of probably Peter, and he had just said, this is my mother and my brothers, referencing the disciples sitting around him. And Mark immediately says, and then he began to teach by the sea. And the crowd was so large, so he went back down by the sea. He left Capernaum. He would have been on the edge of the ocean there or on the sea, the lake. And the crowd was so big that they were pressing him into the water. Remember, as we've talked about through Mark, the crowd consistently over and over hindered his ministry. And we see it again. They're coming in. They want to touch him. They want to be healed. They want to be close to the man that's given them all these things that they're about to push him into the sea. So he gets a very, he gets a boat. and puts it in the sea, and he sits down. Now, when I mentioned earlier that Mark uses exquisite literary devices to be able to cram so much information into such a short time. In the original language there where it says, and he got into a boat in the sea and sat down, in the original language it actually reads, got in a boat and sat on the sea. He got in a boat and sat on the sea. And it's kind of an interesting thing because Mark cleans that language up later, and Luke avoids it altogether. And Mark, in

particular,
has went through extreme measures to ensure that we know that Christ is God, Christ is divine, he has authority, he's a king, all these attributes that we've seen from him so far, right? He's been very, very careful to make sure we understand who Jesus is in these first three chapters. And even in his introduction, he is making a reference to Psalm 29:10, which says, "...Yahweh sat enthroned over the flood." Indeed, Yahweh sits as king forever. Even in his description of what Jesus physically did by the wording of his "his choice of wording, he is pointing to Yahweh, pointing to Christ as king. And so Mark here is setting us up to see what Jesus is doing by every little notation that he makes through his writings. And so with this chain of parables beginning, this is one of only two chapters in the entire book of Mark that has parables, so we're going to dig through this over the next couple weeks. but he taught many things. He taught a plethora of things that we're going to see in those two chapters, but this does not contain all of them. These two chapters do not contain everything that Jesus teaches. Most of us probably went, yeah, I figured that, but I wanted to make sure it's out there. What Mark includes in his teachings is not everything that Jesus taught during his life, but they're very important ones. And as we dig in here, the story that he's going to give makes a lot of us go, if we took it at just face value, if you look at just verses 3 through 8. just for the parable itself, how many of us would go, well, that's a cool story, and just go on, right? It doesn't make any sense if you don't have something different. It doesn't make any sense if you don't know the one who gave the information. So let's look at the soils real quickly. We're not gonna spend a lot of time on them until he, the second half of our passage, whenever Christ tells us what they mean. But the first thing he does to the crowd, is begin teaching them, and he says, listen. In fact, in verse 3, the to this, if your version has extra words on there, it's not in the original language, he just shouts, listen at them. And so he's commanding them with an imperative to pay attention to what he's saying. And he begins to say, the sower went out to sow. Now, in those days and times, the way a farmer would spread was an overabundance of seed. There was no lack of seed for them to spread most of the time. This, it wasn't like our methods of farming where tractors are very particular about where they're putting, you know, that they have the devices that can do that. Farmers would carry a bag over their, a sling over their shoulder, and they would just spray as much as they possibly could with each armful, and where it landed is where it landed. But the difference is Farmers of that day would prepare the soil that they wanted to grow before they would throw the seed. But they weren't only aiming

there. Does that make sense? So it was preparing the soil and then just, they would walk and just cast as far as they could. Because anything that would grow would grow. And so with these farmers throwing this, the sowers sowing this, there's places that it's going to land that they know it's not going to grow. Very important for us to remember that. The farmers of that day knew there were places that the seed would land that it would not grow, and yet they would cast it anyway. So we see multiple types of ground. The first three are unproductive for whatever various reasons, and we'll look more into those reasons later on, but the first three are unproductive. So in verses 4 and 5, excuse me, 5, 6, and 7, we see the unproductive soils. And in verse 8, we see about the only thing that would stick out to a Jewish mind in verse 8 is the fact that there's some seed here that would reproduce on the good soil 30, 60, and a hundredfold. Now, the reason why that would catch a Jewish mind for just a moment is because the fact that a hundredfold harvest was made was absolutely unheard of and was said to be divine grace. Hundredfold, it just didn't happen. You did not harvest a hundredfold off of your seeds. And so that would be the only thing that would stick out to the Jewish mind. So, Jesus is trying to teach them something. And then he says, he who has ears to hear, let him hear. So in verse 9, he says, only those who are able to hear, let him hear. So here we are. We've heard the story. The crowd is probably standing there going, okay. That was a great story. I don't really know what to do with that, but it was a great story. Continue with this teacher or heal us all. Okay, you can just imagine the crowd hearing this story, no idea what it means. And the reason why I'm so confident that's the way the crowd reacted is because we have recorded that's the way the disciples reacted. So I can assure you if the disciples reacted that way, the crowd reacted that way as well. So that's the first layer of bread in our Markin sandwich, the teaching. Next, we're going to look at the teacher, verses 10 through 12. So point number two is the teacher. And verses 10 through 12 is going to begin a portion that is not the exact same timeline as the first nine verses. The first nine verses, Christ is teaching from a boat. The second, from nine through 20, it clearly says that he was alone with his followers. So this is at a different time. So the disciples, the explanation was not given why Jesus was still on the boat. It was at a different time. So Mark is putting this together for us. on purpose, and the reason why I'm being so adamant about Mark doing this on purpose is one, he's inspired by the Spirit, so God wanted him to write it in this exact same, in this exact way, but it's a literary device that helps us understand what the parable means. Because I am arguing the parable does not give us a moral compass. Are

there some lessons we can learn? Yes, but the point of this parable is showing us that there is something different about those who have been called to Christ. There's something different about them. And that difference is Christ himself. So let's look at verses 9 through 12, or excuse me, 10 through 12. And when he was alone, his followers, along with the 12, began asking him about the parables. And he was saying to them, to you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to those who are outside, everything comes in parables. So that while seeing, they may see and not perceive, and while hearing, they may hear and not understand, lest they return and be forgiven. So let's think about the meat, okay? We're in the meat of the Markin sandwich. How do we get names for sandwiches? Bologna sandwiches, ham sandwiches, turkey sandwiches. The meat determines what kind of sandwich it is, okay? Use that thought process when you're reading Markin sandwiches. The meat determines what the sandwich is. It interprets the loaves for us, if you will, the slices of bread. So this is going to tell us what we need to know about this parable. So in verse 10, they were alone. They were now away from the crowds. And the disciples ask him, what in the world did you mean by that parable? What is going on? And Jesus says to them, to you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God. To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God. Think about that for just a minute. the people that Christ called, the ones who established the church, right, we discussed that over the last couple weeks, the one who became the church itself, the ones who brought about the reason that we're sitting right here, have been given the mystery of the kingdom of God. That is mind-boggling. And it's the type of mystery that can only be revealed by God by His own choice. In fact, the word given here of the verb in verse 11, to you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God in the original language, is a divine passive. A divine passive. That means God is the only one working. The one receiving does absolutely nothing. There's no other way to interpret that word in the original language. It is a complete divine passive. Passive, excuse me. God is the only one revealing the mystery. Christ is the only one revealing the mystery of the kingdom of God. The disciples didn't understand anything. They had to be taught by Christ. These men in the inner circle were given something different, and that something different was Christ. There's something different about the ones who are on the inside versus the ones who are on the outside. Now, a lot of our Modern American hairs in the back of our neck stand up when I talk about insiders and outsiders, right? No, everybody's equal. In the kingdom of God, there are only two categories of people. Ethnicity

doesn't matter. Gender doesn't matter. None of that matters. There are only two categories of people. Those on the inside who are converted and those who are on the outside who are not. That's it. And that may offend our modern American Western mindset, but that's simply the truths of Scripture. The only camp that matters is those two camps. Where are you? It's the only two camps that matter. So I wanted to brush up against that a little bit because that steps on our toes, doesn't it? It steps on our toes. Oh, there's outsiders? No, we want everybody to be insiders. But that's not what the text is teaching us. And we're going to show, we're going to look at that together. So we have to understand there are outsiders and insiders, and that's specifically what Christ is saying. To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God. The insiders, those who are on the inside, the disciples, the family of Christ, the ones he just called his mother and brothers. But to those who are on the outside, everything comes in parables. to those who are not called and commanded to follow, to those who are not with me, to those who I've not chosen, those who I've not brought into my family, do not understand. They're on the outside. It's been said about this passage, it is the secret that the kingdom of God has come in the person and words and works of Jesus. That is a secret because God has chosen to reveal himself indirectly and in a veiled way. The incarnate word is not obvious. Only faith could recognize the Son of God and the lowly figure of Jesus of Nazareth. The secret of the kingdom of God is the secret of the person of Jesus. This very mystery, the something different, is Jesus himself. And he chooses whom he gives that mystery to. And this is not something new. This is not something new at all. In fact, he quotes, Mark quotes here, excuse me, Christ quotes here, Isaiah 6, verses 9 and 10. So in verse 12, it says, so that while seeing, they may see and not perceive. And while hearing, they may hear and not understand, lest they return and be forgiven. This in context of Isaiah 6 is when Isaiah is being sent. And the Lord tells him, I am sending you to the nation of Israel, but I will not allow them to repent. They are given a message, and they will not be allowed to repent. Why would Christ use this example? Because over and over and over in Scripture, as hard as it is for us to understand, or maybe to wrap our mind around it in our humanity, We have to understand that there is a tension between the divine decree and human responsibility. There's a tension. God hardened Pharaoh's heart while simultaneously telling him to let the children of Israel go. But in Exodus, you see the blame being placed on both. Not the blame, but the sinful blame on Pharaoh, and God's decree of hardening his heart is also

held up as the reason. We see both, don't we? We see that in the nation of Israel as well. Later on, they're sent prophets that says, repent, return to the one that brought you from Egypt. return to him. And yet, it says, they will not listen, for I have brought them under judgment. And so, here we have the exact same situation, only with Christ himself coming to earth. Christ himself saying, I have given you the mystery of the kingdom, but those who are outside will not have the mystery. revealed to them. For they're going to receive the seed, just like the first three soils. They're going to receive the seed. They're going to hear the word. They heard it just like you guys did. The difference is, I'm here, and I'm going to explain it to you. The crowd was gone now. The crowd had the seed. They got the word. They have left. They're no longer by the sea. They've went home and probably never thought about the message again. And the verb in the first portion of those three soils is in the aorist tense, which means it was a once and done kind of a thing. Think of an in one ear and out the other kind of a thing. They just heard it and went on, right? It's a Greek term. Aorist tense is just a Greek term for verbs. And so the writing of the original languages is telling us here, as hard as it is for us to understand, that God chooses whom he will reveal the mystery to. God chooses whom he will give mercy to and whom he does not. And that is his choice. That is not ours. And I would quote Romans 9. If it makes you bristle, and sometimes it does, I would quote Romans 9 where it says, "'Who are you, O man?'" to question God. Because our Americanism, our individualism, our idea that everyone has to feel equal and loved and be on the inside is vehemently against the teachings of Scripture. Now, please understand, I'm not saying in a normal societal relationship that we should be castigating people and having, you know, kicking people to the curb and those kinds of things, right? We're to love our neighbors and that kind of thing, but what I am explaining to you is from a salvific standpoint, there are two camps and two camps only, and the only one that decides moving from camp A to B is Christ, God himself. That's it. Remember last week when I talked about kicking down the door? I'm not gonna high kick again. That was embarrassing enough one time. But when I talked about kicking down the door and Christ came in and kicked it down, that's what I'm talking about. Christ makes the decision on which door comes down. And so we see here the point of this parable is teaching that the something different is Christ himself. It's been said the sense of 4, 11, and 12 is that Jesus's parables confirm the states of people's hearts. Insiders who are with Jesus will be given the understanding of the mystery, and outsiders who are not with Jesus will be confirmed in their disbelief. So we see

this tension rising here. But those who have not believed are still responsible for their unbelief, for they Their unbelief is driven by their sin, the desire to not believe. Instead of grace correcting that desire to not believe and regenerating them and giving them that gift of grace, they are left there in judgment. This is the idea here of helping us to grow and to learn more about the revelation that God has given us. This parable is designed to teach us something very, very difficult for us to understand. Because the only difference in the soils, the only difference in the soils, and we're going to look more about this in a minute, is the sower. That's the only difference. The good soil that received the seed and grew is because the farmer worked it first. That's it. That's the only difference. No, there's a few points of application that I want us to go over here. And I pray that our prayer, first of all, on this would be, Lord, I believe, but help my unbelief. Because this is difficult stuff. I'm not standing here saying it's not difficult to wrestle with. Because in our humanity, we want to push back against this teaching, do we not? I'll be the first to admit, this is not the easiest thing to understand or to grasp. We wrestle with it. But in this prayer, we pray, Lord, this is what your scriptures are teaching. I can see it right here. Some, I do this on purpose. I do this with parables. Christ is literally saying, I do this with parables so that people can hear it, but not understand it. Because they're not going to return and be forgiven. And the only difference between the two is me. And so our point of application is we have to understand that Jesus is the difference. He is what reveals the mystery to men. It is Christ and Christ alone that we rest in for our understanding, for our grace, for our salvation. And we must also accept, as hard as it is going to be to grasp and as much as we may wrestle with it, that God softened the hearts of whom he will and hardens the hearts of whom he will, all according to his good purpose and all for his own glory. Those are two things that we have to wrestle with and grasp. But the beautiful thing is, even when we don't understand, we are still graciously saved by our sovereign king. Even when you're laying in bed in the dark and you go, this can't make sense. I want to have more control over it than that. God goes, no, no, you don't want to have more control. And he teaches us that, doesn't he? He's so gracious with us. And our point here, there are some that make the accusation, well, if you believe that scripture teaches this, and I didn't go into it for the sake of time, but I could give you all kinds of theological just ransacking that's been done on this passage trying to take apart what I just said. Twisting what Isaiah said, twisting that Mark wasn't actually saying this, saying it was a

scribal error that he didn't mean this, trying to take apart the different languages and meanings of the original language. I'm just, I could spend an hour telling you about the things that people have done to try to subvert the clear meaning of this text. But we don't need to do that.

What we need to do is rest in what God has told us and let it humble us and drive us to our faces before a holy God. Because there are some that make the accusation that those of us who hold to the doctrines of grace and understand that atonement is that Christ died only for those whom he is going to save, say, well, that's just because you wear a badge of honor that says, I'm chosen by God. And I'm telling you, if you have that, put your pride aside and humbly fall before a holy God because it is His choice and His choice alone that you are converted. It has nothing to do with you.

It's no merit with you. The limited atonement, the doctrine of limited atonement should force you to a humble face plant on the ground in absolute praise to a sovereign God that you are no longer in judgment. That's what it should do. If it's giving you pride, read the passage again, because there's nothing that you can do about it. It has nothing to do with you. And so if you want to have a deep, amazing, glorious, praise-filled life, understand that you are nothing and God saved you anyway. Yes, read your Bible. Yes, have prayer time. But none of that brings you to the point of praise, like understanding you deserve ultimate wrath and destruction, and by God's grace and his choice alone, you're not going to get it. And resting in what he's done.

So there's two practical things I want us to think about here. First of all, This drives us, and I've kind of mentioned it, this drives us to unbridled thankfulness, joy, praise, and a desire to bring God glory for saving us by his grace and choice. That's where our love for God and our obedience stems from. Number two, it should make us, the ones who have been tasked as the body of Christ, to carry out the work of sowing all the more. Did you know that we are here

as the body of Christ? We have been given the task of sowing, Matthew 28. That falls to us. When Christ went back to heaven and said, I'm going to send you the Spirit, I'm going to send you the helper that will help walk you forward in this, and established his church, he handed the bag of sowing to us. And the best way I can illustrate that is we are sowing in pitch black. Our job is just to sow. As much as we can, as often as we can. We don't control the soil. We don't work the soil. That's God and his word alone. The ultimate sower, the head sower, is the one who decides which soil gets worked. Our job is to cast as wide and as far as we possibly can. Don't spare a seed, folks. Cast it as far as you can. So that should drive us, that

understanding of God and His grace should drive us to that. Number three. the explanation. So now we're to the last piece of bread. So, we've looked at the first piece of bread, we've looked at the meat, the Markin sandwich, and now we're going to put the last piece of bread on it, because Mark records for us here,

in verses 13 through 20, Christ's explanation of the parable. And it makes so much more sense when you look at it through the lens of verses 10 through 12. And I've heard sermons preached that went 1 through 8, jumped to 13 through 20, so we can get the explanation. You can't have a sandwich without the meat. I don't care what anybody says. That's just bread, okay? Gotta have the meat. So now the explanation, let me reread verses 13 through 20 for us. And he said to them, do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word, and these are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown. When they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them. And in similar ways, these are the ones, excuse me, and in similar way, These are the ones being sown on the rocky places, those who, when hearing the word, immediately receive it with joy. And they have no root in themselves, but are only temporary. Then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. And others are those being sown among the thorns. These are the ones who have heard the word, So now that we're to the last part of our sandwich, the first verse that we read, verse 13, it says, Jesus said to them, do you not understand this parable? how will you understand all the parables? Christ is making a very particular point here. If you don't understand salvation and how it works and that Christ is the difference, none of the other parables will make sense. Your foundation for where everything else in your understanding of the parables lies is understanding that something is different and that difference is Christ. You have to understand this parable first. The difference in the soils is the sower. It's nothing the soils can do for themselves. Anybody ever had a soil break itself open and be ready to plant? Anybody at all? Any farmers in here? I'm not a farmer, so. Anybody? No? Okay. That doesn't happen that way. It just simply doesn't. But this text, Christ is clearly saying, if you don't understand this parable, none of the other ones are going to make sense. The foundation to understanding the scriptures is Christ and Christ alone. So as we look at this, that's why I'm being so adamant about what we're talking about here, is we have to get a grasp on where salvation comes from. And that is from God alone. So now that he's said, he's explained this to him, he gives them the explanation, the sower sows the word. And of course, the word is the

gospel. And we have three poor soils, as I mentioned earlier, the road, the rocky soil, and what I'll call the undergrowth. The road, the rocky soil, and the undergrowth. And they're all essentially the same. They've not been worked by the farmer. Now, there's different things with each one, right? We get to see a little bit of psychology of the human makeup by Christ himself. That there's some that hear the word and Satan comes and takes it away. They're so under the influence of Satan himself, they can't even begin to comprehend the word, even if they hear it. It's just gone. Then there are those who are rocky places. They hear it and it sounds good. Oh, that's a good idea. That seems like it would make my life better. I should probably give Jesus a 90-day money-back guarantee kind of try. I hear it, sounds good, let's give it a try. But ultimately, it doesn't take root because the soil hasn't been worked. by the sower. And then you have those who fall under the underbrush, the undergrowth. The seeds fall under there, and clearly there's stuff growing there, so it's somewhat fertile soil that's got some growth, but it's not the right kind of growth. those who would perhaps hear the Word and even become part of a body and know some of the right things to say, but the world chokes them out. The desires of what they want become more important because the sower had not worked the soil. And all three of these verbs, I mentioned this earlier, so all three of these verbs for hearing, so in each section, each kind of soil, the first three hearing, word for hearing, is the aorist tense, and it means simply and finally. This is just an in-one-ear-and-out-the-other or casual hearing of the gospel. And the reason I bring that up again is because the hearing in the fourth type of soil, So in verse 20, where it says, they who hear the word, that verb is in the present tense, which means an ongoing and continual action. It's two distinct types of verbs. We all know there's just different types of verbs in English. They make a much bigger impact in Greek. And so this present tense verb means that the people, the soil, He's interpreting it now so we can say, hearers, the people who are hearing, and the tense of the verb in verse 20 is a continual hearing. The present tense, they're going to continue to hear, and they're going to continue to take in the word, to take in the gospel, and continue to bear fruit. And the worked soil has a hear, receive, bear fruit. A hear, receive, bear fruit. And the difference in that preparation, or excuse me, the difference in that fruit bearing is the farmer's preparation of the receiving soil. And there's something different about that soil. Do you guys get the theme now?

There's something different about that soil. And it's the farmer. It's the sower, whichever word you prefer to use. But the difference is Christ. The meat has shown us that the difference is Christ. Now, you may think to yourself, well, the verbiage that Christ uses back in verse 11 is, to you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God. It almost sounds like they've been given it once. He's going to explain it to them here, and they're just going to know what's going on from here. Christ doesn't leave us alone after salvation, does he? Praise God for that. He doesn't leave us alone. In fact, jump with your eyes down to verse 34, a verse of chapter 4. Mark chapter 4 verse 34 says, "...and he was not speaking to them without a parable, but he was explaining everything privately to his own disciples." So at no point did Christ teach publicly without a parable, and every single one of them had to be explained to his disciples. Every single one. Even if we don't have the explanation recorded, Mark is telling us every single parable, they had to go back to Jesus and go, okay, now what does that one mean? I remember the seed. Like, I remember that. I remember the sow or the soil. I got that one, Jesus. The soil is different because of you. What does that one mean? And we're going to see that because we're going to look at more parables as we go over the next couple of weeks. But the something different, the establishment that we have to have in our minds to go forward from here is the difference between the inside and the outside is Christ and Christ alone. It is His command. It is His choice. It is His work. It is His grace. It is His love. Our Savior is everything that we have and everything that we are. That's it. He is the something different. So our application in the third point, it's a shorter sermon because there's a lot in here, and I didn't want to take us all afternoon or put you guys to sleep. So, the application here is that we have Jesus in us in the third person of the Trinity. Because my mind first, when I first realized what this was saying, and I saw verse 34, and it said Jesus taught them everything from there on out in parables, well, what are we going to do? He's been gone for a long time. And that's the beauty of what Christ has done. Not only does he save us, but he doesn't leave us here. He sends us his Spirit to fully indwell us. We are united with Christ, church. Do you remember Ephesians? We are united with Christ. So we have the privilege of having his Word and his Spirit in us to tell us what this Word means. How beautiful is that? How beautiful is that? It's glorious. The sower is still working the soil of those fields he chooses to work. through his Spirit. It is still all of Jesus today. So if you look at the fruit,

the harvest that Jesus will reap unto himself and those that are his, so we have this harvest. There's some 30, some 60, some 100-fold. Clearly, clearly it is by God's divine grace. Even the 100-fold, the Jews would have recognized that there is divine blessing in a 100-fold harvest. But we need to understand that we have the privilege of being taken from dead men and then regenerated by God's grace. Remember, he binds the strong man and cleans up our house. We talked about that last week. And then he sanctifies us, guides us, helps us, leads us, lovingly disciplines us as a father who loves his children, and then he uses us in his plan to bring more men and women to life by his word and work. We have that privilege, brothers and sisters. That is an incredible privilege that I think sometimes we don't fully understand, comprehend, or recognize. That serving God for his glory is a privilege, because before he regenerated us, we were dead men and women, bones in a corner, unable to even know that we were dead. And he came in and regenerated us, not only regenerated us, brought us into his family as adopted children, then said, now guess what? You get to go help in my plan. I called you for a purpose. Body of Christ, we are called for a purpose. Let us rejoice in that. So in conclusion, this Mark and sandwich, what does it mean? The thing we walk away from this parable is, the difference is Christ. He's been telling us that since verse one of chapter one. There's something different about Christ. He's a warrior king. compassionate servant and a Messiah and our Messiah Savior. And the difference is only in Him. That's the only difference. There's nothing else that we need to understand from this parable. Yes, there's some things that we can take away and kind of understand about how the world impacts us and those kinds of things, but the primary reason Mark has this here is It's that we understand the difference is Christ and Christ alone. In Him is salvation found and nowhere else. And that we are called to be the sowers for Him going forward. So as we go on in the Mark, we're going to see more parables that are going to build upon what we have just established, that is Christ as the difference. So I pray this week that you'll look ahead, read the rest of chapter four. We'll be tackling that over the next couple of weeks. Prepare your hearts and minds to hear that word. But I challenge you and I pray that us understanding our position before a holy God and that we are only in this room as converted individuals because of God's grace and God's grace alone causes us to humble ourselves before him, causes us to come to a place of glorifying him and praise like we've never come to before. Because when we finally understand and grasp what God has done in our lives, we have nothing else to get. There's nothing else. It should just drive us to unfettered

praise. Let's go to the Lord in prayer. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for your grace. We praise you for your plan of salvation that you brought to fruition. I pray that we would all be humbled before you, the sovereign King, the one who saves those whom

he will for only for his good pleasure. When we understand, Lord, that your justice would not have been blotted by transgression to not redeem anyone, our focus turns away from, why doesn't he receive, redeem some, to a focus of, Lord, why did you redeem me? Look what I've done to you. Help

us walk out of this room with a better understanding and appreciation of your salvation, the teaching that we have here in Mark, and a love for one another that we are here to glorify you together. We love you and praise you in your holy name. Amen.