

SCRIPTURE: Mark 4:10-12 (Good News Bible)

*Over
Good*

TOPIC: "Look, Listen and Understand"

Introduction:

1. Illustration: --to raise question, "What Does It Mean?"

TOOMY'S PAPER - "1,000 COINS WILL GO FREE EARLY IN GA." - why?

2. Hearers of Jesus, prior to event of story, were so many that he got into a boat and pushed off shore to get to a point for a pulpit setting, where he could be seen. We read, "He used parables to teach them many things." Then, according to Mark 4:3-8, he gave the Parable of the Sower."

Later, we read, still in Mark, when Jesus was alone with his disciples (the crowd had gone), some of those who had heard him came to him with the 12 disciples and asked him to explain the parables. Jesus answered in the words of our Scripture, which we have just read:

"But the others (who have not been given the Kingdom of God) who are on the outside hear all things by means of parables, so that

They may look and look, and yet not see;

They may listen and listen, yet not understand.

For if they did, they would turn to God, and he would forgive them."

3. Did Jesus mean that he spoke in parables to keep some people from understanding and turning to God? Did he purposely conceal truth to keep people from understanding truth, from being forgiven, from turning to God? It sounds sort of that way, as you read it. I don't think it is the way he meant it.

Instead, I think Jesus was saying, "I use parables so that people who can't feel and understand, who are not ready to turn to God, will listen to interesting illustrations and stories, and perhaps remember them. As they remember, and occasionally think about them, they may find meaning and understanding which will help them. You've got to get their attention first, and the stories do it."

4. If this is correct, as I think Jesus meant his words, he could be paraphrased accurately in the words of our sermon topic as on today's bulletin: "Look, Listen, and Understand."

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I. It is easy, natural, and usual to look at, to see, things we do not understand.

1. Illustration. *Computer graphics machine in Tour's work*

2. Illustration. *Radiation or chemotherapy in hospital usage*

3. So we go away puzzled and questioning. We shrug our shoulders (in effect) and pass off the event as not understandable, until we forget it. There may be meaning for which we are not willing to invest the time and effort it takes to understand. We miss the value, the help, in the experience.

4. "One picture is worth a thousand words," according to an old saying. *EVER MORE SO* To see something directly, as it is happening, as it is, should be the best learning experience, the best way to understanding.

II. It is even easier and more natural to hear something but not understand.

1. Illustration. Long speeches, such as sermons (like this one). Minds tend to wander. If we hear the sermon, we may relate the message to our own experiences, but let our minds wander into the recall of those experiences, and become distracted from the remainder of the sermon. We may ~~by this~~ get some meaning, but miss the intended message of the preacher. We hear, but do not understand.

ANOTHER WAY IN WHICH WE LISTEN IS THAT

2. We may hear the story, the words, but give them an entirely different interpretation than ~~were~~ intended by the speaker. We hear, but don't understand.

MOST OF US ARE MADE SO THAT WE WANT

III. There is need for understanding of what we see and hear.

1. It takes effort, self-discipline, to seek that understanding. Secular Illustration. The effort usually pays off. *Recent "MONKEY TRIAL IN CALIFORNIA"*

2. To seek understanding of religious sights and words, of their intended messages, is worth the effort, too.

a. You can try many possible interpretations on yourself, "for size," for acceptability, for faith.

This takes hard, self-discipline effort; so usually people seriously consider such teachings only when they are "low," despairing, and feel the need for answers, for help. Then messages of love and care and help are best understood and accepted. For the religious teacher who ~~moves~~ moves people this should indicate not a dictatorial and driving, hard-hitting approach, but a gentle Christ-like approach, as in the usage of parables.

IV. 1. When you feel ^{INSIDE YOURSELF} a ~~stirring~~ ^{STIRRING} response to a message, or to a sight, you can find strength by making a decision as to your feelings about it. "The Hour of Decision," "The Hour of Power," "The Power of Positive Thinking," "Commitment to Christ," "Accepting Your Saviour," are all terms and phrases which say, ^{FROM THE MOUTH} it's your choice, but you are happier, you do understand life better, if you make a choice and commit yourself to a standard and a way, based on your best understanding, NOW.

2. To understand and commit to ^{LEVEL OF} that understanding now DOES NOT mean that you stop seeking to increase your level of understanding.

a. ~~When~~ After dropping everything to follow him, Jesus' disciples ^{STILL} sought more teaching of him, more time to be around him, more light, more understanding. They never reached absolutely knowledge whereby they could coldly shut out of their lives a compassion for people who did not understand and believe as they themselves did. ~~They did not cut off others who did not believe as they did.~~

b. But they believed they understood, so strongly that they bet their lives on their understanding and on their faith.

CONCLUSION: Look, listen and understand.

When you understanding is a matter of conviction, you have something on which to build a life.

In many ways, through many churches and groups, ^{PEOPLE} ~~others~~ ^{FIND} have found ways to express and use their understanding of Jesus. To become part of a group, ^{OF} a church, ~~will~~ ^{PEOPLE} CAN help you, too.

Look, listen and understand JESUS, and you too can find meaning in your life, here, now, forever.

For March 15, 1981

CALL TO WORSHIP:

For us

For those of use gathered here right now in this place and at this time, if we wish to worship and know God through Jesus Christ, this is is house and we are his people. Come, let us worship together.

Invocation

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the presence of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and glorify your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Offertory Prayer

Father, we are aware of so many things we want to own and so many things we want to do, that for most of us the money we have will not begin to cover the costs of these things. We believe that all strength and all things which we have comes from you. Therefore, whatever percentage we get of what we want is a gift from you. We do want to say thank you. One way we can do it is to give to others, and to help others see something of you. So with these gifts, small or large, only as tokens or as real sacrifices, we say thank you for your love. In Jesus name. Amen.

Benediction

Unto God's gracious mercy and protection we commit you; the Lord look mercifully upon you with his favor, and fill you with all spiritual blessings and grace, that in this life, and in the world to come, you may be partakers of eternal life. Amen.

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