

~Other Speakers S-Z: John Sung:

(Patients of Spiritual Gastritis Restored to Health)

Mark 4

I Vs. 1-9. During Jesus' ministry on earth the Church auditorium was too small for Him. So, He had to go to a desert place or the beach where more people could be accommodated to hear Him. Here we find Jesus preaching by the sea. A big crowd gathered around Jesus so much so He had no room to stand. This obliged Him to get into a boat. He stood beneath an open sky, nothing to compare with this gigantic mat shed furnished with seats. When Jesus preached, His sermons were very simple to understand, yet so profound as to transcend the scholarship of the most learned.

Jesus said, "A sower went out to sow. Some seed fell by the wayside. Because the surface was hard the seed did not take root. The birds came and ate them up. Some seed fell on shallow soil. Although the seed took root and sprouted it had no depth because of the shallow soil. When the sun came up it wilted and withered. Some seed fell on thorny ground. Although the soil was soft, the seed had to contend with other seed, which shot forth thorns and thistles. The good seed was choked and overwhelmed. Thus stifled, it bore no fruit. Last, there was the soft rich soil, no thorns, nor thistles, well prepared for the nurture of good seed. The seed sprouted and grew. It bore fruit bountifully, thirty, sixty and a hundredfold.

Jesus having preached here left for another place. The multitude heard Him like enjoying a tasty meal and was waiting for more. Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear let him listen carefully." These hearers were not like those whose ears were stopped, what pity!

The way a human being eats his food is: from the mouth he sends it to the stomach. Spiritual food, however, does not enter the mouth, but the ear. He who has ears, let him hear carefully the Word of God, and let it be absorbed into the heart. Then a change will come to him quickly.

There was an American who loved to hear the choir sing, but not the sermon. He went to Church every Lord's Day to hear the song, not the sermon. When the choir sang he opened wide his ears. When the sermon commenced he shut up his ears. This was his custom in Church attendance.

Once, while the sermon was on, it happened that a fly landed on his nose. He lifted his hand to swat it, but the fly now landed on his mouth, and from his mouth it flew up his ear. Thus went on a wild fly-chase until he had the fly killed with one stroke. Had he not bothered the fly this would not have happened. For with the same stroke he killed the fly he had also the Word driven into his ear. From then onwards, the man repented. He delighted after this to hear the sermon. He who has ears, let him listen carefully.

II Vs. 10-20. The disciples did not understand what Jesus had said, no, not its hidden meaning. They vied to ask Jesus, "Sir, what doctrine were you expounding? What's the hidden meaning? Please tell us!" Jesus said, "The mystery of God's Kingdom is told to you. To outsiders, parables are used. Now they do hear but do not understand, lest they turn around and are saved." What is said to outsiders is heard, but not understood. That's right, because the outsiders are proud, and if the heart be clogged with pride it cannot give way for the Word to enter. Therefore they cannot understand. If they humble themselves, they will understand every word. Now, when you eat peanuts you must break open the pod to get at the nut. You don't just swallow it all.

Tonight I suppose many who are gathered here are outsiders. Let me tell them, except they come down from their pride to listen they will not understand, they will merely swallow what I say without chew. Be humbled, be emptied of your pride to receive Jesus' words. Then will His words shine to the glory of His Name. Don't be like the conceited, they hear but they don't understand.

So, if we are suffering from (spiritual) stomach disorders, let the Lord heal us. The heartless person shall become a heart full of energy, the rootless will be firmly rooted, the unable to testify will be able to testify. Whatever the stomach pains, there is sure cure, restoring full digestive powers.

III vs. 21-25. Listen, pay attention! Jesus has the best stomach cure.

Now the Word of Jesus is Light. All dark places need light. Without light we cannot find the way. Light is not

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covered under a container but set on a lamp stand. Brothers and sisters, if you value the Word, then pay close attention, for the Word of the Lord is Light in the darkness. Many take the Word for granted. They are still hard-hearted, light-resistant. If we understand God's Word, we have light, truth, life. So, pay attention, receive it heartily.

Dear brothers and sisters, many take Jesus lightly. They won't come to Him until their gastritis worsens and the pain becomes unbearable. There was a mad American. His wife loved him very much. She pitied him and tried to feed him, but he refused, not even with the doctor's help to open his mouth. Many there are who so pride over their eloquence, talents, wealth, and education that they look down on Jesus. They reject the Word.

Now Jesus explains the parable of the sower: The first type of ground represents those who hear with the left ear and let the Word fly out through the right ear. These people have no heart to listen to the Gospel. These come to look-see, that's all. For their hearts are trodden-hard by the things of the world. The Word suffers indigestion. These are the most hard-hearted in society.

The second type of ground speaks of hearers who repent, are born again, and who have a warm testimony. But inside the heart there are still stumbling stones, hidden sins beneath. When tribulation comes, he cannot stand, he stumbles and falls. Many students are of this category. Unless the stones are dug out, unless the "coffin" is opened, unless there is thorough repentance, thorough rebirth, thorough uprooting of sin, the Word cannot grow or expand in the heart.

The third type of ground refers to those so encumbered by mundane things that they have no time to hear the Word. Business, business, business --- busy medical practice, busy sulking not making enough, busy fearing the attacks of men. No time to witness. No courage to testify. These pressures, on the right, on the left, squeeze out the Word. Dear brothers and sisters, your busyness has crowded the Word in your heart so it cannot move. What you've taken in cannot be digested, cannot be assimilated. Pity of pities!

The fourth type of ground receives the Word gladly upon hearing it. It takes firm root and bears good fruit in season. It has a warm testimony and stands more firmly under persecution. It has the strength to lead others to Christ. It yields thirty, sixty and a hundredfold.

Praise the Lord! Let's see how Jesus heals those suffering from gastritis. Some suffer even for decades! In their hearts are stones that bar the Word from taking hold. It lacks digestive powers. To cure it, beef and fresh vegetables are prescribed, every kind of nutritive soup. When nutrition is increased the digestive powers return slowly in strength. Beef is absorbed to become flesh, vegetables are assimilated to become blood. So, the constitution is increased in power and strength. The Lord's strength entering the human heart goes through a similar process. It strengthens the growth of the Word within. It helps it to take firm root. This is a phenomenon inside the Church as well. They have mouths but eat not. They refuse to listen to the Word. Dear brothers and sisters, Jesus is our Savior, our life, most precious life. If we understand, we will find Him hold sway over our hearts, my most treasured life. When a person realizes his sinfulness, his heart immediately becomes troubled. He immediately needs the Lord. But when a person is satiated with the world, he will not need Jesus.

Dear brothers and sisters, we are but God's instruments. I've often been asked, "What's life?" Life is to be God's instruments. Eloquence and wealth are nothing. We should give over these for the Lord's use, for we need God. Many know life is important. But life must be filled with the Spirit of Jesus, to be able to issue forth power, to be cleansed of filth, to gush with living water.

Further, there is nothing hid that shall not be exposed. But this needs spiritual power coming out of a sure foundation to take the stones away. Stones removed, a firm foundation laid. Unless a cup is cleansed down to the bottom, the water it holds is polluted. After hearing a sermon, the heart-door must open to let the world and its pomp and power be cast out to let the Word grow in the heart. He who has ears let him hear, hear intently. For with what measure you mete, it is meted to you. So, may you become rivers of living water to benefit many people. The more you give the more you have. Praise the Lord! The Word of God wants to grow in your heart, flower and bear fruit, thirty, sixty or a hundredfold, an ever-flowing river of living water.

IV Vs. 26-29. God's Word grows in us, is established, and overflows. If a born-again person does not witness he will not grow to stable maturity nor bear fruit abundantly. For the ground is not prepared for thorns and thistles, but for the seed --- the Word of God. Let us bear good fruit for man's use and God's glory.

V Vs. 30-34. Praise the Lord! Here is a man who plants a mustard seed, the smallest of all, that when it is grown it gives shelter to the birds. The more widely a Christian labors, the more abundantly flows his life. There

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was a preacher who once was a terribly hot-tempered pirate. He smoked (opium) and drank. One day he came to Church to hear the Word. How did he know he was to fall asleep? The meeting ended and everybody went home except the slumberer. The pastor thought he was a zealous one, when to his surprise he found him snoring away with a heavy opium stench. The pastor shook him up, pleaded with him to stop smoking, repent and believe the Gospel. This man later truly repented. He came to Foochow to the Bible Conference. His health improved greatly. He became a preacher, and continues to this day to shine for Christ. When a man repents God can make him a river of living water.

VI Vs. 35-41 Dear brothers and sisters! Many despise Jesus, but one day they will need Him. At any time you come to Jesus, you will become a river of water. Jesus and the disciples took boat across the sea. Jesus slept while the disciples merrily rolled along, singing and sight-seeing while the night was still and cool. Suddenly a gust of mighty wind broke upon their laughter. Waves ruffled a placid lake into a churning, boiling sea. The disciples struggled to row. Fear gripped their hearts. The boat couldn't advance. The tidal assault came from every quarter. As they cried out in vain, their lives in danger, they were completely overwhelmed. At the sight of Jesus slumbering away, the disciples perhaps chattered among themselves how their Master could only preach but not work, for why, He was sleeping when life was in peril. So they shook up Jesus imploring, "We're dying. The boat is sinking. You're still sleeping!" Jesus awoke. He asked why they were so frightened. The disciples said the storm was raging. Jesus said to the disciples, "Don't be afraid. You thought you were clever enough. You needed Me not. Why are you helpless?" So saying, He rebuked the wind and sea. A great calm settled. Many are too clever. They don't need Jesus. They put Jesus to sleep. They do not want Jesus to Lord over them.

A friend of mine in New York invited me to his house to dinner. He was a big business man. I thought he had something special. When dinner time came he invited me to the table. He said to me, "You've not been back to China for many years. You've not eaten Chinese food for long. I'm sure you'll like this." And who was to expect nice noodles and sweet potatoes? After I had made an end of these dishes, he said, "These are only dim sum (tid-bits). The main course is yet to come." I replied, "I've eaten. I can take in no more." Many reject Jesus, because they are full. There's no room left for Jesus. They want Jesus to go to sleep.

Dear brothers and sisters! Do we need Jesus, each one? Will you open your heart to Him? Will you ask Him to be Lord of your heart? Seven days after I was born again I got locked up in a mental hospital. I could only read my Bible. I said to the Lord, "Let me read my Bible. I shall be most contented." Now the Lord is king in my heart. He turns me into a river of living water. May Jesus be king in every heart tonight. May He make you a river of living water to witness for Him, to glorify Him. When Peter let him be king in his life, he became a mighty preacher. 3,000 turned to Christ. We are instruments of God. May everyone fully surrender himself, body and soul to Him. May He rule as King and give us power, power to witness, a river of living water flowing on forever.