

## Session 2

DECEMBER 10, 2017

### JESUS TEACHES

Mark 4:1-9

By the time we are adults—between school, sports, work, and church—most of us have had a variety of teachers. And most of us would agree that some were “better” than others. Some stand out as having a substantial impact in our lives, while others have long been forgotten. So what makes some teachers better than others? Is it the subject being taught? Is it the technique the teachers use? Or is it really the teachers themselves? Very likely, it’s a combination of these things.

In this familiar passage, we will focus not so much on the meaning of the parable Jesus uses, but rather on the master teacher at work. As always, the Lord Jesus provides us with an excellent example to follow.

**Jesus adjusted His teaching for the needs of His hearers (v. 1).** The early part of Jesus’ ministry was located in the northern section of His region, known as Galilee. The Sea mentioned here is the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus met His disciples and later walked on the water. His early ministry was also marked by large crowds who followed Him, enamored by His teaching and marveling at His miracles (all of this changed later on, when the multitudes clamored to make Him a king because of His miracles; see John 6). With the large number of listeners, and the geography of the place, Jesus sat in a boat parked just off shore. This insured some certain results: first, people could *hear* Him. The downward slope of the seashore and Jesus’ short distance apart from the crowd formed a natural amphitheater. Remember: even the most impacting and eloquent words ever spoken have no effect if they cannot be heard! Any pastor feels complimented when his elderly parishioners comment that “they heard every word.” Second, the people could *see* Him. While the Bible never calls the eye “the window of the soul,” Matthew 6:22 does call the eye the “light of the body.” Educators and professional speakers have long argued for the importance of eye contact in effective communication. Excellent communicators prefer smaller rooms where they are assured eye contact with every listener. **The lesson:** since good teaching is always student based, adjust your teaching set-up so that your listeners can *hear* you and *see* you.

**Jesus used an appropriate method for His hearers (vv. 2-8).** We already know that a parable is an earthly story with a spiritual application. And we know that the parable was Jesus’ favorite teaching method. In the gospels, Jesus used at least thirty-five individual and distinct parables to illustrate His truths. In this text, He used a very familiar illustration that everyone there would be aware of: seeds, soil, a scorching sun, rocky ground, thorns, and the harvest. You can almost picture the crowd of people smiling and nodding; “Yes, I have been there before,” and “That’s right, I know exactly what He is talking about.” Whether He referred to yeast and bread or hidden treasures, or a prodigal son, Jesus connected with His listeners because He taught God’s truth in a very appropriate, easily understood way, using illustrations from everyday life that the people related to. **The lesson:** since good teaching is always student based, know your listeners well and use a method they will easily *relate to* and *understand*.

**Jesus appealed for a response from His hearers (v. 9).** The Lord’s admonition “Anyone who has ears to hear should listen!” appears in the Gospels and in Revelation. But since everybody has ears, what does He mean? There is a condition attached to these words: He is speaking to those not only with ears, but with “ears to hear.” This is a clear call to carefully consider and personally apply the truth just taught. **The lesson:** since good teaching is always student based, encourage your listeners to *carefully consider* and *personally apply* God’s truth.