

MAKING THE CONNECTION

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Mark 4:1-20

The church is no longer relevant to many people. One of the ongoing discussions among pastors and leaders is, what can close the back door of the church? There are some who go from church to church, obviously searching for something they have yet to find. I've often wondered why some people cannot make the connection.

The church has historically been the place where persons could find what they needed. There are many kinds of churches offering many different programs and services and some say you can get all your needs met in one place. Lest we forget the primary ministry for the church is to help us connect with God through worship and the word.. It's by the Word of God that we are given daily direction for life and for living. You name it, you can claim it and find it in God's Word. In some form or another, the Word is preached in churches all across the world. When the word goes forth, God has given his personal guarantee that it will not return void.

There is nothing the word cannot achieve. The word of God is powerful and effective, like a two edged sword. This is no new problem. Moses dealt with it. It's Jesus who helps us understand where the real problem lies. In an effort to connect with the people, Jesus taught in parables. A parable challenges us to think for ourselves. A parable is a story or comparison with the intent that the listeners will get deeply involved.

Jesus placed a great deal of importance on hearing the word of God. So he told this parable. The seed represented the word of God. The sower represented the men and women of God who teach and preach the word. Our hearts are like soil that must be prepared before the word can produce a harvest. It has to be planted and cultivated before any results are achieved.

The condition of the heart determines whether or not the connection is made.

- The first reason the connection is not made is because some of us have hard hearts. Too many people recklessly open their heart to all kinds of people. You cannot read everything and allow just anyone to speak to you. There is a lot that is being written and spoken today that is dangerous. As Christians, we believe that the word of God is the truth. You cannot go around letting people tell you anything and everything John 8:31-32. The Word of God is truth. It's perfect, nothing lacking. We have to be careful. Prov 4:23 When you reject the message of Christ, you are rejecting hope and truth. Then you begin to think you can get along without the word. Each of us needs to know that we have to have the word hidden on our hearts.

The hard heart can't receive the word. You are present physically, not emotionally or spiritually. You leave as empty as you came.

- The second reason is that our hearts are shallow. Since the soil lies in a thin layer on the rock, it has no roots. Roots make our lives stable. Like a tree planted by streams of water... I shall not be moved. When you have no roots, you are an emotional hearer who doesn't want to know the costs of real Christianity. Every Sunday morning when the word is going forth we take it or leave it. As long as things are going well in your life, God is good. Faith is not based on feelings. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. This requires a deeper relationship with God. Where there is no depth to your relationship with God, the seed might germinate, but soon it withers and dies because there is nothing to hold onto. We are into immediate gratification. We have to consider the cost. Luke 14:28 You are in church, but are you committed to Christ? It doesn't work when you are here one day and not the next. We are not born again for a season, we are born again for a lifetime.
- The third reason is because some of our hearts are crowded. There is some ground that is full of weeds. We have everything in order on the surface. But, just beneath the surface there are some weeds. Our hearts are crowded with all kinds of weeds. We have to find time to worship. We even have to find time for God. We may give Him 1 or 2 hours on Sunday but that's it. We allow others to compete with God for our time and adoration. We don't have any room for the word to take root and grow. The reason people leave the church empty and alone is because they have made no connection.

There is a group of people who are fruitful and faithful, walking in victory because the Word says they are yielding some 30 and 60 and 100 fold. How do they experience a harvest?

Mark 4:20 Others hear, accept, and produce a crop.

- They heard the word because they had a desire to hear the word. They asked God to communicate with them no matter what was going on around them. They understand their life depends on it. If you want to hear from Him, then you have to listen.
- Secondly, you have to accept or receive the word. "The human mind is an odd and dangerous machine," William Barclay. Whenever something comes at you that you don't want to hear, your mind shuts down. Sometimes God speaks a word that you don't want to hear. He's not trying to make you happy, he's trying to make you holy. You'll be happy when you get holy.
- You have to put the word into action. We have to act on the word. If you hesitate, you will miss the blessing. Even when you don't understand you must step out on it by faith and then wait for further direction. By the time you realize what is going on, the harvest is coming, but you have to act.
Eze 33:31, Ps.19:7-11, James 1:22

God has blessed each of us with a tremendous seed called money. From one tiny seed comes a major oak tree. Give believing that what we are giving today is a seed that God is going to multiply. That's our response to the word. We have to put the word into action.

Peace.

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