

Hearing But Not Hearing

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Date: 06 April 2025

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[0 : 0 0] I've entitled my sermon, Hearing But Not Hearing.! You know how you can hear something, it can go into your ears, but you don't really hear! Do you know what I'm talking about?

If you're the parent of teenagers, you might have come across this concept, that they heard something but they don't actually hear it. If you're the wife of a husband, you may have come across this idea. I mean, I've been known to suffer this condition in the past.

Sometimes we'll have plans on a weekend and we'll have to get ready to go and I don't actually know that we have plans and Jean will kindly say to me, but I told you on Monday, dear. And you even said, yes, that's fine. And I don't have any recollection of that.

I'm saying that or hearing that. I heard, but I didn't actually hear. Well, I don't know if you've experienced something similar, but today in this passage, Jesus wants us to realize that people do that with God all the time. It's possible to hear God's Word week week in and week out without really hearing it. And in our passage today and this famous parable, Jesus explains this very widespread phenomenon of hearing God's Word but not really hearing it that He's already come across in His teaching. And it really comes out strongly here in Matthew 13. And He explains here at the beginning of this chapter why this phenomenon exists, why it is that people can hear God's Word but not really hear it, and also what we can do to make sure we are not those kinds of people, how to avoid not hearing God's Word even though we hear it. Okay, so that's what we're going to look at this morning. I think it's a very important passage to study and to make sure we hear. So please turn off any distractions, questions, either in your phones or in your minds, and let's listen to what God has to say to us this morning. But first, we need to understand the difference between this idea of hearing God's Word and really hearing God's Word. What is the difference? Well, there's no better place to see that difference play out than here in Jesus' parables. Now, parables

Jesus used was a specific way of teaching. And here in Matthew 13, we come to the third major teaching block of Matthew's Gospel, where Jesus is teaching. The first was the Sermon on the Mount. Then you had the second one about persecution and trials and mission. And now you've got the third one of five. This is the central one. So this is the central piece of Jesus' teaching in the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew chapter 13. And it's filled from beginning to end with parables. These strange stories that Jesus used, which have two layers, two levels to them. That's what was unique about parables. They've got this surface level where he's talking about something everyone can understand, whether it's, you know, seeds or nets or hidden treasures or whatever it might be. It's a surface level story. But then there's also a deeper level that he explains to not everyone. And that's the interesting thing, especially we see it play out in the parable of the sower. So I want you to look in your Bibles now, as I, by the way, always do when I'm preaching. I want you to see this stuff in front of you. I want God to be speaking to you through his word. Don't just take my word for it. Look in your Bibles, Matthew 13. If you forgot to bring your Bible on our Connect app, there's an online Bible. So everyone should be able to look at these words for themselves. And I want you to see how this is structured, how this is laid out.

[4 : 10] Our passage this morning. So at the beginning, Jesus tells this parable about the sower. And you can see that from verse 3 to 9. He starts, a farmer went out to sow his seed. And he talks about this farmer scattering different, well, scattering seeds on different grounds and what happens to it.

But then later on, only later in the passage from verse 18 onwards, he explains what the parable means. And he literally says, and by the way, this is only to a smaller group. So in verse 10, his disciples come to him and say, what are you talking about, Jesus? And then from verse 18, he says, now hear. Your Bible might say, listen to what the parable, but it's just the same word. Now hear. Hear the parable. And he tells them the deeper meaning, but only to a smaller group of disciples. But what's interesting about this is you've got the parable at the beginning, right?

Verse 3 to 9. Then you've got the explanation at the end, verse 18 to 23. In the middle is Jesus explaining to his disciples why he teaches like he does in parables. And look what he says from verse 10.

Then the disciples came to him and asked, why do you speak to the people in parables? Okay, because at that point, they don't know what this parable means. They don't know why he's talking to them about farming. I mean, we come to hear you about spiritual stuff, Jesus, about the kingdom, about salvation. Why are you talking to us about farming? Okay, so they don't understand because they don't know what it means. So that's what they're asking. Why do you speak to the people in parables? Listen to his response from verse 11. He replied, the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. And then verse 13, look what he says.

This is why I speak to them in parables. Though seeing, they do not see. Though hearing, they do not hear or understand. So Jesus says there's two types of hearing. They're hearing, but they're not hearing. In other words, in his answer to them, Jesus is saying he uses parables to make it obvious that there are two types of hearers of God's word. Whenever God's word is spoken, all the word of God that he has been revealing to the people up until now, he's now using parables to show that there's always been two types of hearers when it comes to God's word. Those who just hear it versus those who actually seek out its meaning and its relevance for their lives like his disciples did. And you see this often in these parables.

[6 : 53] He'll say the parable to the crowds, but then only a few will come to him and say, what does that mean? And they want to know what this means for their life. Well, Jesus is saying you have the same two types of hearers today. You've got those who come to church and hear the word and it's nice and they go home. But then you've got those who go, what does it mean for me? What does it mean for my life? What must I do now? Those are the two types of hearers.

Which are you? Which type of hearer are you? Because here's the thing, both of them hear God's word. Both of them are at church. But not all of them really hear God's word. Which are you?

Maybe right now you're hearing this, but you're also thinking about other things. Maybe it's not really meaning anything for you. It's just the preacher preaching. Which are you? Are you really hearing? Well, how do you know which you are? How do you know whether you're really hearing God's word when it is spoken? Well, just as well Jesus tells us in the parable of the sower, how we can really know. And so he explains to his disciples what this parable is about, right? The sower sowing seeds on different grounds is actually the word of God going out to different people and their different reactions. And then he, right at the end of it, he talks about the person who actually hears, who really hears God's word. And what happens? Well, we see it in verse 23.

Have a look. Jesus says, but the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the person who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop yielding 160 or 30 times what was sown. So how do you know you're really hearing the word? There will be fruit. There will be produce. Something will happen.

Something will be produced. It won't be the same for every person. All right? It'll mean different things. It'll produce different things in different quantities for different people. But there will be something produced. If you really hear God's word, something will happen in your life. There will be fruit. As Jesus said back in chapter 7 verse 16, by their fruit you will recognize them.

[9 : 25] And that's been his consistent message. Are there things happening? Is there produce in your life? Because that will show whether you're really hearing God's word. And after all, that is the purpose. A farmer sows seed, right? To get produce. He doesn't just sow seed because he's bored and he wants something to do. Farmers do all that they do and they plow and they sow and they use their tractors. They didn't back then, but they had other plowing implements. And it's hard work.

And they do it so that they can have fruit. Maybe you have a veggie garden at home. I don't, but I've always wanted to grow chilies. I've heard it's pretty easy, but I've just never got around to setting it up, but I'm still thinking about it. Because to have fresh chilies, that would be awesome. But I would only go to all that work and set it up and do that if I was going to get chilies out of it. Not just green leafy plants, right? It's the same if you have a veggie garden or you grow something at home or a fruit tree. You grow it so that you can get the fruit. Guess what? God does the same with his word. When God sends his word to this world, it's not just so we can hear it and carry on living our lives. It's so that fruit can be produced. God wants fruit. God sends his word to bear fruit, to do something. And so that's how you know you're really hearing it. Do you see fruit in your life? Is it producing new things in your life when you hear God's word? Or are you just staying the same week in and week out? That's how you know whether you're really hearing this.

And it's a vital question to ask yourself because of what Jesus says in verse 12. Listen to what he says. Whoever has will be given more and they will have an abundance.

Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. These are heavy words, but it's a warning to us, to all of us. If God's word is not doing anything in your life, you'll actually become increasingly indifferent to it. That's what Jesus is saying.

And over time, it'll mean less and less and less to you. And it'll do less and less and less until it means nothing to you and you don't see the point of coming to church anymore.

[11 : 58] And I've seen this happen to people. In my years of ministry, I've seen people come to church and week in and week out, they're here and they're hearing God's word, but they're not really hearing it because nothing changes. They're just the same and their life is the same week after week.

Those people, and I can think of specific people, I don't see them here today. You see, because what happens inevitably, if people aren't really hearing the word, is that they become less and less wanting to hear it and to a point that they don't see the point of getting up early on a Sunday and going to church and they stop going to church. It's exactly what Jesus was saying here. Whoever does not have even what they have, even whatever faith they have, even whatever they believe will be taken away from them and they'll become increasingly indifferent to it. And that's the warning. So the challenge to us, Jesus issues the challenge at the end of most of his parables. He says this cryptic line and we see it in verse nine here. He who has ears, let him hear. See what he's saying? And he's saying it to us today and he's saying it every time we hear his word. If this word is going into your ears, make sure you're really hearing it. Because there's a difference between hearing it and really hearing it. Make sure you're really hearing it. And that nothing is preventing you as in those moments when you're sitting in church, when you're opening your Bible at home. Wherever it is that you hear God's word, you've got to remember this refrain. He who has ears, if you're hearing it, then let him hear.

Make sure you're hearing it and make sure there aren't things distracting you. Remove anything that is preventing you from hearing it. And to do that, well, we need to next discover what does prevent us from hearing God's word. And that's what most of Jesus' explanation and the parable is about. What prevents real hearing? First, we've got to ask, how do we get real hearing? How do we really hear God's word? And we mustn't lose sight of the fact that real hearing is a gift from God. You can't really hear God's word unless he gives you real hearing. We need God to give that to us. Verse 11, Jesus said, the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom to his disciples has been given to you. Right? You didn't figure it out by yourself because you're clever. They certainly weren't clever. Like there were fishermen notes, insult to fishermen. I'm sure you get very clever fishermen. But you know, they weren't the scholars of the day. They weren't the intelligentsia of the day. They were kind of laborers. And yet they were hearing. And you could have lots. You did in Jesus' day have lots of really educated people who weren't hearing because hearing, truly hearing God's word is something that is given to us. It's not by our own ability or our own education or our own intelligence that we really hear this word. And yet, even though it is something that we need God to give us, at the same time, being deaf to it, Jesus says, is our own fault.

I know that sounds strange. How does that work? God needs to give it to us. But if we don't hear it, that's our own fault. And yet that's what Jesus is teaching here. If we're being deaf to the word, when God speaks, it is our own fault. And he proves that by quoting from the prophet Isaiah that was read for us earlier. Did you notice Jesus quoted from the same prophet? If you didn't notice that, you weren't listening. Okay. You've really got to learn to listen. Because even the most basic listening to that Old Testament passage and then to the New Testament passage would have gone, oh, those are the same words I just heard like half a minute ago. Okay. Get into the habit of really listening.

That's the first step to really hearing. So Jesus quoted from the prophet Isaiah. Why did he quote from this? Because Isaiah was commissioned by God to be his prophet to a rebellious father. He was in Israel. Israel, Israel at this time, were in rebellion against God. They were about to go into exile and be cut off from the land because of their deep rebellion and their idolatry.

[16 : 49] And so God sends Isaiah to them at the 11th hour, even though he knows they're still going to be stubborn and not listen to what he has to say. And that's the whole kind of point of his commission.

And then Jesus quotes what God tells Isaiah here in verse 15. Have a look what he says. So this is God talking to Isaiah, telling him about the people he must go speak his word to. He says, For this people's heart has become calloused. They hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise, they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn, and I would heal them. In other words, God is saying about his people then, and Jesus is saying the same about the people he's talking to. God is saying, if only they would hear, I would give.

If only they would listen. But they have, what have they done? Verse 15, they have closed their eyes. Did you notice that? They closed their own eyes. They have deafened themselves.

Why? Why was it like that in Isaiah's day? Why is it like that today? Why do people deafen themselves to God's word? Well, simply because they don't want to listen. Because they don't want to obey.

That's how it was in Isaiah's day. They don't want to listen because they don't want to obey. And so what does God do with people who don't want to listen? Well, we see it. He stops giving them understanding. He goes, okay, don't you want to hear? I won't let you hear. And so you see, it's both. It's both God not giving understanding and people not being willing to listen. God stops giving understanding to people who don't want to hear, and it makes less and less and less sense to them, his word. And that is what Jesus using parables shows us. That's why he uses parables.

[19 : 03] It shows us that, you know, with him only giving the meaning to some people and keeping it hidden from others, which is what he does with parables. It shows us that God is quite happy to keep truth hidden from those who don't want to hear it. God is quite happy to keep truth hidden from those who don't want to hear it. It's actually a form of judgment. When people say, oh no, God's word makes no sense to me, that's God's judgment on them. He keeps it hidden from them. God is quite happy to do that.

And that is why Jesus kept the real meaning of his parables hidden from the crowds who weren't really listening. Because we've got to get this, okay? God is not desperately trying to convince you to believe in him. Like some salesman trying to get you to sign up. Like those zone fitness guys in the mall. You know what I'm talking about? You go to the mall and immediately you're accosted by these people who want you to sign up for the gym. Okay? And they hound you and they express to you why you need this and they try to get you to sign up. God is not like that. God is not doing that. He's not trying to desperately get you to believe in him. Okay? If you don't want to, he is quite happy to keep truth hidden from you. And to let you believe it's all nonsense. He doesn't need you to believe in him. We've got to get that about God. You know, you may wonder why God is so hidden. Have you ever wondered that? You know, if he's true, why doesn't he make himself more obvious to people?

Why does, if he, if he could just make it more obvious to people that he's there and that he's real, it would be much easier for me to tell my friends about if he, why is he so hidden? Why does it seem God is so hidden? Well, here's why. Because that is him, his judgment on the world. That is one of his primary means of judgment on this world is to keep himself hidden from those who actually don't want to hear him. It's because of his judgment that he's, he's hidden and not obvious. Truth is a gift given only to those who really want it. That is what Jesus is trying to say here. That is why he uses parables. And it's what we need to hear today. God does not have to show himself to us.

He's got no obligation to do that. And he, he's not desperate for you to believe him. Showing himself, showing his truth to you is a gift. Giving you faith in this is a gift given only to those who don't deafen themselves to it, who really want it. But many don't want it. Many actually, even who listen to God's word, don't want to hear it. They'll, they'll hear it on the surface, but they don't want to really hear it. Why? Because believing God's truth means accepting God's rule in your life. And that's why people don't want to hear it. That's why they deafen themselves. They put blocks in their ears and in their hearts so that the word, even though it goes in the ears, doesn't sink in. Because if it did, we all, we're threatened by that.

If it does, that means I've got to listen to God. I can't rule my life anymore. And so that's why people deafen themselves to it. Maybe you're here this morning and you're still struggling to believe in all this. Maybe you're listening to this recording and you still struggle with belief. Maybe that's why you're listening to the recording and you're not in church. Because you're still exploring, you're still struggling to believe. If only God would show himself more obviously. If only he would give you some more evidence than you would believe. Maybe that's where you're at. Although have you ever considered that maybe you don't want to believe? Because you want to stay in charge of your own life. And maybe that's why you don't. Maybe that's why you're not hearing. Because as long as you want to stay in charge of your own life, you will keep yourself deaf to hearing this truth. And yet, this, this truth and really hearing it, God's Word, is the very thing that will heal you if you hear it properly. Look at the end of verse 15.

[23 : 31] Again, Jesus quoting His Father says, if only they would understand with their hearts and hear with their ears, and I would heal them. I would heal them. God wants to heal us. We are broken. We are cut off from Him. We have sin in our lives that messes things up. God wants to heal His people.

But only, only through really hearing God's Word can we be healed. If only we would hear, then He would heal us. Because only God's Word, and really hearing it, shows you Jesus, and shows you the gospel of His death and resurrection, and what it means to your life, and what it means to your life. And it shows you the way to salvation and eternal life that makes this whole life make sense, and is what is real about our existence. All of that only comes through really hearing this Word. If only you would hear, God would heal you. So watch out for that rebellion. That's the internal reason that is keeping you deaf.

But you know what? Jesus goes on and says there are also external factors that can keep us from hearing God's Word. And that's what He explains in the parable of the sower. And so if we have a look before we end this morning, from verse 18 onwards, when He's explaining to His disciples what the parable of the sower means, He outlines that there's three main reasons that keep people from hearing the Word, things from outside. So there's the internal reason, our own rebellion, Isaiah. But there are these outside factors as well that we've got to be aware of. And there are three. Firstly, Satan. Secondly, trouble. And thirdly, the world. Let's look at each of them briefly. Firstly, Satan. Verse 19.

When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. That is the seed sown along the path. The evil one Jesus is referring to is Satan, the real spiritual intelligent being who is set on keeping people away from God. And what he does is he doesn't make himself obvious because he can be much more effective when he's subtle. All he does, Jesus describes him as a bird plucking away the truth that's sown in people's hearts. He plucks away the truth.

You know how quickly birds eat seed? I don't know if you've watched birds go and eat. We've got a bird feeder in our garden and sometimes we'll see the birds land or they'll land on the grass.

[26 : 26] But we put seed in the bird feeder. And these birds, they come, they flutter down, they look around for predators and they quickly and they get their seed and they go. You know, it's so quick. Like the seed's there and it's gone. Just like that. They don't take their time eating. They're very quick birds. Well, Jesus uses that image to describe how quickly Satan can pluck away truth that's sown in someone's mind when they hear God's word. Just as quickly as truth enters a person's mind, evil forces in this world that exist can take it away. That's what we're dealing with. And so we've got to be on our guard against those, shouldn't we? If such forces exist in this world who are bent on making sure that truth does not take root in your mind, well, we better do something about that. If they're ready today to pluck this truth away from your mind, what are you going to do to make sure they don't?

We should be asking that every Sunday. We've got to fight against that. We've got to put disciplines in our lives and especially in our Sundays where we don't leave church with no further thought about what we heard. Because then that's just plucking away. You know, and there's things you can do to make sure you don't. We, in our family, almost every Sunday, we will sit down and we will ask each other what stood out for you in today's service or the sermon. What did God say to you?

And we, you know, take five, ten minutes maybe over lunch to just quickly go around and say what struck us, what stood out for us. That's one of the ways that we can prevent truth from being plucked away and giving it no further thought. Don't leave church with, with no further thought to the truth that you've heard because then you're just giving Satan, you know, an open, an open field to pluck away from. That's the first thing that can keep us from hearing Satan. Secondly, trouble.

Look at verse 20 to 21. The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy, but since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. Okay, so here's someone who receives the word with joy. Now this should be very sobering to us because it's talking about a Christian here.

It's talking about a person who comes to church, who worships, who's enthusiastic for God. Someone who receives the word with joy. They like what they're hearing at church. They claim God's promises on their lives.

[29 : 14] You know, these types of people that Jesus is talking about, I think you find a lot in the more Pentecostal, charismatic churches that are all about God's blessings on your life. You know, lots of people, those are very attractive churches to go to because of course you want to hear about God's blessings.

That's great. So go to the churches that tell you about all the ways God wants to bless you. And then people are very enthusiastic. And of course, there are great blessings in the gospel that God wants to give us, but there are also sacrifices that you won't hear about at these churches. And there are difficulties and there are persecutions that come with following Christ. And when these things happen, these Christians who are only in it for the blessings, what happens? They stop hearing. They don't want to listen. They don't want to hear the full message because it's uncomfortable and they eventually fall away. Make sure you are not one of them. And then thirdly, the third thing that can keep us from hearing is the world. Look at verse 22. The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns, is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.

Again, this is a believer. This is someone who hears the word. And in the original parable, Jesus says the seed even takes root in them. The last one, it didn't take root. It didn't have time because of the trouble and the persecution. But this one actually takes root. They could be a mature believer for years coming to church. But what is it about them? There's no fruit. You see that?

It remains unfruitful. Why? Why does this kind of person who comes to church and who hears remain unfruitful? Well, Jesus says because of the concerns of the world out there that are competing for their headspace when they're at church. They're the person who's sitting in church but thinking about the world, thinking about the week ahead, thinking about all the stuff they've got to do out there.

You know, this is the person... Jesus describes it as weeds competing for nutrients. That's what weeds will do, right, with healthy plants. Weeds and the thorns will compete for all the nutrients in the soil and take it so that the healthy plant can't grow properly. Jesus is saying that is what thoughts about the world and concerns of the world do in our hearts and in our minds. They compete for headspace.

[31 : 53] When a person's mind is so occupied with their business and their holidays and their sport, so that even though they come to church and they listen to the things of God, what they hear here is just not as important as what's out there and all the responsibilities and all the stuff they have out there. That's the third type. That's the other thing that prevents people from hearing. Now, if any of this describes you in any way, you need to take the warning of verse 12 seriously where Jesus says, whoever has will be given more, but they who do not have, even what they have will be taken from them.

Okay, even the truth that you might have at this moment might be taken away and you might lose it. Use it or lose it.

Right? We hear that phrase a lot. It is no truer than with God's Word. Use it or lose it. And to do that, I think what we all need to do is to do some weeding in our lives.

You know, you will often go into your garden, hopefully, and you will pluck out the weeds so that the healthy plants can grow. We need to do that in our lives as well. We need to pluck out the things that are keeping us from hearing God's Word so that the fruit can grow.

Weeding. Identify the things that stop you from really hearing the Word. And they could be basic things. You know one of the biggest culprits? This.

[33 : 38] Okay, not my phone. Your phone. Okay. But seriously, our phones, what are our phones and the social media and the apps on them designed to do and the notifications?

What is it designed to do? It's designed to keep us connected with the world. Think about that. It's the way that the world gets to intrude on your life every day and you let it.

You wake up. What is the first thing you look at? I mean, maybe you're good and you look at your Bible. Great. But probably, majority of people will look at their phone.

The very first thing. They let the world intrude on their lives from the moment they wake up. Think about your morning routine because this is one of the key areas where we must guard against letting the world intrude on our day too early.

Okay? Think and letting the weeds set in. Think about your morning routine. What happens the first moment you wake up? What do you do when you're eating breakfast? Think about that.

[34 : 44] The easiest thing when you're eating breakfast is to sit and eat and scroll on your phone and to catch up on the news and to catch up on messages. Okay? You could be spending that time in God's Word and in prayer.

Right? You could be spending that time in communion with the Creator of the cosmos and setting your day in light of Him and yet, oh, let me look at this cat video.

Okay? I only say that because I looked at a stupid cat video yesterday when I was preparing my breakfast. It was about a restaurant in Japan who has these toy trains and to get more customers, the restaurant owner bought a whole lot of cats to chase after the trains and he put GoPro cameras on the trains and he put it on.

And I was looking at this and then I was thinking, what a waste of my time! And I switched it off and I went to the dining room and I took my breakfast and I opened God's Word and I took out the bookmark and I, oh, what a blessing!

I got from that, just that time, spending reading those few verses, praying over them, it made my whole day much better and I got to just be reminded of the truths of God, but it could have been all taken away by a stupid cat video if I wasn't more aware and if I hadn't prepared the sermon this week, probably.

[36 : 10] Okay? So I want to say the same to you. Don't let things get in the way of competing and compete for God's Word and really hearing God's Word in your daily life.

Look at your morning routine. And we, at St. Mark's, we make it as easy as possible for you to connect with God. Like a couple of verses a day, we've got a nice bookmark, it's on our app, you can look at the verses, there's instructions of what to do and it's very simple, it can take five minutes and yet it can make such a difference because it means that you're letting God's Word speak to you before you're letting the world speak to you.

And if you're still not, if you're still not doing this or doing some other daily devotion, well the question is, do you really want to hear God?

If you haven't gone to the effort of building Bible reading into your daily life and just some time spent with God, well then I would seriously question, do you really want to hear Him?

Or are you not that interested? That's one of the things that we need to weed out of our lives. I think a second thing is outside commitments.

[37 : 27] And this is another thing I've seen a lot in ministry that compete for people's headspace with the things of God is outside commitments. Often, people commit to things for very good reasons.

Christians, you know, it can be school things, it can be on this committee and that committee and I've got that responsibility all out there in work and career and whatever it is.

You know what Christians need to do? They need to learn to say, it's a very simple word, no. N-O. Christians need to learn to say no to things out there, even if it's going to disappoint people, so that they can say yes to things in here, in God's Word.

Because if you do that, and if you say yes to what's in here and you really listen to it and you put aside distractions and the things that pluck the seed away and the things that compete with it and you let yourself really hear this, well then you can be one of those that the parable ends with in verse 23.

But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the Word and understands it and he produces a crop yielding 160 or 30 times what is sown.

[38 : 43] And man, it is encouraging to know that there's this seed, there's this ground as well, isn't it? To know that this will also inevitably happen as God's Word is sown.

Yes, it'll not take root in a lot of instances, but also, just as inevitably as that, when God's Word is sown, then for some it will take root and it will take root in your life if you listen to it and it will bear fruit.

But also, and this is the encouraging thing, especially at Easter time when we want God's Word to go out, we want God's Word to go out every month, but we've got opportunities this Easter with the Risen Christ musical to really invite our friends to tell them about Jesus while everybody's kind of celebrating Easter and we've got to remember when we do that and God's Word is sown, it will take root in the lives of others as we sow the seeds of God's Word in the lives of our friends and work colleagues.

Yes, a lot of it will fall on hard ground and a lot of it will be rejected and you'll be mocked for believing it and you might go, well, why bother? So many people reject this.

So many people don't believe it. Why bother sharing it? Well, because not all of them will. For some, it will take root. As it's taken root, I hope, in your life and it will produce greater yields than you ever thought possible.

[40 : 15] Let's hope that that's the case this month. Let's pray. Lord, we hear you.

We pray we do. Lord, help us to hear you. Whenever we hear this Word, help us to really hear it.

Help us to identify and remove the things that are perhaps keeping us deaf to your Word. And Lord, would you produce fruit in our lives?

Would you cause us to unblock our ears, to open our eyes, to really hear, to really see, and also to then take this Word and this truth to others, knowing that some of that seed will fall on good soil.

Give us encouragement and this month, Lord, would your Word go out? Would you, as the great sower, sow your seed? And through us, would you cause it to take root in our lives and in the lives of others?

[41 : 19] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.