

Listening for Profit

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[0 : 00] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's Word to you today.

A special welcome if you're new or visiting with us. We are glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community.

And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good, they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad, they can't have it, which is why we return week after week, Sunday after Sunday, to hear what God has to say to us in His Word.

We're continuing our series in the Gospel of Mark, and you'll remember that the Gospels tell the story of Jesus in His life, in His death, and His resurrection. And this week, we are continuing in Mark chapter 4.

We're going to be picking up in verse 21, continuing the theme of what we saw from last week. You'll remember we looked at the importance of hearing. Jesus told us about the four different types of soil that the seed fell on.

[1 : 10] This week, we're looking not at the importance of hearing, perhaps a subset of it, the urgency of hearing. Not just why you listen, although we will talk about that, but why do we listen now?

And we're going to see two reasons as we come to this passage. First, that there's a secret that is being revealed. And second, we listen because listening is fruitful.

We listen because there's a secret to be revealed, and also because listening is fruitful. And so with that, I invite you to turn with me to God's Word. You can turn in your Bible.

You can turn on your phone. You can turn in your worship guide. No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's Word. And God tells us that His Word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold.

And it is sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb. And so that's why we read now together Mark 4, starting at verse 21.

[2 : 10] And He said to them, Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket or under a bed and not on a stand? For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest, nor is anything secret except to come to light.

If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. Verse 24. And He said to them, Pay attention to what you hear. With the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. For to the one who has, more will be given. And from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's Word.

Our Father in Heaven, we come again asking you two simple things. We thank you.

First, that you've given us your Word. And we come admitting, second, that we need your help.

Unless your Spirit helps us this morning, we are dead on arrival.

[3 : 21] And so we ask simply for that, that you would use your Word in a powerful way among us this morning. That you would pour out your Holy Spirit. You would use it to challenge us.

You'd use it to encourage us. And you'd use it most of all to show us your Son and our Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you that we have confidence as we ask these things.

We know that you'll help because we ask them in the mighty name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. Amen. So both of my mom's parents have been dead for a long time.

But when they were alive and my grandmother was getting frustrated with my grandfather, she would tell him, I'm not going to talk to you anymore. And my grandfather, in classic form every time, would respond with this, is that a threat or is it a promise?

Now, I don't recommend saying that to your spouse. And the category of threat versus promise is not just a one-liner from my grandfather.

[4 : 33] It is also a helpful category for us as we understand secrets. In other words, there are two kinds of secrets in this world. There are secrets that are threats, and there are secrets that are promises.

There are secrets that shame. There are some that excite. There are secrets that you threaten people with. There are secrets that you promise to people.

There are secrets you use to blackmail someone. There are secrets that you use to draw them in. It's important for us to understand those two types of secrets as we come to this passage.

First of all, we have exciting secrets. These are secrets that are hidden with the purpose, the intent of being revealed. So I assume last month, you prepared some secrets for some people in your life. You bought them a Christmas gift, and you wrapped it so that it would be hidden. But it was meant as a secret to excite, right? There was a set time and day and hour when that secret was meant to be revealed.

[5 : 37] Same thing is true with the plots of new movies or TV shows or books. They are kept secret, right? Often by binding legal contracts so that they can be revealed on opening day.

If you follow Disney+, you know that we were told Boba Fett is coming on December 29th. The secret is kept now. Things are concealed and wrapped up. You can only guess what is to come and it will be revealed.

If you have ever written a will, you probably have not shown that to many people. And you know one day we will know who it is that you have blessed with your goods and who it's been withheld from.

There's a time that is set for the secret to be revealed. So we have secrets that are exciting. We also have shameful secrets.

Secrets that are meant to be hidden forever. These are the sort of secrets that you blackmail someone with. I'm probably going to butcher the pronunciation on this, but it's what's called the term from the Russian's Comprodat.

[6 : 44] You gather this dirt on someone who's a politician or a businessman. You know you have the folder that's necessary to blackmail them and to get them to do what you want to do.

It's just these two types of secrets in mind that we begin to understand what Jesus is telling us this morning here in this passage. Verse 21, he asks this rhetorical question. Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket or under a bed and not on a stand?

The answer is what? Of course not. That defeats the purpose of the lamp. The whole reason the lamp exists is to bring light.

And then he brings it home for us in verse 22. For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest, nor is anything secret except to come to light.

And so you can track with Jesus' logic here. The purpose of the lamp is to bring light. But the purpose of the secret is to be revealed. This is not a shameful secret.

[7 : 48] It is an exciting secret. It's a secret that was set at one time to be revealed one day when the day and the hour and the time was set. And so the point is this.

Jesus is telling them that he has come finally to bring new information and new revelation. Jesus is revealing here what has previously been hidden.

The secret that he's bringing is not trivia. It is treasure. The secret that he is bringing is not a shameful secret, but an exciting one. In other words, Jesus, as he's teaching here, is saying this. I have come to finally unwrap the Christmas present. I have finally come to turn on the lights in the room.

Will you show up for it? Will you pay attention? Will you be there when I take the wrapping paper off?

[8 : 47] Will you come when you know that I'm going to turn on the lights? The secret is being revealed, and it's going to be the greatest secret that has ever been made known.

I'm going to invite you for a second to look with me on page five of your worship guide, the same page that you have your sermon text on. We have a famous quote from a theologian named B.B. Warfield.

I won't read the whole quote for you, but he says this. The Old Testament may be likened to a chamber richly furnished but dimly lighted. There is this room that has wonderful things in it.

The problem is the light is so low you can't actually see what you're dealing with. Jesus here is telling them that he has come in his ministry to finally take the dimmer switch and push it all the way to the top.

The things that were unclear in the Old Testament are now going to be clear. The questions that were unanswered in the Old Testament are now going to be answered. The things that were confusing are now going to be clarified and cleared up.

[9 : 56] People in the Old Testament, and you might think even of Jesus' original audience here, are like folks who are waiting for the new season of a TV show. They know everything that's come before.

They know there are these two people who are interested in each other and may or may not end up together. They know there's a rivalry between two other characters, but they're not sure how it's going to resolve. And so they have all kinds of theories and hypotheses about how the show and the story is going to continue.

And yet it's not until the secret is revealed, it's not until the new season drops, that they have all their questions answered. Except it's even worse than that.

We are used to waiting maybe a year, maybe a few years to know what's going to happen in our favorite stories. The people in the Old Testament have been enduring 400 years of silence.

It has been 400 years since God's last revelation in the Old Testament until Jesus comes in the New Testament. And so there's been all sorts of guesses and predictions about how it is that the promises of the Old Testament are going to be fulfilled.

[11 : 05] Jesus then comes to finally and fully give the ultimate reveal. He comes to finally clarify what has been wondered at for centuries.

We had all these questions in the Old Testament, like how are we going to answer the question of both God's holiness and his love at the same time? How are we going to resolve the paradox of the temple, that God is both incredibly holy and can't be approached, and at the same time this temple, this tabernacle, exists within the center of his people, representing his presence with them?

If you think back to our series on Advent, those same questions appear. How is it that the head of the serpent is going to be crushed? How is it that shame is actually going to come to an end once and for all?

And how are we actually going to see a king who will rule over all the nations with a righteous rule? And Jesus finally comes to answer all of those things.

And this season doesn't play out the way they expected. He comes as the Son of God and a king who's also going to suffer and die.

[12 : 18] He comes as a king who's going to be born in a manger and ride in, not on a war horse but on a donkey. He's going to come and bring this kingdom that is upside down and unexpected. It is less than we want and more than we imagined.

It's a kingdom that comes not in strength but in weakness. It comes in victory that happens through death. It is what some refer to as an instrument of torture that's used as an instrument of redemption.

It's a kingdom in which the last are first and the first are last. It's a kingdom in which God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. It's a kingdom in which he reveals to the simple what he hides from the wise.

He comes to those who are outcasts on the margins of society and he brings them in as those who are close to him. And so as we come to this topic of listening, the point is this.

Jesus is now revealing the greatest secrets in the world and the universe. He is answering the most important questions ever asked.

[13 : 23] He is finally unwrapping what has been concealed and hidden for centuries. He is going to finally teach us and show us what it looks like to have this kind of king and how we live in his kingdom.

And so we respond coming to the words of God with great joy and anticipation and diligence because we know what is most important. The greatest secrets and the wisdom of the universe are being revealed.

That a child wiser than the wisest of men in an ultimate sense can be wiser than anyone else if they understand the secrets that God is revealing in his kingdom.

It is what the apostle Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1. These are things into which angels long to look. Unlike the people in the Old Testament, unlike Jesus' audience here, we have the last season. We have the finale. We know how the story ends. And so how much more clarity, motivation, excitement, momentum do we and should we have as we come to God's word?

[14:41] He is telling us and giving us the most important information possible. We listen because he is revealing the secret.

He is showing us what is most important and true and real. He has given us what has been hidden and is now revealed. It is with that background that we come to verse 23, which is a repetition of what we saw last week in verse 9.

If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. Now this is certainly not less than a repetition, but it is more than that because it expands the question here of why we listen.

Last week we saw the importance of listening. We saw the dangers to us that would pull us away from the path. Here we're told why it is that we would want to listen so carefully.

And the first reason is what we've just seen. The secret has been revealed. What do you do when the most important information is coming? What do you do when the new season of your favorite show has dropped?

[16:04] What do you do when your favorite author is releasing a new book? You buy the tickets early. You show up for the midnight showing. You dress up in the characters that you love so much.

You pre-order the book on Amazon so that you can be the first person to have a hard copy. You host a watch party. You quote your favorite lines and you watch it over and over.

Brothers and sisters, the same is true for us. We are here for the most important information that we could receive. Jesus has already given us the secret that beats every other secret.

How much more do we show up and listen carefully? Because there is nothing more important that we can hear.

Nor is anything secret except to come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. Jesus doesn't just give us one reason, though he gives us two.

[17:10] It's not just that this is a treasure, a secret that's been revealed. It also is something that is incredibly profitable. We move on to the world of investing here in verses 24 and 25.

Jesus tells us that the greater our investment, the greater our dividends and our growth. Look with me in verse 24. And he said to them, Pay attention to what you hear.

With the measure you use, it will be measured to you. And still more will be added to you. In other words, the more you listen, the more you'll grow.

And even more. And still will be more added to you, meaning there's going to be profits that are beyond your initial investment. There's going to be interest added. You're going to get more than you put in.

And the opposite is true. The less you listen, the faster you deteriorate. Verse 25.

[18:17] For to the one who has more, more will be given. And from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And so the concept here is very simple.

If you're familiar at all with money and investing, there is compound interest to your listening. And it moves in both directions.

There is compound interest to your listening. And it moves in both directions. Now I'm going to butcher this because it's a Japanese word.

But there's this idea called kaizen, which is the Japanese term for continuous improvement. They talk about the importance of getting 1% better every day. And so one person summarizes it in this way.

If you get 1% better each day, compounded is 38,000 better each year. 38,000 better each year. 1% worse each day, compounded means you lose 97% of your value each year.

[19:24] In other words, you're going to make it big or you're going to go bankrupt. Investing in money in this world is of some value.

In fact, in many ways, it's wise. Investing in God and His word is of even greater and more infinite value.

It provides even greater and better returns. It is more important than knowing which stocks to buy now to get rich. It is more important than knowing the right people.

It is more important than balancing your portfolio at the right time. There is nothing more important than coming and listening to the words that God has to say, and He promises a great return.

He promises a better reward than anyone else. There's a spiritual law here that Jesus is teaching us that we are either becoming stronger or weaker.

[20 : 30] It is difficult, if not impossible, to simply maintain our lives spiritually. We are either moving towards God or moving away from Him. We are either getting stronger or weaker.

There is a compound effect to all of this. And so this passage is telling us what is most important and urgent in this life. There is, brothers and sisters, no neutral ground.

You are either growing closer to God or you are drifting farther away from Him. Last week, I asked you the question, why are you here? This week, my question for you is this, where are you?

Are you growing closer to God as you listen to His word or are you drifting farther away? How are you listening?

Jesus could have finished with our passage last week, but He continues to drive this point home because it is so critical for us to understand. We understand it in our physical lives.

[21 : 41] It's just challenging to understand it in our spiritual lives. You know, especially as you age, that physical movement is a use it or lose it proposition. In other words, as is often said, movement is life.

One estimate says this, up to 65% of older adults who are independent in their ability to walk will lose their ability to walk during a hospital stay.

Loss of walking independence happens quickly. The less you move, the harder movement gets. The more you move, the easier it gets.

It's amazing what the body loses and how quickly it loses. We could say, he who has a body, let him move. How much more important to hear Jesus' words, he who has ears to hear, let him hear.

There's an urgency to what Jesus is telling us. We don't get to sit back from a neutral position and decide what we're going to do. Our ship is already moving in one direction or the other.

[22 : 46] And so the time for us to listen to what God has to say to us in his word is now. The time for us to hear God's words is right now.

Don't say, I don't have time to listen now, I'll listen later. That's the thorny soil that we talked about last week. Don't wait until there's a good time because you're either shrinking or growing.

This goes back to what we've talked about last week. This is not a priority that we juggle among many others. This is the priority, the keystone that takes precedent over anything.

and everything else. Last week, we saw the importance of listening. Here, Jesus reminds us, not just listen, but listen now. Listen before it is too late.

Indeed, no one knows the day or the hour of the end of their own life. We are far too optimistic when we think we can at some time listen later.

[23 : 54] And not only are we optimistic, but we are incredibly overconfident in who we are and our abilities. We are having this great confidence in our future self that somehow if we wait till later, we will still have the ability and the softness of heart to listen to what God has to say.

And yet, just as our bodies harden and shrink faster than we realize, so we overestimate or underestimate how quickly the human heart hardens.

We listen before it is too late. We listen while our hearts are soft, knowing human weakness and feebleness and frailty.

Movement is life. Listening spiritually is life. And so we do whatever we can to keep moving and listening.

We get a group, we find a team, we create a pattern and a habit. We make it a priority to be here with God's people in worship. We know that this knowledge of the kingdom is meant to be distributed and known.

[25 : 03] We want to be the person last week that we saw who stayed after to talk with Jesus and ask questions. We want to be the student who shows up to office hours knowing they're confused but wanting to clarify and grow.

Brothers and sisters, when the elders of this church call you to worship, echoing the call of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, they do so because they want you to have great profit.

They want you to flourish spiritually. They want you to have wonderful and amazing dividends. They want you to be rich. Come here and be with us.

Don't make our elders chase you down. Don't make them try to figure out where you are and where you've gone.

They want you to be rich. They want you to be rich. They want you to be incredibly wealthy. Now you might be wondering, where's the grace in all of this?

[26 : 17] I have given you this morning many serious warnings. To understand the grace, I want you to go back to the secrets of Christmas that are to be revealed.

I would hope that all of you in some way bought a gift for someone and I hope that all of you received a gift. You did not earn your Christmas presents in any way, at least I hope not. And you still had to show up to receive them. Our obedience to God, our listening does not earn anything from God in any way.

and it is the way that we show up to receive His gifts to us. Put another way, the fewer Christmases you come to, the less gifts you're going to have.

That's the measure given in proportion. And so in this world, we know that we must pay to play, right? In God's economy, there is no pay to play.

[27 : 41] You do not buy or purchase anything. It is purely a gift. That is part of the upside down nature of the kingdom. The word of God, in other words, the seed that is full of power is so powerful that all you have to do is be in its presence and listen for it to be at work in your life.

That is how rich and generous and good God is. He provides profits and interest and earnings simply to those who show up.

I can guarantee you that T. Rowe Price and Vanguard and TD Ameritrade have never offered that kind of deal and they never will. And brothers and sisters, our God does.

We come together on Sunday morning, not out of ritual or duty, but because we love God and long to know more of Him. We trust that the power of the word is so great as He is at work among us by His Spirit that when we show up, He is going to provide us with rich and great returns.

He is going to bless us with more than we could ever think or hope or imagine. And so we know the words that God has for us in Isaiah 55, come everyone who thirsts, come to the waters and He who has no money come buy and eat.

[29 : 06] Come buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

Listen diligently to me and eat what is good. And then in verse 3 it says this, incline your ear and come to me hear that your soul may live.

You know if you play blackjack you have the option of a double down. And if you play a double down you're going to double your bets which means you're either going to win big or you are going to lose big.

Jesus is telling us here our life is a double down spiritually. We are going to get it all or we are going to lose it all.

The difference between blackjack is this, the win is guaranteed. We are not making a bet. we know how and when and where to place our cards.

[30 : 27] The question is will we do it? Will we listen? Great things are being revealed and you have to listen attentively.

Great gifts are being given and you have to show up to receive them. Will you do it? will you listen? Mark chapter 4 verse 23 if anyone has ears to hear let him hear. Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven we thank you and praise you that all we have to do is come and listen and your word is at work. we pray for your word this morning that it would be at work in our lives stirring us up to greater love for you and service to you.

We thank you that you are a good and generous Father who gives your children wonderful gifts just for showing up. We ask these things in the mighty name of your Son and our Savior our Lord Jesus Christ.

[31 : 39] Amen.