

I want you to read the statement that's up on the screen...

For those who are listening to the recording, and can't see the statement, it says:

“There are 1,0 (10) types of people in the world: Those who understand binary, and those who don't.”

Put your hand up, if you 'get it'...

Would I be right in saying, “Those with a mathematical mind 'get it' / those with a computer mind 'get it'?” And to everybody else, it's just a nonsense...

With a bit more explanation, a few more might get it, but others still won't... Let's give it a go...

- *Our number system is what's known as “the decimal system”. Deci {meaning 10}, it is Base 10. We go through digits from 0 - 9, before we start back at 0 again, and put a 1 in front of it.*
- *Base 5, goes through digits 0 – 4 , before it puts a 1 in front of it. So, 1-0 would be the equivalent of the decimal system 5; 1-4 would be 9, 2-0 would be 10.*
- *Binary, is Base 2, and this essentially, is the mathematical ability of a computer – it's brain, is basically a series of switches – it can only think in 2 ways – on or off, 0 or 1.*
 - $1 = 1$
 - $1-0 = 2$

- $1-1 = 3$
- *What do you think would be number 4? $100 = 4$*
- *Therefore, to express the decimal number 10 as binary, it would be 1010*
- *I'm 49 years old this year. But in Binary, I'm very old 1,1,0, 0,0,1*

So, do you now get it?

“There are 1,0 (10) types of people in the world: Those who understand binary, and those who don't.”

Put your hand up if you get it now...

- *Some of you got it right at the beginning;*
- *When I explained it, maybe a few more of you caught up, and you now know what it's talking about;*
- *Some of you sort of know the point I'm **trying** to make, and that's enough for you, because you're not really interested;*
- *And some of you are starting to think, “Maybe I need to find another church – that crazy preacher just speaks in riddles...”*

Essentially, what I've just done, is I've divided us: Between those who are on the inside (those who get it), and those who are on the outside (those who don't get it)...

BTW, if you still don't get 'binary', it really doesn't matter – it's obviously not important for you... This little illustration is probably the first real use I've had for binary since I leaned about it Junior high school 1,0,0,1,0,0 years ago (36)...

Unless you're a mathematician, or a computer engineer or software engineer, it's not important for you to understand binary –

What **is** important for **us**, (and where there is another great divide) is for us to be able to 'get' the teachings of Jesus. It's to have a responsive spirit, to the word of God.... To understand, receive, and obey.

When I was going to Bible College, there was a real push on around that stage – “If you're preaching, you've got to use stories... People don't want to hear a sermon – they want to hear stories.” “People don't remember sermons, but they do remember stories”... And there's a fair bit of truth in that...

Essentially, what they were saying, is “Jesus used stories, because stories are the best way to communicate a message.”

And so **we** were being told, “Tell stories, because people will understand it better.” But you know what: Jesus told parables, for exactly the opposite reason. Jesus told parables, so that **some** people would 'get it', and everybody else wouldn't have a clue...

To His disciples, He said:

“To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables,¹² so that

“ they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand,

lest they should turn and be forgiven.' "

What's going on??? I'll tell you what's going on: Only those who are Spiritually Responsive to the Word of God, will understand, turn, and be forgiven...

And this is God's choice... Some people might be offended at this, because they're troubled by the concept of "God's divine choice"... But here, Mark doesn't explain it; He doesn't defend it – He merely records it, and accepts it as a given... It's God's divine choice, that some people 'get' it, and others do not...

And I rather see this as a positive...

Luke 11: ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

If in your heart, you **are** truly seeking God, He's not going to hide Himself... – If your heart, is spiritually responsive, the Word of God won't be a mystery – it comes alive... It's only those who are **not** truly seeking God, who'll be left in the dark...

What the parables do (you see), is they test the spiritual responsiveness of those who hear them.

The parables of Jesus, (as with any of the Word of God):

- have the power to save;
- the power to renew;
- the power to transform...

but only if our hearts respond...

And so, much more important than understanding binary, is having a heart, that seeks the word of God, and 'gets' the word of God... Because, whenever the word of God is preached, some people **will** 'get' it, and others won't. And that's what the Parable of the sower is about – it's about the spiritual responsiveness, of those who hear the Word of God...

Now, being an ex-farmer, I 'get' this parable, and some of you will too. In fact, this is probably my **favourite** parable...

BTW, Jesus didn't call it "the parable of the sower" – that's just how we know it. I reckon, a better title would've been "The Parable of the Soil types", because that's what it's about... And any farmer knows, just how critical good soil is, for cropping...

Now: Is this parable, about the initial response of being saved? Yes it is. But it's **also** about our ongoing spiritual responsiveness to the Word of God, because God continues to speak daily, into our lives... That's the beauty of parables – they reveal a spiritual principle, that applies to us, no matter how long we've been walking with God...

So:
The seed that is sown, is the word of God.

Now, farming practices have obviously changed a lot since 1st century Galilee... If I was to visit any of the irrigation farms in St George today, I'd probably find a lovely Maxemerge planter in the shed (or the equivalent). Equipment designed to put seed in nice straight rows, at an equal depth, with an accurate seed spacing between each seed...

Even our broadacre farmers are probably running parallelograms of some sort, so that they can plant at an even depth, fixed row spacings....

But there once was a time when sowing had to be done by hand, - exactly the way I fertilise my lawn today... You get a big hand full of seed and throw it out, and a practised hand can well control its dispersal so that it's evenly scattered across the ground. And it's mostly effective, but it's certainly not accurate.

And so the word of God, the good news of Jesus Christ, is planted out into the world (broadcast). And when the word of God is broadcast, some of it lands on a hard road.

*This time of year, is harvest time, and there's some grain trucks on the road... And this time of year, more than any other is when pink and grey feathers litter the radiators of country cars... And you **know** why: Those trucks sometimes spill a bit of grain on the road. Galahs flock to the roads and gorge themselves on any bit of grain they can find, and with a full belly, they don't get airborne so quick, and so they end up in the grill of your car.*

And some people, are like that hard road... When the word of God is preached, everyone gets to hear it. But for some people, it's just like water off a duck's back:

- They hear the word, but they don't hear it...
- They don't think on it
- they don't ask God for insight
- their hearts are dull; and
- they don't want to understand, and so they won't.

And I've seen this. When you start sharing with somebody, the mysteries of God, and you can see it in their eyes – they just glaze over... What's going on??? The word of God is seed being sown **onto** a hard road, and Satan's just snatching it away, before there's any chance of it taking root.

And so the first soil type – is a hard heart, that is closed off to God...

The second soil, is the stony ground. And the strange thing with stony ground, is sometimes you'll get a pretty good strike on stony ground. And some people find this hard to believe, but I've experienced it. A crop can sometimes come up faster in stony soil, than it does in good soil... But it doesn't last.

When a paddock is stony, there is less soil and more rock. When the rain falls on stony ground, the little bit of soil that is amongst the rock, actually gets wet quicker, because obviously rocks don't absorb much moisture. And so the same amount of rain, falls onto less soil, making what soil there is, all that much wetter. And the seed just seems to spring into life. It germinates quicker – it gets going, great guns.... But it

doesn't last. The hot sun beats down on it, and it withers. There's only a little bit of soil there. The plant can't get a root hold, and so it withers and dies.

And some people hear the word of God, and they **immediately receive it with joy** but their faith is short-lived... Why is it short-lived??? Because **tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.**

Now, is that the fault of the tribulation and persecution? No, it's not – Tribulation and persecution, are a normal part of Christian life... There is a cost to being a Disciple of Jesus. *In places like North Korea, Afghanistan; Somalia; Sudan; Pakistan; Eritrea; Libya... Christians are being targeted and murdered, for being disciples of Jesus.*

Now, in **our** land, we mightn't be getting killed for our faith in Jesus, (not yet anyway)... But if we publicly hold to the word of God, we'd better expect to be criticised; ridiculed; humiliated, and even targeted...

In recent years, Christians are becoming increasingly targeted for holding to the Word of God, especially on issues of sexuality and marriage – They've been taken-to-task under various anti-discrimination acts across the states...

In the Australian Newspaper only yesterday, there was this article:

Christians are being run out of business, hounded by boycotts and bullied by activists, for adhering to their faith, a year after the celebrated same-sex-marriage vote.

In a sign Australia faces a “crisis of freedom”, The Weekend Australian can reveal a successful international wedding magazine that chose not to feature gay couples will today announce its decision to shut down after becoming the target of an intimidation campaign.

The founders of White magazine, Christians Luke and Carla Burrell, said they were the targets of an activist campaign that deterred their advertisers, frightened their staff and included threats of physical harm because of their stand on same-sex weddings¹.

Basically, this Christian couple, made the decision that their magazine would continue to only present marriage as between a man and a woman... and so they were targeted by activists, who ran a campaign to try and stop people from advertising in the magazine... Their revenue dried up... End of the business...

Under Queensland's new abortion laws, if a woman asks a Christian doctor to kill her baby, that doctor is now legally obliged to either:

- *do it; or*
- *refer them to somebody who will...*

And if they don't refer them on, they break the law, and it becomes a matter of professional conduct...

Be under no illusion – there is a cost to being a disciple of Jesus, in Australia today... But only if we're serious in our response to God's word...

And those who **have no root in themselves** – those who's faith is shallow, as soon as the world comes against them, because of their faith in Jesus, they fold, and they quickly fall away...

And so the stony ground, are those who fall away from discipleship, when the pressure comes on.

BTW, once again, those who hold to the human teaching of "once saved always saved", are going to have a bit of trouble with this parable... , because Jesus is talking here about people who eagerly receive the gospel – they come to faith, but their faith is short-lived, and they fall away....ⁱⁱ

Righto: The next soil type:

Weeds. All farmers hate weeds. One of the most important crop management decisions, is weed control.

Crops do not compete very well with weeds:

- They're prolific seeders;
- Their seed is carried by the wind and animals and water; and
- so they pop up where you least expect them; and
- they're vigorous; and they choke out the crop.
- Their root system, is extensive; and
- they starve the crop of valuable water and nutrients.

Now, the crop will usually exist, but its yield can become negligible.

So, the 1st soil type – seed onto the hard road – that's those who don't even make a start in faith.

The 2nd soil type – the stony ground – that's those to respond to the gospel, , and they endure for a while, but then when they're confronted by persecution or tribulation because of their faith, they fall away – it's a short-lived faith...

The 3rd soil type (weeds), is discipleship that survives, but it's unproductive...

Listed here, are 3 things that choke out the word of God.

1. **cares of the world** ,
2. **deceitfulness of riches**, and
3. **desires for other things**.

Now, at this point, it's becoming pretty clear, that this parable **isn't** just about our initial response to the gospel, and it's not just about whether we're saved or not – it's about **fruitfulness**... Jesus' intent, is for His disciples, to be fruitful. We're not meant to just exist – we're meant to be fruitful. And so, this is about how we spiritually respond, to **all** of God's word...

You see, as disciples of Jesus, the Word of God, continually points us to focus on God and His Eternal Kingdom... Obedience to Jesus, means living for eternity... And it's only when we've got our eyes fixed on Jesus, and it's only when

we spiritually respond to the Word of God, that we'll continue to be fruitful... In fact, fruitfulness **is**, spiritually responding to the Word of God...

But things of the world, are always trying to distract us from that? You see, the world has its priorities (as temporary as they are), and the world thinks you're crazy for holding to God's, eternal priorities.... And we are so ingrained into this whole world system (that we call our culture), it's hard to break free of it... It's so easy to get distracted by it:

cares of the world (or NIV **the worries of this life**)

The **deceitfulness of riches** .

And **desires for other things**

All sorts of stuff compete for our attention...

They **enter in, and choke the word**...

These are external things, that we let in, and what's the result? They stifle our response to God's word... And we become unfruitful...

You see, Jesus calls us, as His disciples, to be radically **different** to the world, but here we are... Are we really that different? : when we let the desires of the world in,, they seem to tone-down our response to God, don't they.....

Now, here's a picture of good soil:

v20 **But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and **accept** it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."**

What sort of soil type we are, will determine how we spiritually respond to God's word, and therefore, how fruitful we are...

Now, here's the thing:

Jesus' parables, always call for a response. We could look at this and go "Well, I am what I am." "That's just how I am."

But at the end of this parable (V9), Jesus says: **"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."** Now, when Jesus says that, He's not talking about mere audio-processing... **It's a demand for a response... BE GOOD SOIL !!!** What he's saying is "Allow the word of God to be fruitful in your life"...

It's not just about recognising:

- how broken the world is;
- "how unfruitful I am"; or
- how worldly I am; or
- how faithless I am...
- This is a demand for a response "Allow the word of God to be fruitful in your life"...

Alright, Jesus is talking in parables, so some people don't get it... Why don't they get it? It's because something is making them impervious to the Word of God... But you know what??? That can change...

There is nobody so-far-gone, that they cannot turn their hearts towards God, and allow the word of God to become fruitful in their life...

Today is a message for us all:

- Some of us **might be** like the hard road, and when we start hearing the Gospel, our eyes have just glazed over, and it's been like water off a duck's back...

Well, God's word to you today, would be "soften your heart"... It's not by accident that you're hearing this today – It's time – it's time to allow the Word of God to take root in your life, [**Yes** – Your life] and you know it.

Remember: Only those who are Spiritually Responsive to the Word of God, will understand, turn, and be forgiven

- Some of us might be like the stony ground, and at some stage, some time ago, you heard the Gospel; You received the Gospel; and you were excited about this new journey you were on with Jesus, but then you copped it... You were persecuted because of your faith... You realised you were thought "less of", because you followed Jesus... You found it harder as a Christian, and so your faith only lasted a while... It ended up "just being a phase you went through"...

Well, God's word to you today, would be "Remember your first love"... "Return to what you did at first"... Let the joy of God's word, take root in your life again, and this time, have a bit of depth... Come into it with

your eyes wide-open, knowing that the life of a disciple of Jesus, isn't going to make you popular, and at times it's going to be jolly tough, but because you've got depth to your faith, you'll endure.

- Some of us might be like the thorny ground, and we believe in Jesus, but we get so easily distracted by everything that makes up the messiness of life:
 - home;
 - family;
 - friends;
 - television;
 - social media;
 - romance;
 - work;
 - business;
 - investments;
 - sports;
 - fitness;
 - hobbies;
 - studies;
 - accumulating a nest-egg;
 - career....

And you find that all of this stuff, hinders your response to God...

And God's word to you today, would be:

Fix your eyes on Jesus... Throw off everything else that's going to hinder you, and don't grow weary or fainthearted...

Be good soil...

V20 is the key here: **the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."**

Every one of us, has the potential, to be fruitful Christiansⁱⁱⁱ - when we keep our eyes fixed on Him.

We're going to continue on with this in a couple of weeks, when we're next together.

the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit

Being good soil, is being spiritually responsive to the word of God.

ⁱ <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/religious-freedom-lost-as-white-magazine-shuts/news-story/5c00c977426bd2228f4e0613b34524aa>

ⁱⁱ "Here the focus is not on sin but on apostasy under pressure. The occurrence of *σκανδαλίζομαι* in 14:27, 29 for the disciples' desertion of Jesus under pressure well illustrates the point, though in their case the desertion was temporary; Mark does not suggest that he is thinking here of only temporary failure."
France, R.T., 2002. *The Gospel of Mark: a commentary on the Greek text*, Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

ⁱⁱⁱ Fruitful Christians: Fruit of the Spirit; fruit of spreading the word; fruit of sharing Christ; but what did it mean for Isaiah: Isaiah 6:8 obedience. Fruit isn't necessarily achievement.