

Mark - the Responsibility of Hearing

by J. Glyn Owen

The sermon emphasizes the responsibility of hearing and the importance of heeding the word of God in order to reap profit and avoid loss.

Duration: 48:16

Scripture: Matthew 5:14-16, Matthew 13:12, Mark 4:21-25, Luke 8:4-15

Topics: "Responsibility"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the parable of the sower, the seed, and the soils. The main theme is the responsibility of listening to the word of God. The speaker emphasizes the purpose of Jesus' teaching ministry, which is to bring the word of God to light and not keep it hidden. The sermon also highlights the principle that the measure of profit or loss from Jesus' teaching depends on how well one hears and heeds the word. The importance of actively listening and obeying the word is emphasized throughout the sermon.

Transcript

May I indicate for the benefit of those who are visiting us this morning, and we're delighted to have you with us, that in our morning worship at the present time, we are studying the Gospel recorded by St. Mark. And we have come at this time to a passage that begins with verse 21 in chapter 4 and proceeds over to verse 25. We believe that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable.

And in an attempt to honor that principle, we believe that there is value in systematically going through the books of the Bible, all of them, if we had time. But we can't do that. We must choose.

And at any rate, what we can't do systematically in that way, we can preach the various doctrines and tenets and principles of the entire Scriptures. Well, at this point, we are going through the Gospel recorded by St. Mark. And I would like to read now, once again, this very wonderful passage, though I think we shall find it challenging.

Mark chapter 4, verses 21 to 25. And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed, and not to be set on a candlestick? For there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested. Neither was anything kept secret, but that it should come abroad.

If any man have years to hear, let him hear. And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear. With what measure ye meet, it shall be measured to you.

And unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given. And he that hath not, from him shall be taken, even that which he hath.

A lesson that was implicit in the parable of the sower of the seed and the soils is now being made explicit, I believe, by our Lord Jesus Christ. We have given the title to our message this morning, Hearing and Its Responsibility. That immediately links us with the theme of the last few Sunday mornings when we've been looking at the parable of the sower, the seed, and the soils.

We're still here in this area of listening to our Lord. If we can transport ourselves back into the environment of the Gospels, that's the setting. People listening, hearing, having the opportunity of hearing the Son of God declare the Word of God right here upon earth.

That carries with it inevitable responsibilities. Now, there are three main things I want us to look at in turn, and the first is this. First of all, I want us to look at the expressed purpose of our Lord's teaching ministry.

Now, this is obvious, but it needs to be said. Jesus brings it out here, and we need to see it. Can I read again? He said to them, Is a lamp brought in to be put under a bushel or under a bed and not on a stand? For there is nothing hid except to be made manifest, nor is anything secret except to come to light.

Now, the language may appear somewhat strange to us, but I think that what you will find we have here is this. Our Lord is telling us very clearly that the ultimate end of His teaching is that what He tells His disciples is to be proclaimed abroad. What He shares with men, men are to declare to others.

Let's say a word about the ultimate end of our Lord's ministry. He puts it like this. He puts it in terms of lighting a lamp and of so placing it that it has the best possible opportunity of letting its light shine in all quarters, in all directions.

Now, we're talking, you see, about the same word as was a subject in the parable of the last three Sunday mornings. The word of God which is capable of germinating in the soil of the human heart and bringing forth light life there is also a light kindling word. The word of God brought into this world, especially in our Lord Jesus, is a life and a light kindling word.

It brings light into the soul, even the light of life and of the knowledge of God. But what do you do with a light kindled life? Well, says Jesus, what do you do with a lamp? What do you do with a candle? You don't put it under a bushel. You don't dream of putting a candle under a bed if you're wise.

The thing is monstrous. You wouldn't do such a stupid thing as that if you've got a candle or a candelabra that has been lit. You're going to put it on a stand.

Every man and woman that has had the light of life by the word of God is meant to be in a position where he or she can shed the light abroad. I don't know whether any of you are as old as I am. Well, I guess some of you are.

But I remember as a boy going to a town and seeing the lamp lighters. Did you have them here in Canada? In some of our towns and cities in England when I was a boy and in Wales we used to have lamps, gas lamps. And toward the late afternoon just at dusk you would see the lamp lighter going with his

taper, his long pole and a taper at the end of it.

And he would light each single lamp one after the other. And it was quite a spectacle really, especially if the darkness had come a little earlier. And it was getting dark as the lights were being lit.

And you could see him going, moving from street to street. And as he went you could see the glow emerging. One lamp is lit here and another lamp is lit there until all the streets of the city or the town are illumined.

Now my friend, that is the purpose of the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was the reason he came and it was the reason he sent his disciples into the world to proclaim the gospel. Can I put it to you this morning? The purpose of this morning's service in the plan of God is this, that every man and woman, every fellow and girl gathered within the walls of Knox or anywhere else should be set alight by the Spirit and the Word of God.

And then that we should go back into the dark streets and alleys of human life and there shed abroad the light kindled in our own hearts. That's why Jesus could tell his disciples, you see, you, he said, are the lights of the world. And the Apostle Paul says exactly the same thing when he tells the Ephesians, you are light in the Lord.

And again he tells the Philippians, you shine as light in the world. It's a crooked, he says, a very perverse generation. It's very dark, writing to the Philippians.

But you shine as lights in the midst of the surrounding gloom and darkness. Now, at that point, Jesus proceeded to enlarge on that ultimate purpose of his ministry by showing that having first kindled the light in the souls of men, he was concerned that every illumined life should be in a position to shed forth the light he or she had. And that's the point of this picture.

You see, lamps are never lit to be placed under a bushel or under a bed. Why should he say that? Why should he use those metaphors? Why should he use that pictorial language? May I suggest to you, this is again a continuation of one of the themes we had in the parable of the seed and the sower. I believe that what Jesus has in mind is this.

He wanted to impress upon his hearers the truth, sometimes all too easily forgotten by the allegedly wise, that both commerce, the bushel, and comfort, the bed, can equally well result in the light failing to shine. A man may become so immersed in the things of time and sense, legitimate though they may be, we may become so absorbed in them and with them, it is as if a bushel has come down over our lives and the light we have simply, simply doesn't shine where it ought. But you know, the same thing can happen because of our love of ease and comfort.

Some of us, I don't know, you may be cross with me for saying this, but some of us are too downright lazy to let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven. We need not become so immersed in commerce and in the business of this world that we have no time to do it. We can simply enjoy our pleasures and just sleep our way through indolence into a life of inactivity that counts for naught.

Now, of course, let's be fair, scripture mentions other things that can equally hinder our showing forth and shedding forth the light which God gives his people. That doesn't come into my text this morning, but let me remind you, it's not only the bushel or the bed, there are other things. Moses and Jeremiah nearly

missed the boat because they were so very much aware of their own inadequacy.

Both of them suffered from a kind of inferiority complex and the question they asked the Lord when the Lord said, go shine, the question they asked was something like this, me, shine? Me, anybody else, Lord, says Moses, but not me and I can't talk and if I got to talk to Pharaoh, well, now that's the last straw. Sheer self-will and prejudice, national prejudice, it's an old, old weed that. Sheer self-will and national prejudice, well, I wrecked God's plan for the great prophet Jonah.

He was afraid that if he preached, God would be merciful upon the Gentile Nineveh and he didn't want them to be saved. The weed of nationalism strangled his soul and he says, Lord, I'm not going there. Until God got hold of him and threw him into the whale's belly and gave him a couple of days there.

And my friend, make no bones about it, God may put you and me in a whale's belly to teach us a lesson. Sometimes there are prejudices in our souls that take a very long time to be extricated, but because God is our God, he will do it. Now that's the ultimate end and this is where we have to start looking at this passage.

If God has given you light, my friend, it was not to be put under a bushel. It was not to be tucked away in a corner and put a cloak around you and say, I've got the light, I'm rejoicing in it. Isn't it wonderful? It's not that at all.

It's to be shared abroad. It's to be shared with others. We're to hold it forth.

We're to shove it forth. We're to shed it forth. Are you doing that? Am I doing that? Is that our task? But now, having seen that ultimate end, Jesus says something about an immediate purpose which is puzzling.

That being the ultimate end of our Lord's ministry, the immediate purpose of withholding truth from some people was a temporary necessity. Now, strange enough, no one has told me about this. I've been waiting somebody from Knox to tell me, look, Matt, there's something you've missed out in that parable of the sower, the seed, and the soils.

And not one of you have said that. You're a very gracious people. I expected some of you to say to me, look, you're doing exactly what the commentaries do.

You're saying the things we know, but the thing that's difficult and we want to know about, you've just deserted and you've jumped over it. And I have done just that to this point. There's something that I haven't touched upon.

And it is a very, very, very difficult part of the subject. Let me read to you words that came earlier in the chapter. I've left them to this point.

Verses 11 and 12. Did you notice that? Can you understand that? Is it an easy passage for you to understand? Now, the disciples, no less than ourselves, found these words most challenging, I believe, and difficult to understand, as we may well imagine. Now, Jesus at length, and this is the wonderful thing about the Bible, you know, give the writer's time, give the Holy Spirit his time, and he'll explain himself.

And our Lord is constantly like that. He will raise a problem. In answering one question, he will raise another problem.

In due course, you'll find he answers that one too. Jesus at length will expand the meaning of the truth, which will, in part at any rate, help to relieve the intellectual tension which his form of words have here. On the one hand, he says, my ultimate end is that the light should shine everywhere.

Nothing, no word, no truth is given to be held under a bushel. It's all to go out. On the other hand, he's keeping the truth under the bushel of parables from some.

Now, we shall return to that a little later on. Please exercise patience. We shall return to that just a little later on this morning.

At this moment, the thing I want you to notice is this. Let us simply notice now how in the passage before us, Jesus stresses again that ultimately, truth is to be imparted. There is nothing hidden except to be made manifest, nor is anything secret except it come to light.

I have told you that I'm speaking in parables to hide the truth from some people, but nevertheless, he says, don't let that hoodwink you. Ultimately, I want the truth to get out. It is as if he said something like this to them.

At present, there are truths which are secrets between you and myself. He tells his disciples that. And I'm literally hiding these truths from people who are listening to us.

There are reasons for that, but at the moment, I'm not going into it. He says, there are reasons. And I'm holding it back, and I'm speaking in parables in order that they should not understand.

But in due course, I shall tell you, go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, not only baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, but telling you, tell them everything that I've said to you. Now then, that's the first point I want us to get across. My friends, if the Lord Jesus has given you light, it's not to be hugged and kept under a bushel under your own roof within your own little circumstances and kept to yourself.

It's to be passed on. Give the gospel wings. The second thing I want us to notice in the passage is this.

A principle which determines whether and in what measure men reap profit or loss from our Savior's teaching. Now the Lord unfolds this all-important principle in two main strands of reasoning. We'll look at them in turn.

First of all, He talks about hearing and heeding. Hearing and heeding. Look at verses 23 and 24.

If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. Take heed what you hear. The measure you give will be the measure you get.

Hearing and heeding. Now, the implications of heeding the word of our Lord Jesus was, of course, indicated and spelt out for us in the parable of the sower, the seed and the soil. And I think we need to remember that lesson now as we come to this.

What does it mean to heed the word of God properly? That doesn't imply simply listening to it, but obeying it and letting it take its course in our lives and through our lives. What does it mean? Well, this. It means that we must be very careful, lest in reading the word of God alone in our own quiet times, or hearing the preaching of the word of God on the Lord's day or at any other time, we become like the pathway.

You remember some seed was sown there and it was so hard the seed didn't penetrate. And the birds of the air came and took it all away. Be careful, lest your life be like that.

Take heed what you hear. Be careful that what God says is received as the word of God. Again, take it further.

It means this, that you should be very careful, lest you simply give a momentary response to the word of God. You remember the seed that was sown, and it brought forth fruit immediately. But then after a while it withered away because the soil was only superficial, and there was a rock underneath that made it impossible for the little thing to bud, and there was no place for rootage.

To heed the word of God is this, it's to clear out the rocks from the depths of my life. Throw them out. Let the spirit of God break my soul, break my heart, break my stubborn will, break me, make me, mold me, so that the seed of the word can germinate and its roots go down to the depths.

One other thing. To heed the word of God means this, that I get rid of the weeds that are in the depths. Do you remember that? The seeds sown among weeds.

Of course they'd been cut down, but the roots were still there. And the seed was sown, and when the seed began to flourish, so did the weeds grow. But the weeds choked the word, and the word came to nothing.

Get rid of those weeds of the old life in your heart and in your nature and in your soul. Deal radically with them. Jesus says if your right hand offends you, pluck it off.

Jesus says if your right eye offends you, pluck it out. It is better for you to go to life, to heaven, maimed, than to be cast into hell with two eyes or two hands. Jesus said that, not me.

In other words, what I'm getting at, deal realistically with things. If there are things in your soul that throttle the word of God, get rid of them, man, get rid of them. Throw them out.

Heed the word. Heed what you hear. Him that has ears to hear, let him hear.

You and I know the danger, do we not, beloved? Do we not? Do we not? We know the danger of letting the word of God just tingle the tympanum of our physical ears, and yes, we hear the sound of voice or of noise, but the thing doesn't come through and the message doesn't touch us. That's what Jesus is saying. Let it come through, man.

Take heed what you hear. I will put it to you like this before I pass on. If God is speaking through His Son, if God is speaking His own word by the Spirit, then it behoves every man and every woman to be at attention and listening.

And it is an insult to the Almighty God if I am in any other attitude of soul before Him than fully attendant with every aspect of my being wide open as the windows of the soul towards Jerusalem, for God is speaking. See how you hear. Heed what you hear.

And how? Hearing and heeding. Now come to this other matter. Following out of that is this question of profit and loss.

You see, it's a terribly challenging thing. It's a terribly challenging thing that you can lose by hearing the word of God. You can lose rather than gain if you don't heed what God is saying.

Jesus says this. He said to them, take heed what you hear. The measure you give in terms of heeding will be the measure you get.

And still more will be given to you, that is if you heed properly. For to him who has, will more be given. And from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

Oh, this passage worried me for years. I couldn't see any sense in it, but I see it now. With these words our Lord clinches the principle that he has been enunciating.

Losing by hearing, how can that be? Not just losing. Jesus says it is possible even to suffer real loss. Now, let me at this point refer to that which we mentioned earlier on and I said I would come back to it.

Why did our Lord tell the disciples, look, ultimately everything I'm telling you is to be spread abroad. The glad tidings, everything I'm teaching you, you are to teach others. But in the meantime, in the meantime, there are some things I don't want these other people to hear.

Pharisees, scribes, critical people who've gathered around and they're listening and I'm speaking to you in parables to hide from them certain truths. I want you to get them, but I don't want them to get them. Why did he say that? Now, let me say a word here about the parables because I think they're commonly misunderstood.

At an earlier stage in his ministry, our Lord Jesus had used parables to illustrate truth and teaching. In teaching abstract truth as he sometimes did, he brought in a little picture, a little parable alongside of it in order to illustrate it, to make it clear as we would use a story or an illustration. He did that at an earlier stage in his ministry.

I'll give you an example of that. When he said the fields are already white unto harvest, but the workers are not many. Now, everybody knew what he said.

That was an illustration. That was a parable brought in in order to make the thing plainer and clearer. Come again.

Those who are well have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. You look at that in the context and you see that this just makes clear exactly what Jesus was teaching just then. And the parable, the parabolic metaphor or simile, it was employed by him to elucidate, to make the thing clear, to get it home so that people simply couldn't get away from the message.

The same again. Follow me and I will make you to become fishers of men. And there are many others.

But now, something's happened. Something's happened and the whole approach and the whole use of parable changes in Jesus' ministry. From this point on, he's using parables not to elucidate truth, but to hide the truth.

Not to open up the truth to everybody, but to hide it from some people. He wants the disciples to hear, but he says, I don't want them to hear. Other people.

Why? Well, the fact is, you see, that opposition by this time had crystallized into irrational and crazy hostility. Even a stubborn, senseless kind of hostility that refused to be argued with in any language whatsoever. You remember, for example, and I can't go into this in detail, you remember Mark tells us that the Pharisees and the Herodians had joined in a league together to get rid of our Lord Jesus, to kill him.

Now, if ever there was an illogical and irrational move, there it is. The Pharisees and the Herodians represent the two opposite poles in society, politically and otherwise. And yet these two are ready to forget all their differences, which are major, not minor, and they come together in a league for one thing, to get rid of this man that's teaching and healing.

Such an attitude is forcefully exemplified by the way in which a commission of Pharisees who had come up from Jerusalem to the north, the way they responded to what they saw and what they heard. I'm quoting from Mark 3.22. Do you remember what they said when they saw Jesus perform a miracle? They said, well, we can't deny the miracle at all, but the fact of the matter is this. He is performing the miracle because he is in touch with a prince of demons.

He is possessed of the eligible. And by the prince of demons, he casts out demons. Now, says Jesus, at that point, people have sinned against the Holy Spirit.

They're not sinning simply against me, he says, but they are calling that which is holy and which is evidently wrought of the Spirit of God, I by the finger of God am casting out demons. They have sinned against the Spirit. Now, he says, I cannot proclaim the word to them anymore.

They cannot have it. They must not have it. I will withhold it from them.

You can sin away the privilege of hearing. At this point, therefore, Jesus began again to teach his disciples. And because of the presence of the hostile crowd, he said, I will now speak to you in parables.

You'll have the key to the parable. You'll be able to understand, but not them. You know, it's for a similar reason.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was silent before King Herod. I may have referred to this before. Let me do so again.

Luke tells us in chapter 23 that when Herod saw Jesus at the trial at the end of our Lord's life, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him. So he questioned him at some length, and then this remarkable statement, that he made no answer. Jesus made no answer.

Jesus said nothing. Jesus was dumb to Herod. But Herod could set him free.

Herod could influence Pilate, and Herod and Pilate together could set him free. But Jesus wasn't interested in freedom. Why didn't he talk to Herod? I'll tell you.

Herod had heard the word of God through John the Baptist. Herod heard that man of God filled with the spirit from his mother's womb. And Herod slew John the Baptist because of the lust of his soul running riot within him.

And to a man who has not listened to the Baptist and to Moses, Jesus has nothing to say. My friend, you cannot play with the word of God. I may be speaking to a whole company of Christian men and women this morning, but I want to say it with all the passion of my soul.

I am more convinced of this than ever. There are withering saints in our churches, and they're withering and wilting and dying because they play with the word of God. You can't do it.

You can't do that. If this is the word of God, I've got to listen to it. And I've got to obey it.

And the more I obey and the more I listen, the more wonderful it becomes to me. Meat to my soul, light to my goings, honey to my spirit. This very same kind of thing happens, of course, on other planes.

I'm only saying this because I can imagine somebody saying to me, this is a strange thing to happen. It isn't strange at all. It's true to the entirety of life, this kind of principle.

If you don't use and employ the opportunity you've got intellectually, you'll become incapable of learning. If you just sit down quietly and don't use your mind, sooner or later your mind will not want to be used, and it'll get rusty. If you put your arm in a sling for a week or two, you good people, I've seen some of you recently with arms in slings.

Now you know what happens when you take the sling off, and it's only been resting for a week or so, the muscles don't move as once they did. And if you don't use your conscience as the word of God requires, you know, my friend, your conscience can become as dead and as silent as Jesus was before Herod. So spiritually, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Take heed what you hear. Take notice of it, says Jesus. Underline it, rub it, underscore it, and get it into your soul.

Take notice of it. See, so many of us read the scriptures and take no notice. And we pass on, we say, I've had my quiet time for today.

It's been so quiet, neither God nor devil knows anything about it. Now my time has gone, and I have to close, and I want to just bring the other side in. Jesus says to him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he hath.

That's something very solemn. But I want you to notice that there is also great gain to those who hear and heed. This to me is one of the great principles in the New Testament.

When a man or a woman gets a little glimmer of divine light and follows it, my friend, it's an amazing story, the story of the Bible. I'll give you two illustrations only if you can take these in the time that remains. To him who has will more be given.

That's the principle, verse 25. Now let me first give you the illustration of the Ethiopian eunuch. Do you remember him? In Acts chapter 8. Now I don't know how the work began, I can't tell you.

But there's a mystery, there is a mystery to the providence of God and to the grace of God. But this pagan man from Ethiopia, this pagan man from Ethiopia had some notion in his soul that was big enough to bring him to a point where he was going to abandon him. He abandoned his job and he was going to Jerusalem to a Jewish feast.

Now that took some doing, financially, time-wise and otherwise. And here he goes, you see, because something, something was dissatisfying. He was looking for something.

He obeyed the little bit of light he had. When he got to Jerusalem, I have no doubt that he asked many, many questions. I don't know how his questions were answered, but one thing I do know, somebody told him that the God of Abram and of Isaac, the God of the ancient people, the God of the Exodus, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ had spoken.

And that what he had spoken had been written into a book. And this dear chancellor of the exchequer went to a bookstall and he got hold of a piece of literature. Whether it was the whole or part of the book of the prophet Isaiah, I don't know, but he got it.

And what did he do? Did he pack it nicely to be put on a shelf when he went home? Don't you believe it? He was going to follow the light he had. If God has spoken and God has put his word in a book, then I must read it. Well, all right, man, but get home first and have a nice comfortable chair to sit in and take time, not on your life.

I must follow the gleam. And there he was in his chariot going through the Gaza desert. Now they had no pneumatic tires in those days.

It wasn't a very pleasant journey, but you see, the man was following the light and obeying the light he had. And he was reading and he was puzzled as he read. And evidently a cry went up to the throne of God.

Oh, God, what does this mean? If this is your word, if you have spoken, what does this mean? Who's this man, this prophet Isaiah talking about as somebody going as a lamb to the slaughter and bearing the sins of others? Suddenly God has taken the next move and he sends Philip from Samaria down to the very Gaza wilderness of desert. And here comes Philip alongside the chariot. And Philip's first question is this, sir, he said, saluting him, I believe.

Do you understand what you're reading? No, not on your life, man, says he. There's a puzzle here. Well, come up to the chariots of the man.

And Philip sits alongside of him and explains to him that the prophet was speaking about Jesus. And you see his heart opening and his mind illumined and the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ enters him and the man is saved and is baptized in the Gaza desert and goes on his way. You see the principle.

Obey the little light you have and God will give you more. The reason why many of us don't have more light is that we don't obey the light we have. Can I give you another one? I do so because I don't want you to think that this is just just one freak incident.

It isn't. Turn over the pages and come to Acts 10 and 11 and you come to Cornelius. Now, Cornelius was a Gentile, a centurion of the Italian cohort stationed there in the country.

And some light had come into his soul, too. Where did he get it from? I just don't know. And it doesn't, it doesn't, it isn't necessary for us to know.

But there was some light there and he was praying and he was praying to the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and of Jacob. He was praying to the one true God. And one day God came to him and spoke to him in a way that God doesn't necessarily speak to us today and said to him, look here, my dear man, your prayers are coming up before me all the time.

And he says, I've got to do something about it. Isn't it wonderful when God says that? And he sent an angel to him and he said, look, man, I've got one of my chiefest servants at this hour in history waiting for you. I want to give you his name and address.

His name is Simon Peter. And he's lodging in the house of a certain man in Joppa in such and such a place. You send your servants for him and he'll tell you everything you need to know to have the fullness of the light, which is the knowledge of myself and the salvation of your soul.

And what did Cornelius do? Did he start a little fad about angels? Did he start weaving a little theory or a theology about angels? You know, so many of us would do that. Others of us wouldn't recognize an angel if he stood before us. He heard the message.

He got the light. He obeyed. He got his servants and he sent them to Joppa.

And when they came to Joppa, they told Peter all about it. God had prepared Peter. Peter comes.

Peter expounds the word. He sees the glories of Jesus as the Messiah sending forth the Holy Spirit in all his glory and fullness. And as Peter is in full flight, the Spirit comes.

And Cornelius is transported into the kingdom and is born again and speaks with tongues. And it is evident that the man is born of God. You see the point to him that hath shall be given? It was only a little glimmer he had at first.

How small, I cannot tell you. But one thing I know, he followed the light. And God said, I can't leave this man in darkness.

If he takes the step and obeys the light I give him, I'll give him more until I give him all. This then is a principle fixed and eternal. The measure of a person's carefulness in hearing and heeding the word of God will determine the measure of his gain or of his loss.

May God give us grace rightly and at all times to respond to his incalculably precious word, to his glory. To our good and to the profits of those who still sit in darkness and in the shadow of eternal death. Let us pray.

Our Heavenly Father, forgive us, we humbly pray that we have not treasured this your word, incarnate or written, as we ought. And it is our common fault it doesn't belong to one group among us any more than another. It's a very general attitude of ours.

We like to talk about it. We like the hymns that enable us to sing about it. We even like to hear people preach about it.

But our Father, we are so slow to heed it. Preachers and people alike. Oh, forgive us if we have not obeyed the light that has been given and where we have not done so.

Give us, we pray, another chance. Come to us as you came of old to Jonah a second time, yea, a third and a fourth. And responding properly to your word, may we be able to share in the fullness of your blessing that we may declare the fullness of your word to all who sit in darkness.

Hear our cry and bring honor and glory to yourself through each of us and through all of us. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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