

Notes on the Greek New Testament Day 50 – February 19th – Mark 3:31-4:25

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Mark

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|-------------------|--|
| Cranfield, CEB | <i>The Gospel According to Mark</i> (Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary), CUP, Cambridge, 4 th ed. 1972 |
| France, RT | <i>The Gospel of Mark</i> (The New International Greek Testament Commentary), Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2002 |
| Guelich, Robert A | <i>Mark 1-8:26</i> (The Word Biblical Commentary, vol 34A), Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1989 |
| Lane, William L | <i>The Gospel of Mark</i> , Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1974 |
| Taylor, Vincent | <i>The Gospel According to St Mark</i> , Macmillan NT Commentaries, London, 1952 |

Verses 31-35

Cf. Mt. 12:46-50; Lk 8:19-21.
In Mark these verses complete the account begun in vv 20-21. "These verses also, however, bring back into view the 'Jesus circle' (literally κυκλω v. 34), whose chosen representatives have been introduced in vv 13-19, and who now surround Jesus in the house while the family stand outside... It is not so much a narrative as a tableau, enabling us to see graphically the contrast between insiders and outsiders. The focus is on Jesus' words in vv. 33-35, in which the element of dismissal of his natural family is balanced by the positive affirmation of a new 'family' of the true people of God... The contrast between insiders and outsiders is vividly depicted by the spacial imagery of the scene. The members of Jesus' family are έξω στηκοντες (v. 31), and are again described as έξω in v. 32, while the crowd of supporters έκαθητο περι αυτον (v. 32) and are again depicted as περι αυτον κυκλω καθημενους in v. 34. Each of these phrases will be picked up in the subsequent pericope in which the insider/outsider contrast is brought to the centre of attention, οι περι αυτον to denote the privileged recipients of revelation, and οι έξω those to whom it is not given (4:10-11)." France.

Verse 31

Και έρχονται ή μήτηρ αυτού και οι άδελφοί αυτού και έξω στήκοντες απέστειλαν προς αυτον καλοϋντες αυτον.

έξω adv. out, outside, away
στήκοντες Verb, perf act ptc, m nom pl
ίστημι stand, stop
άποστειλλω send, send out

Cranfield says that the absence of mention of Joseph suggests that he was probably dead.

Verse 32

και εκάθητο περι αυτον όχλος, και λέγουσιν αυτω· Ιδου ή μήτηρ σου και οι άδελφοί σου έξω ζητουσιν σε.

καθημαι sit, sit down, live
όχλος, ου m crowd, multitude
άδελφη, ης f sister, female believer

Cranfield suggests that "και άδελφαι σου should probably be omitted with κ B C W Θ f¹ f¹³ vg ... Perhaps as an assimilation to v.35 or 6:3." Metzger also agrees, stating, "From a historical point of view, it is extremely unlikely that Jesus' sisters would have joined in publicly seeking to check him in his ministry."

ζητεω seek, search for, look for
σε Pronoun, acc s ου

Verse 33

και άποκριθεις αυτοις λέγει· Τίς έστιν ή μήτηρ μου ή οι άδελφοί μου;

άποκριθεις Verb, aor pass dep ptc, m nom s
άποκρινομαι answer, reply, say

"This construction [άποκρθεις λεγει] occurs for the first time in Mk here. It is due to Semitic usage either directly or as reflected in the LXX." Cranfield.

The words of Jesus in this verse seem an implied criticism of his own family – an awareness of their unbelief. Taylor uses this to cast doubt on the historicity of the Virgin Birth. Cranfield responds by saying that the Virgin Birth is "a pointer to *his* uniqueness, but does not mean that she [Mary] was not a sinner. We have no grounds for expecting it to have made her for the rest of her life exempt from the possibility of unbelief."

Verse 34

καὶ περιβλεψάμενος τοὺς περὶ αὐτὸν κύκλω
καθημένους λέγει· Ἴδε ἡ μήτηρ μου καὶ οἱ
ἀδελφοί μου·

περιβλεπομαι look around
κύκλω adv in a circle, round about

Verse 35

ὃς γὰρ ἂν ποιήσῃ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, οὗτος
ἀδελφός μου καὶ ἀδελφή καὶ μήτηρ ἐστίν.

ὃς ἂν see v.29
θελημα, ατος n will, wish, desire

"Obedience to God rather than physical relationship binds men close to Jesus." Cranfield. The 'will of God' spoken of here is linked by France to "Jesus' proclamation of the coming of the kingdom of God, with its consequent call to repentance and belief of the εὐαγγελιον (1:14-15), which is the only general injunction of Jesus which Mark has so far recorded. It is that call which both scribes and family have, in their different ways, rejected, and in so doing have put themselves outside το θελημα του θεου." Calvin says that Christ "admits all His disciples and all believers to the same honourable rank, as if they were His nearest relatives, or rather He places them in the room of His mother and brethren."

Mark 4:1-9

Cf Mt 13:1-9; Lk 8:4-8.

France writes concerning this section of Jesus' teaching in 4:1-34, "The βασιλεια του θεου, which was announced with such fanfare in 1:14-15 but has not been mentioned directly since, now comes back into focus... This is, therefore, a discourse about God's kingship, and it aims to explain the paradoxical fact that a proclamation of such ultimate importance can be ignored or even opposed by some who hear it. It reveals a fundamental clash between divine and human values, and the necessity of a more-than-human insight if the purpose of God is to be understood and welcomed."

Verse 1

Καὶ πάλιν ἤρξατο διδάσκειν παρὰ τὴν
θάλασσαν. καὶ συναγεται πρὸς αὐτὸν ὄχλος
πλεῖστος, ὥστε αὐτὸν εἰς πλοῖον ἐμβάντα
καθησθαι ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ, καὶ πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος πρὸς
τὴν θάλασσαν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἦσαν.

παλιν again, once more

Cf. 2:13.

ἀρχω midd begin
συναγω gather, assemble
πλειστος, η, ον (superl. of πολυς) large
ὥστε so that, with the result that

πλοιον, ου n boat, ship
ἐμβάντα Verb, aor act ptc, m acc s ἐμβαινω
get into, embark

Sitting was the normal posture for teaching.

Verse 2

καὶ ἐδίδασκεν αὐτοὺς ἐν παραβολαῖς πολλά,
καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ αὐτοῦ·

Cranfield says that "The key to an understanding of παραβολη in the Synoptic Gospels is the use of the Hebrew word *masal* in the OT (together with its Aramaic equivalent *m'tal, matla*) in Rabbinic literature... The *masal* covers a wide range of meanings including the ethical maxim, the short sentence of popular wisdom, proverbs generally, by-word, taunt-song, oracle, riddle, comparison, allegory, fable, in addition to what is meant by 'parable' in the strict sense." France comments, "παραβολη is perhaps best defined negatively as the opposite of prosaic, propositional speech. It is speech whose meaning does not lie on the surface, but demands enquiry and insight, so that the degree of communication which it achieves will depend on the extent to which the hearer shares the background of thought and the values of the speaker."

France quotes with commendation the following from C. F. D. Moule, "A parable is like a modern political cartoon. A good cartoon presents an interpretative analogy, and it is for the viewer to work out its meaning, first by understanding it, then by reacting to it critically and, finally, by taking action accordingly. If the viewer is half-witted or stupid or so shallow as to be virtually incapable of being educated, no doubt he will see nothing but the mere picture, and he will not get further than saying that he likes it or dislikes it. But anyone with a grain of intelligence will respond in one way or another. He will say 'Yes, of course that is exactly what is happening. I hadn't seen it so clearly before, but now I know I mustn't vote Conservative [or whatever it may be] again'. Or perhaps he will say, 'Yes, I see what the cartoonist is getting at, but I don't think his interpretation is fair. He is being cruel to X, who isn't really doing what the hog in the picture is doing.' The moment the viewer is responding in one way or another, he and the cartoonist have entered into a partnership in creating something; education is proceeding."

διδαχη, ης f teaching, what is taught

Verse 3

Ἀκούετε. ἰδοὺ ἐξῆλθεν ὁ σπείρων σπείραι.

"The fact that the following parable is both introduced and concluded by an appeal to hear marks it out as specially important." Cranfield. France points out that 'hearing' is a key theme in this discourse (cf. vv 9, 12, 15, 16, 18, 20, 23, 24).

σπειρω sow

Verse 4

καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ σπείρειν ὃ μὲν ἔπεσεν παρὰ τὴν ὁδόν, καὶ ἦλθεν τὰ πετεινὰ καὶ κατέφαγεν αὐτό.

ἐγένετο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s γινομαι
ἔπεσεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s πιπτω fall
ὁδος, ου f way, path, road, journey
πετεινον, ου n bird
κατέφαγεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s κατεσθω
eat up, devour

Seed was normally ploughed in after sowing. Seed which fell at the edge of the field would not have been ploughed in and would be vulnerable.

Verse 5

καὶ ἄλλο ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὸ πετρῶδες ὅπου οὐκ εἶχεν γῆν πολλήν, καὶ εὐθὺς ἐξανέτειλεν διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν βάθος γῆς.

ἄλλος, η, ο another, other
πετρῶδες, ους n rocky ground
ὅπου adv. where
εἶχεν Verb, imperf act indic, 3 s ἔχω
γῆ, γης f earth
ἐξανέτειλεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s
ἐξανατελλω sprout, spring up
βαθος, ους n depth, greatness

"Verse 5b appears to suggest that the lack of soil actually causes seed sown in such a place to grow up more quickly, but this makes little agricultural sense. The focus is rather on the contrast between impressive upward growth and inadequate roots, resulting in initial success and subsequent failure." France.

Verse 6

καὶ ὅτε ἀνέτειλεν ὁ ἥλιος ἐκαυματίσθη καὶ διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν ρίζαν ἐξηράνθη.

ὅτε conj when, at which time
ἀνέτειλεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s ἀνατελλω
rise, dawn, shine
ἥλιος, ου m the sun
ἐκαυματίσθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s
καυματιζω scorch, burn
ρίζα, ης f root
ἐξηράνθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s ξηρανω
dry up; pass wither

Verse 7

καὶ ἄλλο ἔπεσεν εἰς τὰς ἀκάνθας, καὶ ἀνέβησαν αἱ ἄκανθαι καὶ συνέπνιξαν αὐτό, καὶ καρπὸν οὐκ ἔδωκεν.

ἀκανθα, ης f thorn-plant
ἀναβαινω go up, come up
συμπνιγω choke
καρπος, ου m fruit, grain, harvest
ἔδωκεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s διδομι

καρπον οὐκ ἔδωκεν A Semitism.

"There has ... been a progression in the three failed seeds, which is probably intended to be noticed in drawing out the symbolism: the first never started, the second started but died, the third survived but could not produce grain. But in the end none is of any value to the farmer, since he is looking for grain, not mere survival." France.

Verse 8

καὶ ἄλλα ἔπεσεν εἰς τὴν γῆν τὴν καλήν, καὶ ἐδίδου καρπὸν ἀναβαίνοντα καὶ αὐξανόμενα, καὶ ἔφερον ἐν τριάκοντα καὶ ἐν ἐξήκοντα καὶ ἐν ἑκατόν.

The plural ἄλλα now directs attention to individual seeds.

καλος, η, ον good, proper, fine
ἐδίδου Verb, imperf act indic, 3 s διδομι
αὐξανω and αὐξω grow, spread, increase,
reach full growth
φερω bring, carry, bear, lead
εἰς, μια, ἐν gen ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one
τριακοντα thirty
ἐξηκοντα sixty
ἑκατον one hundred

"By carefully depicting the state of *six* seeds Mark has effectively ruled out any notion that those who fail are in a majority. Rather here, by contrast with the three types of failure, are three further seeds which represent what should be the norm. The contrast is marked even by the way the sentence is constructed: the fate of each of the preceding seeds was described in the aorist, and in terms of what was done to it (eaten by birds, scorched by sun, choked by weeds) or what it failed to achieve (καρπον οὐκ ἔδωκεν); but the seeds which fell in the good ground are the subject of an active sentence, with imperfect verbs (ἐδίδου, ἔφερον) filled out by two present participles denoting continuous growth (ἀναβαίνοντα καὶ αὐξανόμενα ...)... The yield of the seeds in good ground represents what a farmer might reasonably hope for in a very good year." France.

Verse 9

καὶ ἔλεγεν· Ὅς ἔχει ὄτα ἀκούειν ἀκούετω.
οὓς, ὠτος n ear, hearing

Cf. v.3. "The feature which is emphasised is the fact of differences of soil. This is the point at which the hearers are challenged to take action: they are summoned to ask themselves which sort of ground they are. The parable indicates the situation of the hearers in the face of the message of the kingdom of God and challenges them to hear the message aright. It is a parable about the hearing of the Word of God." Cranfield.

Verses 10-12

Cf. Mt 13:10-15; Lk 8:9f.

"The sandwiching of these verses (which deal with parables in general) between the parable of the sower and its interpretation undoubtedly indicates Mark's belief that each throws light on the other." France.

Verse 10

Καὶ ὅτε ἐγένετο κατὰ μόνας, ἠρώτων αὐτὸν οἱ περὶ αὐτὸν σὺν τοῖς δώδεκα τὰς παραβολάς.

ὅτε conj when, at which time
μονος, η, ον adj only, alone; κατα μονας
alone

ἔρωταω ask, request, beg, urge

France suggests that the imperfect may imply "not simply a single enquiry, but a regular pattern of response to Jesus' parables on the part of οἱ περὶ αὐτὸν σὺν τοῖς δώδεκα. The related general summary in vv. 33-34 will also use imperfect tenses throughout."

δώδεκα twelve

"The neat distinction between those in the boat and those on the shore is ... deliberately blurred, and the circle of privileged revelation (v. 11) is drawn more widely than the now closed group of the Twelve... Among the large crowd there were some, and only some, who were sufficiently interested in what they had heard to join the Twelve in demanding further elucidation, while others went away having heard nothing but παραβολαι. On the principle to be enunciated in v. 25, to those who had this degree of curiosity, more would be given, but those who lacked it would lose any benefit they might have gained from hearing the παραβολαι. The gift of special revelation (v. 11) is thus not restricted to a predetermined circle of favoured followers into which no one else is allowed access, but is offered to those who ask for it. The group of those περὶ αὐτοῦ is self-selected rather than predestined." France.

Verse 11

καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς· Ὑμῖν τὸ μυστήριον δέδοται τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ· ἐκεῖνοις δὲ τοῖς ἔξω ἐν παραβολαῖς τὰ πάντα γίνεται,

μυστηριον, ου n secret, mystery

"In the Pauline Epistles the word is used to denote, not something that must not be divulged to the uninitiated, but something that could not be known by men except by divine revelation but that, though once hidden, has now been revealed in Christ and is to be proclaimed so that all who have ears may hear it; and behind Paul's use of it and also its use here we may recognise the O.T. idea of God's *sod* or 'secret' (e.g. Amos 3:7; Ps 25:14; Prov 3:32; Job 15:8)... Here ... it is the secret that the kingdom of God has come in the person and words and works of Jesus. That is a secret because God has chosen to reveal himself indirectly and in a veiled way. The incarnate Word is not obvious. Only faith could recognise the Son of God in the lowly figure of Jesus of Nazareth. The secret of the Kingdom of God is the secret of the person of Jesus." Cranfield.

France argues that "the true sense of μυστηριον is better captured by the English 'secret', which denotes not incomprehensibility but hiddenness. A secret is that which is not divulged – but when known it need not be hard to grasp. It is privileged information rather than a puzzle."

δέδοται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s δίδωμι

by God.

ἐκεῖνος, η, ο demonstrative adj. that, those
ἔξω adv. outside; ὁ ἔξω outsider,
unbeliever

The sense is that to those 'outside' (the kingdom) all things are obscure. France comments, "It is probably misleading to pose the exegetical question of this verse in terms of the intention of parables either to reveal or to conceal, to attract or to repel potential adherents. The parable of the sower, which surrounds this brief pericope, suggests a different understanding. The intention of the sower is to produce a crop, but whether or not this is achieved depends not on a change in his intention, but on the condition of the soil into which the seed falls. The same seed produces contrasting results. So it is with parables. The same parable produces enlightenment in one and no response in another; the result is appropriate to the condition of the hearer (and that is why 'how you hear' is so central to the theme of the chapter... Thus the same parable which to some brings an understanding of the secret of God's kingship will leave others cold. They are the ones who remain ἔξω, and for them there is nothing but parable."

Verse 12

ἵνα βλέποντες βλέπωσι καὶ μὴ ἴδωσιν, καὶ ἀκούοντες ἀκούωσι καὶ μὴ συνιῶσιν, μήποτε ἐπιστρέψωσιν καὶ ἀφεθῆ ἑαυτοῖς.

Cf. Isa 6:9f. "If ... the *ἵνα* is given its proper final force, its significance is that the fact that the secret of the kingdom of God, in accordance with O.T. prophecy, remains hidden from many is something that is within the purpose of God." Cranfield. France suggests that one of the ways of viewing *ἵνα* is "that while the lexical meaning indicates purpose, this is to be understood within the context of Semitic thought which tends to suppress second causes, so that human decisions are attributed to the overriding providence of God. This ... observation, while in no way removing the normal force of the conjunction, does help us to set it in the appropriate theological context. The ultimate outcome falls within the overall purpose of God, and, as Is 6:9-10 reminds us, this can embrace the rejection as well as the acceptance of the prophet's message."

France adds, "A sensitive discussion of this passage for Bible translators by B. Hollenbach concludes that both Is 6:9-10 and, derivatively, Mk 4:12 are to be understood as ironical, and proposes the following translation for the latter: '... so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand; because the last thing they want is to turn and have their sins forgiven!' In this rendering the exclamation mark is the crucial element; without it, the irony remains invisible on the printed page." Peterson's *The Message* has a similar translation. Linking this with the parable of the sower, France comments, "Whereas the Isaiah passage gives no clear indication that there will be *any* response, the parable of the sower balances bad soil with good, and v. 11 envisages responsive 'insiders' as well as 'outsiders'. The difference depends on how they hear (or, in the terms of the parable, what sort of soil they are), and parables are a uniquely effective way to bring out that difference."

βλέπω see, look

ἴδωσιν Verb, aor act subj, 3 pl ὄραω see, observe, perceive, recognise

συνιημι and συνιω understand, comprehend

μήποτε i) conj. lest, otherwise; ii) interrog. particle whether perhaps, perhaps

ἐπιστρέφω turn back, return, turn round

ἀφεθῆ Verb, aor pass subj, 3 s ἀφιημι cancel, forgive

It is worth including here an extensive quotation from Cranfield, who says, "God's kingly intervention in the person, works and words of Jesus is a secret (μυστηριον) in the sense that it can only be recognised by God-given faith (δεδοται). This secret of the kingdom of God is the secret of Jesus' Messiahship and the secret of his divine Sonship. God's self-revelation is indirect and veiled. (While the eye of faith sees through the veil and grasps the secret, for the unbeliever, so long as he remains an unbeliever, the veil is unpenetrated, and everything is still simply ἐν παραβολαῖς.) No outwardly compelling evidence of divine glory illumines the ministry of Jesus. It is a necessary part of the gracious self-abasement of the Incarnation that the Son of God should submit to conditions under which his claim to authority cannot but appear altogether problematic and paradoxical. In the last hours of his life his incognito deepens until in the helplessness, nakedness and agony of the Cross, abandoned by God and man, he becomes the absolute antithesis of everything the world understands by divinity and by kingship. But this veiledness is not simply designed to prevent men from recognising the

truth. God's self-revelation is truly revelation; it is precisely *veiled revelation*. Throughout the ministry we can see these two motives (revealing and veiling) at work. On the one hand, Jesus gathers the crowds around him and teaches them, sends out the Twelve to preach, and reveals the power and compassion of God by his miracles. God's self-revelation is not to be accomplished in a corner. On the other hand, Jesus teaches the crowd indirectly by means of parables, seeks to conceal his miracles, and forbids the demoniacs to declare his identity. The two motives, both of which are necessary to the divine purpose, are constantly in tension – a fact which explains some apparent inconsistencies (e.g. between the command ἐγειρε εἰς το μέσον in 3:3 and the frequent injunctions to silence).

"By this veiled revelation men are placed in a situation of crisis, a separation between faith and unbelief is brought about, and the blindness and sinfulness of men are shown up for what they are. That this judgement (cf. Jn 9:39) is part of the divine purpose is indicated by the ἵνα in v.12; but it is not the whole purpose of God. His ultimate purpose is salvation, and the latter part of v.12 (μηποτε ἐπιστρεψωσιν και ἀφεθη αὐτοῖς) is perhaps to be interpreted, as was suggested above, as hinting at this. God's self-revelation is veiled, in order that men may be left sufficient room in which to make a personal decision. A real turning to God or repentance (ἐπιστρεφειν) is made possible by the inward divine enabling of the Holy Spirit (δεδοται), but would be rendered impossible by the external compulsion of a manifestation of the unveiled divine majesty."

Verses 13-20

Cf. Mt 13:18-23; Lk 8:11-15.

Verse 13

Καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· Οὐκ οἶδατε τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην, καὶ πῶς πάσας τὰς παραβολὰς γνόσεσθε;

οἶδα know, understand

γνώσεσθε Verb, fut midd dep indic, 2 pl
γινωσκω

This parable "is the key to all the rest, the parable about parables." France.

Verse 14

ὁ σπεῖρων τὸν λόγον σπεῖρει.

σπειρω SOW

"In its historical context ὁ λογος refers to the teaching which Jesus has been giving in Galilee (in the proclamation of which his disciples are themselves soon to share, 3:14), beginning with the εὐαγγελιον of 1:15 and climaxing in the ἐν παραβολαῖς πολλὰ of v. 2. It is the varying response to this proclamation which has been the focus of interest in chapters 2-3, and of which this discourse offers an explanation." France.

Verse 15

οὗτοι δὲ εἰσιν οἱ παρὰ τὴν ὁδὸν ὅπου σπείρεται ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὅταν ἀκούσωσιν εὐθὺς ἔρχεται ὁ Σατανᾶς καὶ αἶρει τὸν λόγον τὸν ἐσπαρμένον εἰς αὐτούς.

Cf. v.4

ὅπου adv. where

ὅταν when, whenever, as often as

Σατανας, a the Adversary, Satan

αἶρω take, take up, take away

ἐσπαρμένον Verb, perf pass ptc, m acc & n
nom/acc s σπειρω

"We would say, 'In one ear and out the other,' or, 'like water off a duck's back.' Some people politely listen to the gospel but as hearers only. The gospel is not precious to them, for their hearts are as hard as the footpath along the grainfield." Kistemaker, *The Parables of Jesus*.

Verse 16

καὶ οὗτοι εἰσιν ὁμοίως οἱ ἐπὶ τὰ πετρώδη σπειρόμενοι, οἳ ὅταν ἀκούσωσιν τὸν λόγον εὐθὺς μετὰ χαρᾶς λαμβάνουσιν αὐτόν,

Cf. v.5

χαρα, ας f joy, gladness

Verse 17

καὶ οὐκ ἔχουσιν ρίζαν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἀλλὰ πρόσκαιροί εἰσιν, εἴτα γενομένης θλίψεως ἢ διωγμοῦ διὰ τὸν λόγον εὐθὺς σκανδαλίζονται.

ρίζα, ης f see v.6

πρόσκαιρος, ον temporary, not lasting

Not found elsewhere in the Synoptic Gospels (apart from the parallel in Matt 13:21 it occurs elsewhere in the NT only in 2 Cor 4:18 and Heb 11:25).

εἴτα adv. then, and then

θλιψις, εως f trouble, suffering

ἢ or

διωγμος, ου m persecution

σκανδαλιζω cause (someone) to sin, cause (someone) to give up the faith

"σκανδαλιζω which will occur prominently in 9:42-47, is often translated as 'cause to sin', but is in fact used more generally for anything which 'catches people out' or 'trips' them so as to render their discipleship ineffective. Here the focus is not on sin but on apostasy under pressure." France.

Verse 18

καὶ ἄλλοι εἰσὶν οἱ εἰς τὰς ἀκάνθας
σπειρόμενοι· οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ τὸν λόγον
ἀκούσαντες,

Cf. v.7

Verse 19

καὶ αἱ μέριμναί τοῦ αἰῶνος καὶ ἡ ἀπάτη τοῦ
πλούτου καὶ αἱ περὶ τὰ λοιπὰ ἐπιθυμίαι
εἰσπορευόμεναι συμπνίγουσιν τὸν λόγον, καὶ
ἄκαρπος γίνεται.

μεριμνα, ης f care, concern, anxiety
αἰων, αἰωνος m age, world order
ἀπατη, ης f deception
πλουτος, ου m & n riches, wealth
λοιπος, η, ον rest, remaining, other
ἐπιθυμια, ας f desire, longing, passion

"In this scene ... the threat to effective discipleship comes not from external pressure but from the disciple's own divided loyalty." France.

σμπνιγω see v.7

ἀκαρπος, ον barren, unfruitful

"Neither here nor in v. 20 is there any attempt to spell out what sort of καρπος is expected, or how it is to be recognised. Since, however, fruitful discipleship is contrasted with the material concerns listed at the beginning of v. 19, it may reasonably be assumed that fruitfulness involves conformity to the principles of the kingdom of God, with its opposition to such 'worldly' values." France.

Verse 20

καὶ ἐκεῖνοί εἰσιν οἱ ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν τὴν καλὴν
σπαρέντες, οἵτινες ἀκούουσιν τὸν λόγον καὶ
παραδέχονται καὶ καρποφοροῦσιν ἐν
τριάκοντα καὶ ἐν ἐξήκοντα καὶ ἐν ἑκατόν.

Cf. v.8

σπαρέντες Verb, aor act ptc, m nom pl
σπειρω

οἵτινες Pronoun, m nom pl ὅστις, ἡτις, ὁ τι
who, which

παραδεχομαι accept, receive, welcome

"Perhaps rather stronger than λαμβανειν, used in v.16. Those who are good soil welcome the message and, instead of keeping it on the surface, allow it right into their hearts and lives." Cranfield.

καρποφορεω bear fruit, be productive

Verses 21-25

Cf. Lk 8:16-18; Mt 5:15.

Verse 21

Καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς· Μήτι ἔρχεται ὁ λύχνος ἵνα
ὕπὸ τὸν μόδιον τεθῆ ἢ ὑπὸ τὴν κλίνην, οὐχ ἵνα
ἐπὶ τὴν λυχνίαν τεθῆ;

μητι Negative particle, used in questions to
indicate expectation of a negative answer

This verse "neatly illustrates the idiomatic use of μη(τι) and οὐ to introduce questions expecting the answers 'no' and 'yes' respectively." France.

λυχνος, ου m lamp
μοδιος, ου m basket, bucket
τεθη Verb, aor pass subj, 3 s τιθημι place,
set

ἢ or

κλινη, ης f bed, couch

λυχνια, ας f lampstand, stand

This saying here (in contrast with Mt 5:15) seems to have reference to the ministry of Jesus. "No one in his senses would carry a lighted lamp into a house simply in order to hide it; the intention would rather be to set it on a lampstand. No more must it be supposed that God's whole purpose in sending Jesus is that he should be concealed." Cranfield.

Verse 22

οὐ γάρ ἐστιν κρυπτόν ἐὰν μὴ ἵνα φανερωθῆ,
οὐδὲ ἐγένετο ἀπόκρυφον ἀλλ' ἵνα ἔλθῃ εἰς
φανερόν.

The γαρ provides a close link between vv.
21,22.

κρυπτος, η, ον hidden, secret, private
ἐὰν μὴ except
φανερωθῆ Verb, aor pass subj, 3 s φανερωω
make known, reveal, make evident
ἀποκρυφος, ον secret, stored away
φανερος, α, ον known, evident, visible

"For a while the kingdom of God is a mystery, concealed under apparent weakness, and this hiddenness (or indirectness of revelation) must not be laid aside before the time. But the present costly hiddenness [costly because it leads to Jesus' death – cf. the notes on v.12] is for the express purpose of the kingdom's future glorious manifestation." Cranfield.

"Verses 21-22 therefore stand in tension with the implication usually read in vv. 11-12 that God does not want 'outsiders' to understand and be forgiven. Hidden things are to be made known, though we are not told when or by whom this is to be accomplished. (Perhaps there is a clue in 9:9, which introduces the idea of secrecy *until*; with regard to the disciples' own message, the resurrection will mark the turning point between hiddenness and open declaration.)" France.

Verse 23

εἴ τις ἔχει ὄτα ἀκούειν ἀκουέτω.

οὖς, ὠτος n see v.9

The hearing ear is a divine gift – cf. v.11.

Verse 24

καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς· Βλέπετε τί ἀκούετε. ἐν ᾧ μέτρῳ μετρεῖτε μετρηθήσεται ὑμῖν καὶ προστεθήσεται ὑμῖν.

βλεπω see, look, beware of

"The warning Βλέπετε τί ἀκούετε stands apart from the rest of the verse; it is not linked with the 'measure' saying in its other synoptic occurrences, but it does occur without the 'measure' saying at the parallel point in Luke 8:18a. These words pick up the recurrent theme of the discourse that it is not hearing alone that is important, but *how* you hear. They thus repeat the call of v. 23 to listen attentively, but whereas v. 23 rounded off the preceding teaching, the formula Καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς introducing this clause ensures that it relates rather to the teaching that follows. And that teaching is itself about effective hearing, in that it reinforces the message of the parable of the sower that there will be different degrees of response to what is heard, depending on what the hearer brings to the encounter." France.

μετρον, ου n measure, degree, quantity
μετρεω measure, deal out
προστιθημι add, add to, increase

Of the textual variants here France writes, "The omission of καὶ προστεθήσεται ὑμῖν in D W and some OL is perhaps due to assimilation to Mt 7:2, but may be simply a mechanical error after a similar preceding phrase. τοῖς ἀκουουσιν (A Θ and most later MSS and Syriac and Coptic versions) is probably an early moralising addition: only those who listen will receive the bonus."

In context here in Mk this saying is linked with hearing. "So perhaps: According to the measure of your response to the Word, so will be the blessing which you will receive from God – or rather God in his generosity will give you a blessing disproportionately large (cf. Lk 6:38, and καὶ περισσευθήσεται in Mt 13:12; 25:29)." Cranfield.

France comments on this saying, "It serves here to encourage careful hearing, because the care expended in understanding and responding to Jesus' parables will be proportionately rewarded. What you get out of them depends on what you put in."

Verse 25

ὃς γὰρ ἔχει, δοθήσεται αὐτῷ· καὶ ὃς οὐκ ἔχει, καὶ ὃ ἔχει ἀρθήσεται ἀπ' αὐτοῦ.

Cf. Mt 13:12

δοθήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 s διδωμι
ἀρθήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 s αἰρω
take, take up, take away

"Here in Mk its meaning seems to be that to the man who hears the Word, and lets it into his heart and life, an ever increasing knowledge of the secret of the Kingdom will be given; but the man who fails thus to lay hold on the Word will one day lose it altogether." Cranfield.

Verses 21-25 Postscript

"There is a notable tension between the two parts of this complex of sayings. The 'optimism' of vv. 21-22, that all that is now secret will in due time be revealed, is balanced by the 'realism' of vv. 24b-25, that there will still be those who fail to benefit from divine revelation. These two insights together constitute the framework within which a coherent exegesis of this discourse as a whole, and therefore an understanding of Mark's 'theory of parables', must be found." France.