

24 And He was saying to them, “Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides.

Jesus tells them, **Take care what you listen to.** Jesus is especially telling them to listen carefully to His teaching. Jesus has just finished telling them **“If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.** This is a warning to listen up—really listen, because it’s important to comprehend them with their hearts. Because of the differing conditions of their hearts, there will be different responses, and different growth among them—different benefit from Jesus’ words. Those with prepared hearts will find it edifying, and grow from it. Those with hard, shallow and rocky hearts, or those choked by the cares of the world are not going to be able to get the growth that Jesus wants them to from His teachings. They must allow God to come in, water their hard hearts, take out the rocky soil, get rid of the thorns, and prune them as necessary, so that they can grow and be fruitful. So, when Jesus says, **By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given to you besides** He’s saying that the time, energy, and prayer that you spend to understand Jesus’ sayings will be proportionally rewarded with understanding—what you get out of Jesus’ Words depends on the effort that you put in in allowing God to change your heart, and then listening with a prepared heart. This kind of saying was used in a lot of situations, because they all go back to the principle that God is Just in His rewards, and has set things up such that life may not be fair, but life plus the after-life is fair. What we do with the received, implanted, and live out Word that determines our reward. The Lord will not forget to reward us. Matthew 10:40-42 ... **the one who receives a righteous person in the name of a righteous person shall receive a righteous person’s reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones just a cup of cold water to drink in the name of a disciple, truly I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.”** In other words, even honoring someone else who is doing the work of the Lord, because they are engaged in accomplishing doing the Father’s Will, will receive a Just Reward. Even the small deeds that we do in Jesus’ Name, or even in the name of one of His followers, because they are His followers, will receive a reward. And that means that whatever we do for the Lord, because He has told us to, even if it seems small, is not wasted effort. Col 3:23-24 **23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord and not for people, 24 knowing that it is from the Lord that you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.** We can be sure that God’s judgement will be True and Righteous and Just, and that He sees all. 1 Cor 15:58 **“Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be firm, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. Matthew 25:21 His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter the joy of your master.’”** And finally, Rev 22:12 **“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to reward each one as his work deserves.”**

25 For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.”

And, just like with giving, when we serve God, we will not only be given a just reward, but **more besides, ...a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over.** We can be sure that the ultimate reward for Citizens of the Kingdom will be an ultimate eternal reward more rich, more profound, more completely wonderful beyond our comprehension than we can possibly imagine, if we will only listen to Jesus, hear with our prepared hearts, and apply His Word to our lives. But to those who do not allow God to prepare their hearts, who refuse to let the Word penetrate their heart, who hold on to sin, rather than letting God take it out of their lives, who desire other things more than their relationship with God, then not only are they unfruitful, but they will ultimately be uprooted if they do not allow God to change their hearts. **and whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.”** They will be unable to derive any spiritual insight from their hearing of Jesus’ Word, including the parables, and will lose any benefit which

should have come to them through their encounter with Jesus' divine revelation. The person who, in hardness of heart, refuses the word shall experience that absolute loss.

Parable of the Seed

26 And He was saying, "The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; 27 and he goes to bed at night and gets up daily, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he himself does not know. 28 The soil produces crops by itself; first the stalk, then the head, then the mature grain in the head.

Jesus again gives them a parable involving the seed of the Word. Again we see a man who casts seed on the soil, as the Gospel is preached in ministry. **The soil produces crops by itself; first the stalk, then the head, then the mature grain in the head.** The parable of the seed is oriented to the idea of the power released through the scattering of the seed—that God is at Work in the spreading of the Gospel. The interesting thing about this parable is the deemphasis of the sower. It's about his contribution in sowing, and eventual harvesting, but notice how little his contribution is. In fact that the man who is the beneficiary of the seed's growth contributes nothing towards it beyond the initial sowing of the seed and the eventual harvesting; in between he has nothing to do but wait. The parable says that the seed grows by itself, and the ground produces it's crop by itself, which is striking, more naturally applied to wild plants than to a cultivated crop. Any farmer knows, of course, that this laid-back approach on the part of the farmer is not a true picture of agriculture in real life: a crop left to fend for itself after sowing in this way would probably be barely worth harvesting. So this farmer's crop has clearly been blessed by God, despite his relatively meager contribution, because it is God's crop in the first place—not his. As a teacher of others, and preacher of the Gospel, we have to come to terms with the fact that this Work, and this Growth is God's business. We just have to be faithful to **Get up daily**, and labor in it. There may be limited response to the initial preaching of the kingdom of God, and we may perceive little to show for the sowing of seed, and maybe that nothing is happening. But there is power in the Word of God, which will in due time produce its effect, even if we can't see the working of God behind the scenes. This does not mean that Jesus is telling us that God wants a completely hands-off approach. We have to do our part, if we expect a harvest. After all, God provides for the birds, but He does not have the birds lie on their backs, while He drops worms into their mouths—they must do their part in foraging for food, and we must do our part in being diligent about the Work that God has put before us. We see this again in 1st Corinthians 3:6-7, where Paul lets us know that we get to cooperate with God in His Work to produce this spiritual crop, along with others, but it is really God that causes the growth: **6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. 7 So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. 8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.** And, this means that God deserves all of the glory! It's God's Work, through-and-through, but He allows us to play a part in the process. What a privilege, to allow us, who's frames are dust, to play a part in His Plan of Eternal Salvation of other people who's frames are dust! And then, God has generosity to reward us, when He's the one who made our work possible all the way through! And, when we get to heaven, when it is safe to give us glory without puffing up our pride, then we will receive a just reward for our work. That also means that we need to keep, even our well-meaning hands off of God's work. The work that God is doing in their hearts is too important. Remember, that sowing has eternal consequences Galatians 6:8-9: **8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. 9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.** Let us not grow weary, especially when we're dealing with the hard hearts of our family, friends, and neighbors.

29 Now when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

The certainty of the mature crop is associated with the action of the seed within the soil. The seed which is sown is the authoritative proclamation of the Gospel, which does not prove barren, and does not return void. This is God’s harvest and God’s kingdom—when Paul says ...**God gave the increase...**he is emphasizing that it’s not about our efforts, or our work, but God working through us. We must contribute the willingness to be used, and the effort through the use of the spiritual gifts that God has given us, but the actual growth and transformation are the work of God the historical inbreaking of God’s kingdom in Jesus, the first Sower of the gospel. We must cooperate by allowing God to use us. So when we read of the unnoticed growth of the seed leading in due time to a full harvest, we have to struggle with the hidden, unrecognized aspects of the Kingdom of God here on earth, since God doesn’t share everything He is doing with us, and cannot yet see it’s future consummation, when that which is hidden will be uncovered, and people will be able to ‘see that the kingdom of God has come with power’ (Mark 9:1). A Harvest will come. But it will come in God’s time and in God’s way.