

GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

38 – Lest

Announcements:

8/24 @7:00 -

Corporate

Prayer

8/25 @6:30 -

Grace Group

8/28 @8:30 -

Sunday School

8/29 @6:30 -

Men's Group

- Chapter 20

ICE BREAKER: Describe your day today in ONE word! Why did you pick that one?

READ: Matthew 13:14-15

I believe I should start with a bit of a confession. I am not a huge fan of what some people call Bible word studies. This is where you dive deep onto what is pretty much the smallest unit of any passage, just the word. While these can often have value, I *personally* have two issues with this strategy. The first is that you need to be very careful, for we are working with a translation from Greek or Hebrew to English and that has HUGE ramifications on the word level. The second is that I have seen too many people look at individual words and completely ignore what I believe is *the most important tool in understanding Scripture*: CONTEXT! With that confession out of the way, today we are going to be honing in on just one word in the above text while remembering the above cautions. We find it in the middle of verse 4: LEST

In order to understand what exactly is being said here, a quick dive into what this word means is useful. The Greek word translated “Lest” here is *mepote*. When diving into any given word, you have to cover all of what is known as the *Semantic Range of Meaning*. The semantic range of meaning for any word is the broad things that any word can mean. For example: the English word “love” has a hugely broad range of what it can mean, like a strong preference for something like Chick-fil-A or describing the feelings that God has for us. For *mepote* we should note that this word can mean three very different things. 1) it can mean never, 2) it can be a question meaning “can it be that” and 3) it can mean a prohibition, something like “so that it cannot be”. Knowing this we can ask: what does this mean here? A look at the larger context of verse means that we can fairly easily throw out definition 2, for this is a declarative statement by God (through Isaiah) and not asking a question. So we are left with two options. Verse 15 describes the hard hearts of those who are outside of the kingdom in response to hearing the parables of Jesus. So here we can ask a question: Is this better understood as definition one or two?

For a bit more clarity we can ask this in this way: Is this passage saying that Jesus speaks in parables because there are those who have closed their ears and eyes and those people will NEVER see and understand or be healed; or is this verse saying that when people close their hearts and ears Jesus speaks in parables so that it cannot be that they know and understand the truths Jesus is speaking of? While this is a minor distinction it is an important one!

DISCUSS: Which do you think works better in the *context* of this verse?

While both options have reasons to support them, the even larger context of Matthew makes the third definition the most appropriate. This verse is best understood in relation to what we mentioned on Sunday as the “concealing” purpose of parables. What Matthew wants us to understand is that the treasures of the truth of the kingdom of heaven are precious and valuable. We will see in later parables that the kingdom is of infinite value, worth every sacrifice and cost. And so these precious truths are not just out in the wild so to speak. Because they are so important for the life of the believer (and the church!) they need to be guarded and protected. In other words they are not for everyone! Knowing this leads us to what is, in my opinion and even more important (but more difficult) question: whose fault is this “lest”? Is it the case that the people close their eyes so that they themselves cannot understand or does God communicate to them in this way so that they cannot understand?

DISCUSS: Which do you think it is? Why is this important?