

## MARK 4:10-12      “IS THIS A GAME?”

<sup>10</sup> When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. <sup>11</sup> He told them, “The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables <sup>12</sup> so that, “ ‘they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!’”

Why would Jesus ever say something like this? Is he establishing some elitist cult that one can only enter through some secret knowledge? Or, is he making it so difficult to understand that no one can enter the kingdom except by hard work? No easy street here. You have to successfully pass the theological hazing before you can be admitted to the kingdom. Neither of these options sounds consistent with the rest of his message. What then is this all about?

First, we need to remember that this statement is sandwiched between the parable and the explanation of the parable, so Jesus is not talking about the Gospel as being secret. That which is referred to as a secret, or a mystery in Scripture is *a reality that remains hidden from humankind until it is revealed by God*. So, here it is not the Gospel, but the meaning of the parable that can only be understood through divine revelation. To those in the kingdom it is a revealed truth, while those outside the kingdom it is a sign that points toward the truth, but not the truth itself. The bottom line, however, is that we can only understand the true meaning of the Gospel through our dependence on God. Those who are not ready to depend on God will never see nor understand the truth of the Gospel. Believing based on one’s own understanding leads to a perversion of the Gospel, usually in the form of making the Gospel fit one’s desires. This can lead to a complacency of thinking one has been forgiven on one’s own terms. Unfortunately for those who think this way, forgiveness is only available on God’s terms.

The strength of the Gospel is that God has provided the way back into relationship with him, even though we are utterly incapable of repairing that relationship on our own. May our hearts be prepared as good soil, so that we might know our dependence upon him and be receptive to the truth of his word.

**Father, keep me from thinking that I am special and can know the truth through my own understanding. Help me to know that I cannot recognize and know the truth without your revelation. Grow me in my dependence on you for every aspect of my life. Make me fertile soil for your word and a fruitful vine for your kingdom. Amen.**