

Passages that may be confusing

Mark 4:12

“so that, ”“they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!”

This is a quote by Jesus telling His disciples why He is speaking only in parables. It would seem like Jesus is excluding some people in the audience to hear the lessons He is teaching. That does not square with the overriding message of the Scriptures. Several passages help explain the will of God: 1Timothy 2:4, *“who [God] desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”* and Ezekiel 18:23, *“Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?”*

What is meant here is that the Jewish leaders had long and continuously refused to believe in Jesus. Some who heard Christ would never come to an understanding. As evidence He quoted the words of Isaiah 6:9,10. In Isaiah’s ministry the time had come when God through the preaching of Isaiah hardened the hearts of many in Israel as a just and righteous punishment. Jesus recognized that a similar time had also come in his own ministry. But nowhere did Jesus say these words of Isaiah applied to everyone of His hearers. (PBC)

Nor does Jesus here say we in our ministry today can apply these words to our hearts. Only God can make a judgment like that. We cannot look into the hearts of people. To the Twelve when He sends them out to preach Jesus says, *“And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them”* (6:11). But the door for repentance is still ajar. And that’s why the Christians’ present assignment reads: *“Preach the good news to all creation”* (16:15). (PBC)