

Canons of Dort, Head 3&4:8-10: “The calling of the Gospel and two responses”

Scripture Lesson: Mark 4:1-20

Lesson Aim	To understand two things: first, why some people do not believe the Gospel when it is preached to them and, second, why some people do believe the Gospel when it is preached to them.
Steps to Learning	Read the Canons of Dort, Heads 3&4, articles 8-10 and Mark 4:1-20. Also discuss the sermon and the particulars of the lesson below. It may be best to work through the material over several days or sessions.
Discuss	The Arminians challenged the Reformed arguing that the Gospel could not be preached sincerely given the Reformed interpretation of election and reprobation. After all, the Arminians argued, the reprobates could not respond to the Gospel in faith. How do we, the Reformed, respond to this challenge? We respond by arguing that the Scriptures teach that the call to believe in the Gospel IS sincere. Scripture texts such as Isaiah 55:1, Luke 13:34 and John 6:37 state this. In addition, the Scriptures record the story of mankind’s fall into sin, which is man’s own fault. God’s seeking out man, from the beginning, has not changed despite the fall. The Gospel is preached to all, without distinction. Why do some who are called to believe respond negatively? The fault is not in God and the Gospel but in mankind. The parable of the Sower in Mark 4:1-20 explains this well. In this parable, the sowing of God (the preaching of the Gospel) is consistent; God makes sure the Word is broadly preached. But many of the soils don’t produce crops. That is, many people don’t respond to the Gospel because they don’t believe the Gospel. In fact, Jesus argues in Mark 4 that the Kingdom of God in the Gospel will always be a parable (an enigma) to those without faith. Why do others who are called by the Gospel respond positively? The reason is not found in man, as if some are better than others. Rather, the reason is found in God who elects some to believe and in time and space regenerates and grants them faith in Christ. To these God grants understanding of the mystery of the Gospel so that preaching of the Word is not in parables.
Bible Reading	Genesis 1-3 (Reading the great stories of the Old Testament)