


Parable of the Sower

Parable of the Four Soils

Matthew 13:3-8; 18-23

INTRODUCTION:

- A. As Jesus went about preaching the gospel of the kingdom of heaven (cf. Mt 4:17,23), He did not always find a receptive audience...
1. Even where He did mighty works, some did not repent - Mt 11:20-24
 2. Some sought to trick Him, so they might have reason to accuse Him - Mt 12:9-14
 3. - It was for this very reason that Jesus began teaching publicly in "parables" - Mt 13:10-13
- B. The problem Jesus faced was that many people, though they had ears to hear, their ears had become "hard of hearing" - Mt 13:14-15
- C. To illustrate this problem, Jesus told a parable that has come to be known as
1. **"The Parable Of The Sower"**
 2. It can also be properly called **"The Parable Of The Four Soils"**
 3. Or **"The Parable Of The Seed"**
Note: It was told by Jesus to illustrate different reactions to the gospel message
 4. The parable itself is recorded in Matthew 13:3-9 and examined in verses 18-23. It is also recorded in Mark 4:3-9; Luke 8:4-8) - PLEASE READ
 - a. It is one of the few parables in which we actually have Jesus' own interpretation of the parable
 -  b. The significance of this particular parable is enhanced by the words of Jesus recorded in Mark 4:13 - "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all parables?"

[The value of this parable becomes clearer in the light of Jesus' explanation, for by it we can see ourselves as we really are in regards to how we have received the Word into our lives...]

EXPLANATION OF THE PARABLE

A. "THE SOWER"

1. Not specifically mentioned, but compare Mt 13:37
 - a. This is in explanation of "The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares"
 - b. In which Jesus explains "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man"
2. So it is likely that the "sower" in this parable had immediate reference to Jesus

- d. But it is a fair use of the parable to apply it today to anyone who faithfully proclaims the message of the Son of Man

B. "THE SEED"

1. The seed is "the word of the kingdom" - Mt 13:19a
2. Luke 8:11 – “The seed is the Word of God.”
3. The gospel of the kingdom, which was the theme of Jesus' preaching Matthew 4:23

C. "THE WAYSIDE" (The First Soil)

1. Some of the seeds fell along the path (on the road). Paths (the "roads" in Bible times) ran right through the fields.
 - a. The hard and compacted soil of the road made it impossible for the seed to penetrate.
 - b. So it sat on top, as tempting morsels for birds that came and ate it up. In 13:19 we learn that the "birds" represent Satan.
2. This soil represents one who "hears...and does not understand" Mt 13:19a
3. Most likely, these are those who have hardened their hearts prior to hearing the Word - cf. Mt 13:15
4. The "birds" represent "the wicked one" (called "the devil" in Lk 8:12)
 - a. Who snatches away the Word from those whose hearts are hardened
 - b. Their condition therefore is one of being "blinded" by Satan to the gospel 2 Corinthians 4:3-4
5. While Satan contributes to their blindness, it is precipitated by their own hardness of heart!

D. "THE STONY PLACES" (The Second Soil)

1. Unlike the path, rocky ground had some soil to accept the seed, but not much. The seed sprang up quickly in the shallow soil.
 - a. Most of the land in Palestine is rocky.
 - b. The soil is filled with rocks of all sizes. Such soil traps the moisture so that plants can grow quickly, but the sun takes the moisture out so rapidly that a young plant withers
2. This soil represents the one who...
 - a. "Hears the word and immediately receives it with joy" – Mt. 13:20
 - b. "Yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while" - Mt 13:21a
 - c. "when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles" - Mt 13:21b
3. Some hear the Word and receive it with great joy...
 - a. But with no root, they are not grounded in the Word

- b. So that when troubles arise, there is no endurance and stumbling occurs
- 4. Here we learn that an emotional reception without a strong foundation based upon the Word will not enable one to stand against tribulation and persecution

E. **"AMONG THE THORNS" (The Third Soil)**

1. No farmer would intentionally scatter the seed into an area filled with thorns and briars; this probably refers to the seed falling among seeds or roots of thorns that cultivation had not destroyed.
 - a. Thorns rob the sprouts of nutrition, water, light, and space.
 - b. Thus, when the thorns grew up, the good seed was choked out and could not grow to maturity and yield a crop.
2. This soil represents the one who...
 - a. "Hears the word" - Mt 13:22a
 - b. But whose ability to bear fruit is choked by:
 1. "The cares of this world" - Mt 13:22b
 2. "The deceitfulness of riches" - Mt 13:22c
 3. "Pleasures of life" (added in Lk 8:14)
2. How these three "thorns" can cause us to be unfruitful is explained in other portions of God's Word...
 - a. The cares of this world
 1. Can cause us to be unprepared - cf. Lk 21:34-36
 2. The evil in cares and anxieties is that they can detract our minds from what is truly important - cf. Lk 12:29-32
 - b. The deceitfulness of riches
 1. The danger is described in 1 Ti 6:9-10
 2. Again, the evil in riches lay in diverting our attention away from God, and feeling self-sufficient - 1 Ti 6:17
 - c. Pleasures of life
 1. Those involving the flesh in particular divert our minds from the things of the Spirit - cf. Galatians 5:17
 2. Sowing to the flesh make it impossible to reap of the Spirit! – Gal. 6:7-9

F. **"THE GOOD GROUND" (The Fourth Soil)**

1. However, some of the seed landed in plowed and readied soil.
 - a. This seed had the depth of soil, space, and moisture to grow and produce a crop.
 - b. This seed multiplied and yielded thirty, sixty, or even up to a hundred times the amount of seed sown.
 - c. A farmer would be happy indeed to see his crop multiply even ten times.

Thirty, sixty, or a hundred would be a marvelous (although not unheard of) yield, for it would mean even more seed to plant and harvest in the coming year.

2. This soil represents the one who...
 - a. "hears the word and understands it" - Matthew 13:23a
 - b. "indeed bears fruit and produces" - Matthew 13:23b
 - b. Luke adds that he hears "the word with a noble and good heart", and then "keeps it and bears fruit with patience" - Luke 8:15
3. Those with "a noble and good heart", then, are the ones...
 - a. Who will understand the Word
 - b. Who will keep it, and with patience produce fruit in their lives!
4. They will be like the Bereans, who were commended for being "fair-minded", as manifested in the way they:
 - a. "Received the word with all readiness"
 - b. "Searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" - Acts 17:11
5. Note the importance of "understanding" in relation to "bearing fruit". . .
 - a. Jesus made the connection between the two in this parable - Mt 13:23
 - b. Paul connects the two when he writes of the gospel producing fruit among the Colossians "since the day they heard (NASV says "understood") the grace of God in truth" - Coossians 1:5-6

-- When one "understands", they will more likely "bear fruit";
but the key to understanding is having a "good and noble heart" that is willing to listen and learn!
6. And what kind of "fruit" will one bear? There are different kinds...
 - a. The fruit of winning souls to Christ - Romans 1:13
 - b. The fruit of practical holiness - Romans 6:22
 - c. The fruit of sharing material things - Romans 15:27
 - d. The fruit of the Spirit (i.e., a Christ-like character) Galatians 5:22-23
 - e. The fruit of good works - Colossians 1:10
 - f. The fruit of praise & thanksgiving - Hebrews 13:15
7. An important observation is that not all will bear the same amount...
 - a. "Some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" - Matthew 13:23
 - b. As illustrated in The Parable of the Talents, some may be given more according to their ability to use what God has given them - Mt 25:14-15
 - c. Whatever our ability, we should exercise it accordingly - 1 Peter 4:10-11
8. With the explanation provided by Jesus Himself, we should have little problem understanding **The Parable of The Sower** and the spiritual truths Jesus was teaching.
9. However, it is one thing to understand it, quite another to make application of it. Seeking to make application in a thought-provoking way, let me ask "**What kind of soil are you?**"

APPLICATION OF THE PARABLE

A. ARE YOU LIKE "THE WAYSIDE"?

1. If you have heard the gospel of Christ and His kingdom, but are not yet a Christian.
2. You may be in the process of hardening your heart the longer you wait!
3. You are susceptible to Satan's deception in some form, to blind you and not allow the Word of God to have its intended effect!

B. ARE YOU LIKE "THE STONY PLACES"?

1. If you responded to the gospel at one time, but are not being grounded in the faith.
2. You will likely fall away when persecution or temptation comes your way!

C. ARE YOU LIKE THE SOIL "AMONG THE THORNS"?

1. If you responded to the gospel at one time, but are becoming too preoccupied with the cares, riches, and pleasures of this world...
2. You will not be able to bear much fruit. And remember what Jesus said about branches that don't bear fruit! - **John 15:1-6**

D. ARE YOU LIKE "THE GOOD SOIL"?

1. If you have responded to the gospel, and are bearing fruit...
2. Then you have demonstrated several important things:
 - a. You have a good and noble heart!
 - b. You have come to understand the Word!
 - c. You have been keeping it with patience!
3. And so the Word of God has been able to produce its intended effect in you!
4. This parable should encourage spiritual "sowers" -- those who teach, preach, and lead others.
 - a. The farmer sowed good seed, but not all the seed sprouted, and even the plants that grew had varying yields.
 - b. There are so many factors involved with the process of believing in the truth of the gospel that we should be reluctant to use percentages and ratios (of numbers of presentations to numbers of responses) as an application of this parable.
 - c. Don't be discouraged if you do not always see results as you faithfully teach the Word.

CONCLUSION

- A. When Jesus finished telling His parable of the Sower, He cried out:
"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" - **Matthew 13:9**
- B. The four types of soil represent different responses to God's message.
 - 1. People respond differently because they are in different states of readiness.
 - a. Some are hardened
 - b. Others are shallow
 - c. Others are contaminated by distracting worries
 - d. And some are receptive.
 - 1. How has God's Word taken root in your life?
 - 2. What kind of soil are you?
- C. Clearly from the explanation of Jesus Himself, we learn that not all those who have ears to hear, really listen!
- D. It is important that we listen well when God's Word is being proclaimed, for that is how faith is obtained - Romans 10:17
- E. How well have YOU listened to this parable of Jesus and His explanation?
If you are anything other than that like "the good soil", you need to repent today!
- F. **God's Plan for Man's Salvation.**