

THE PARABLE OF THE SOILS

MARK 4, MATTHEW 13

Text:

Introduction:

This passage finds Jesus still ministering in the city of Capernaum. Great crowds of people have gathered to hear Him teach the Word of God. In this instance, the crowd is so large that Jesus gets into a boat and uses it as a pulpit to teach the people who have gathered on the seashore. This passage also showcases a change in the way Jesus teaches the people. This is the first time Jesus would use parables to teach spiritual truth.

The word “parable” means “to cast alongside of”.

Someone has defined a parable as “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.”

In a parable truth is cast alongside life and life interprets the truth.

In other words, a parable takes the common, everyday events of life and uses them to illustrate the deep things of God.

Jesus often used parables. In fact, there are nearly sixty of them in the Gospels. Why did Jesus preach in parables? He answers this question for us in verses 11-12.

He used parables to reveal truth to those who were open to what God was saying and to conceal truth from those who had closed their minds to what God was saying.

We'll consider three things from this parable; The sower, the seed, and the soils.

1. THE SOWER

The sower in this parable is a man who goes into his field with the intention of raising a crop and reaping a harvest. He expects to reap a profit from the crop he is sowing.

Such is the case with the Lord God. He sent His Son into the world to die and He sends His Spirit into the world to convict lost people of their sins so that He might reap a spiritual harvest to the glory of His name.

Just as a bountiful harvest brings riches and honor to the farmer, so the salvation of souls brings glory to the name of God.

2. THE SEED

Every seed that was sown by the sower had the potential to produce much more seed.

Matthew 13:8

⁸ But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

Matthew 13:23

²³ But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth *it*; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Those who have raised a crop understand this principle.

You can plant one bean seed and from that seed reap many beans, with each pod containing several more seeds.

Sow one squash seed and it will produce a plant that yields several fully grown squash, each containing dozens, if not hundreds or new seeds.

Plant one corn seed and watch it produce a plant that will yield several ears, each containing many rows of fresh seeds.

The seed is the Word of God.

The Word of God is likened to seed, as well as a sword.

2 Timothy 3:16

¹⁶ All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

The Word of God:

- Convicts – 2 Kings 22:9-13; 2Chronicles 17:7-10; 2 Chronicles 34
- Comforts – Psalms 119:50
- Cleanses – Psalms 119:9
- Counsels – Psalms 119:24
- Understanding – Psalms 119:1044
- Direction – Psalms 119:105
- Gives light – Psalms 119:130
- Peace – Psalms 119:165

3. THE SOILS

As the sower sowed his seed, it fell upon four distinct kinds of soils.

A look at the four types of soils mentioned here by Jesus is very revealing when it comes to understanding the human heart and why people respond to the Gospel as they do. One of these soils is going to paint a perfect picture of your heart.

A. The Wayside

Mark 4:4

⁴ And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

Matthew 13:4

⁴ And when he sowed, some *seeds* fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

The "*wayside*" refers to the narrow footpaths that ran beside and through the fields. These were the roads of the day and the soil on them had become as hard as concrete from the feet of the travelers that had walked upon them.

When the seed fell on the footpath, it could not penetrate the soil and it remained there in the open, only to be devoured by the fowls of the air.

We are told in Matthew

Matthew 13:19

¹⁹ When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth *it* not, then cometh the wicked *one*, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

Mark 4:15

¹⁵ And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

We are told that this speaks of the person who hears the Gospel, but who doesn't "*understand it*".

They cannot make the connection between the claims of God's Word and their own life.

Maybe they are steeped in sin and refuse to believe.

Maybe they are calloused and cold toward the things of God and refuse to hear.

Maybe they have hardened their hearts for years against the call of the Gospel and like a path trampled underfoot for centuries, they have become hard hearted!

Whatever their need, they are hard hearted and the seed cannot penetrate the soil of their heart.

When this happens, the devil will snatch away to the seed by diverting the mind and helping the person become even more hardened against God.

This person has a heart that is not prepared.

B. The Stony Soil

Matthew 13:5-6

⁵ Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: ⁶ And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

Mark 4:5

⁵ And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth:

These stony places are common in Palestine. Often there will be an outcropping of limestone rock covered by a thin layer of topsoil.

This soil looks like it is ready to be sown.

This ground looks good and productive and seed cast here will germinate and quickly spring up into a promising plant. But, because there is no depth of soil, as soon as the sun beats down on the plant, it withers and dies without producing any fruit.

There are many stony ground hearers. The preaching of the gospel makes very quick, but only temporary impressions upon them.

Their religion is all superficial, just a flash in the pan, nothing else.

Like burning briars in a fire, they may crackle and pop, and make a lot of noise, but they produce nothing.

They appear enthusiastic.

They talk a good game.

They are sometimes moved to tears.

They may even speak about inward conflicts, hopes, desires, struggles, and fears.

But they lack one thing. They have no root.

Like seed sown in unprepared soil, the Word of God takes no root in them because there is no work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts.

- No Conviction
- No Conversion

These stony ground hearers are like cut flowers.

They look pretty and smell nice for a while; but soon wither and die. They have no root. Christ is not in them and they are not in Christ.

C. Among the Thorns

Matthew 13:7

⁷ And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

Mark 4:7

⁷ And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

The wayside hearer has no interest at all in the things of God. He could care less who Christ is and what he did.

The stony ground hearer is somewhat impressive. He makes a big splash, but does not last very long. The thorny ground hearer is something else.

The thorny ground hearer agrees with the gospel, approves of it, and is moved by it.

He makes a good start and goes a long way in religion.

He feels much, experiences much, and may even do much that appears to be truly spiritual; but he has a basic, fundamental, underlying problem.

It is a problem that may lie under the surface, hidden from every eye but God's.

It may even be hidden from his own eyes. But it will eventually destroy him.

The problem is worldliness. The world still holds his heart. He loves the world.

False faith is a strong delusion, a delusion by which, in this parable, one in four who professes faith in Christ are lost.

Note:

- False faith may greatly reform the outward life like The Pharisees
- False faith may humble itself in sackcloth and ashes like Ahab
- False faith may be generous and charitable like Ananias and Sapphira
- False faith may preach, perform miracles, like mentioned by the Lord

1 John 2:15

¹⁵ Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

If you are one of these thorny ground hearers, the Lord Jesus plainly warns you that one of these three things will eventually destroy your soul.

Matthew 13:22

²² He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

Mark 4:19

¹⁹ And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

- The cares of this world – Legitimate Cares
- The deceitfulness of riches – Materialism
- The lust of other things – Fame, Acceptance, Position, Power, Sensuality, Pleasure

D. Good Ground

Matthew 13:8

⁸ But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

Mark 4:8

⁸ And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.

Finally, some seed fell onto good ground.

This ground had been worked and prepared.

It had been plowed and tilled and it was ready to receive the seed when it came.

The seed germinated within the heart of the soil and the plant began to grow.

When the plant reached maturity, it began to produce fruit that brought honor and gain to the farmer.

Notice that the only difference between these soils was fruit.

The hard soil, the seed did not penetrate, but it disappeared, being removed by the fowls.

In the other three, the seed disappeared within the ground.

In these last three soils, a plant resulted, but only the good soil brought forth a harvest!

While these kinds of soils are used to speak about the matter of salvation, there is another application that we can draw from them as well.

If we are not careful, we that are saved can allow ourselves to develop the wrong kind of heart. We can become hard hearted toward the things of God, toward His House and toward His Word.

Or, we can grow shallow in our commitment to the Lord and His work, this too can hinder our fruit production.

Or, we might allow our lives to become filled with the wrong kinds of things, thorns of sin and worldliness that will hinder us and keep us from being fruitful for the glory of the Lord.

If you are saved, what kind of soil is your heart made of?

Close:

What kind of soil are you?

Has your heart become hardened to the things of God?

Are you shallow in your commitment to the Lord and His work?

Have you become distracted by the cares of the world?

Are you bearing the kind of fruit you should be bearing?