

The Sower and the Seed

Matthew 13:34 *“All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them.”*

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Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23 *“And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; 4 And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: 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. 7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: 8 But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. 9 Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. 18 Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. 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. 20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; 21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. 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. 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.”*

In verses 1 and 2 of Matthew 13, the Lord has come to the seashore from the house and there takes a seat on the water's edge. Before long, a crowd has surrounded him. The Lord then moved from the shore into a boat and there stood to speak to the crowd. Perhaps He noticed a sower at a distance from the sea, a farmer in the field as he attended to the task of sowing seed. The Lord then began to speak to the people this great parable of the *sower and the seed*.

There are three constituent elements of this parable: the sower, the seed, and the soil. Let us first take a look at the sower.

The sower

The sower is unnamed. We actually know nothing to say in regard to the sower. His clothes, height, skin color, wealth or fame are not mentioned. The personality of the sower is thus of secondary importance, giving way in this parable to the seed and the soil. In the sowing of the seed of the Gospel message, the message of Jesus Christ is what is important. Those who spread the message are **not** to be uplifted, only the message.

God is a sower, for he has planted the truth through the ages. Likewise, surely the *Son of Man* is a sower for He said of Himself in Matthew 13:37 “*He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man.*” The entire world has been enriched by the truths scattered by Jesus Christ. The *Holy Spirit* is a sower. The Holy Spirit sows by inspiring the sower and watering the seed that is sown. *Every Christian* should be a sower. *It is both a privilege and an obligation for each Christian to sow the seed of the Gospel.* All, not just teachers and preachers, may be sowers. In fact, there is a huge field before us, the world, and few sowers. Psalm 126:6 says “*He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.*”

So, we have established the truth that the sower is *whosoever* is willing to sow. Further, all the sower has to do is sow. It is up to other powers to make the seed germinate and come forth. If all who witness for the Savior were responsible for the effect of the Gospel on the hearts of men, sowing would be a dreadful task. It is not the preacher’s duty to save one soul, for he has not the power to do so. The Christian witness spreading the message of Jesus’ saving grace can save no one, only tell the message.

The seed

Next, we investigate *the seed*. What is this seed? Verse 19 says the seed is the “*word of the kingdom.*” Verse 20 says he that receiveth the seed is he that heareth the Word. So, the seed is the *Word of God*. Since Jesus came as the Word of God (John 1:1,2,14), Jesus is seed. Therefore, when one sows, Jesus must be his seed else his seed is of

the wrong sort. Thus, we preach “Christ only” as did Paul: I Corinthians 1:23 “*But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness.*” Any other message is seed that will not germinate. Further, since Jesus Christ is the Word, we find it of no surprise that Jesus is the central theme of the Bible. He preached the Savior and was also the Savior whom He preached.

The seed of the Word is *living* and *incorruptible* as spoken in I Peter 1:23 “*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*” The seed of the Word is able to give life, and the life given is incorruptible, that is, it passeth not away. Thus, God’s Word gives ETERNAL life. Amen!

The soils

The most discussed feature of this parable is the soils into which the seed is sown. We do not focus so much on the sower or the seed, but how the *soils* receive the seed. We will take a look at four soil types. Please do not miss the important truth that the SAME SEED is placed into all four soil-types. We preach the same Gospel message to every creature. Jesus Christ is the only message we have to preach and the only message we need!

We now look at four soil types into which the seed was placed. Which type are you?

The Way side soil

In verse 4, some seeds fell by the way side. What kind of ground is “way side” ground? “Way side” ground is just as it says- it is the ground where folk travel. It is the way wherein we move about, be it a pathway or highway or walkway or some other way. It is the traveled path. The ground is hard and unable to receive the seed. Foot traffic packs the soil, and it is unable to receive seed. Do you plow your field to loosen the soil before you plant the seed?

Some hear the Gospel message in the same fashion a seed would fall on the roadway. Verse 19 explains that the way side hearer hears the Word but “*understandeth it not.*” Way side hearers take no heed for the Word nor do they lay hold on it. They are too busy traveling along in life. They are going to the beach, on a vacation, to visit

relatives or some other place. They may come where the Gospel is preached and taught, and they may attend church regularly. With the human ear on the side of their head, the Gospel is heard. Yet, the Word goes in one ear and out the other and makes no impression on them. The Word never gets near their heart. The person who hears as seed fallen on pavement does not receive Christ as Savior. Do you know folk like this? The fowls of the air pick the seed from the wayside and carry it away.

This group heard the Gospel but trampled it under their feet. They represent unsaved people.

The Stony Ground soil

There is soil on the stone, but the soil is shallow. A seed cannot take root in a stone. It may germinate and come up, but have little root to sustain it. If only the soil were a little deeper! Have you ever noticed the outline of the septic tank in the lawn during the hot days of summer? The earth is shallow above the tank. Therefore, the grass over the tank has shallow roots. The grass wilts in the summer heat.

The stony ground hearer is emotional, that is, they received the Word with joy, verse 20. They are easily excited and enthusiastic. Just stand in the shoes of the preacher of the Gospel, and you will know them well. Their faith is paper-thin. When you first meet them, you believe they are going to conquer the world for Christ. However, one simple test of heat, and they wilt. Challenge them concerning sin, or righteous living, or faithfulness, or on praying and Bible study, and they wilt. They have no roots! When temptation and persecution arise, verse 21, they quickly “backslide.” They are easily discouraged. They are easily disappointed. They are touchy and operate on feelings. “The root of the matter is not in them.” They have no vision of Calvary or of hell or the worth of a soul. The seed is on and in, but not down.

These people heard the Gospel and meditated upon it, but heard it only in their head and not their heart. They, like the way side hearer, are unsaved people.

The Thorny Ground soil

The thorny ground hearer starts out fine. The seed germinates fine. The seed takes roots. The plant begins to grow. I believe that the

plant even bears fruit. Then, oh no, something happens! The ending of verse 22 says the plant becomes “*unfruitful*.” What happens? The plant became choked-out by thorns, verse 22. The plant takes hold, comes up, bears fruit, and then becomes infertile.

What happens? Forces opposing fruit-bearing appear. What are these forces? Look at this parable as recorded in Mark 4:19 “*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.*”

One, the *cares of this world* choke out fruit. Business, finances, religion, family, jobs. We all have cares. But we need not let cares stop us from bearing fruit.

Second, the *deceitfulness of riches* arises. What a hindrance! “Riches” can mean many things. It speaks not of money only. It can be material “things” that come into our life that crowd out fruit- boats, campers, airplanes, houses and land.

Third, *lust* crowds the plant and fruit will not come forth. Lust refers to want- “I don’t have it, but I want it.” Everywhere folk seem to be in desire of more pleasure, more money, more fame, bigger houses. Lust is found in many people and is a detriment to God’s work. The man who has little pleasure wants more pleasure. The man who has plenty lusts for even more.

Yes, good fruit-bearing folk can cease to bear. For those who have stopped bearing, the Bible gives only *three* reasons why the fruit stopped coming. I truly believe these three say it all- cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust for other things. In their early Christian life, there was promise of fruit. However, in time, the craving of pleasure and material, along with the cares of life took away the promise of fruit. I know no less than 1000 people who fit this category. No man can serve two masters.

The thorny ground hearer got saved for he bore fruit. However, he turned his back on the Lord.

The Good ground

Ah, yes, the “good ground.” Thank God for the good ground. The good ground is not compacted ground nor is good ground stony or thorny. The good ground is a heart that hears the Word and receives it. The Word germinates. The plant becomes rooted. The plant

grows. Then, and how wonderful it is, fruit comes forth! Glory to God! Thorns don't interfere. Because the Word is rooted in the heart, the fowls can't carry it away. Because the roots are deep, the plant does not wither in the heat or the cold. This soul in the "good ground" is devoted to the cause of Christ.

Oh that God's work had more hearers of this type. We need more laborers with an abiding faith, more that have no fear of tomorrow, more that simply rest in the arms of Jesus.

In verse 8 and verse 23, we see the quantity of fruit brought forth by the plants in the "good ground." Some brought a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. Note that no plant brought forth zero. Why? Where the Gospel is received, it will have a work in a person's heart, and some amount of fruit will come forth.

Why didn't all these plants bring forth the same amount of fruit? Why do some folk bring forth a lot of fruit and some so little? This is because of the talent level each person has. Everyone does not have the same ability in the Lord. This is not a shame or a fault, but reality. Luke 12:48 reminds us "*...For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required...*" We find a further explanation of the variance of ability in individuals in Matthew 25 (please read). There, the master gave one servant five talents, one two talents, and one received one talent. Why the difference? The three servants had varying ability. Some preach, some teach, some sing, some witness, but none are to do nothing. Do the best you can for God with what He gives you.

Those in the good ground were born-again by the receiving of the Gospel. They brought forth fruit indicating salvation. They remained faithful to the Lord never turning their back on Him.