

The Parable of the Sower #91

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Thesis: Using the Parable of the Sower, Jesus teaches receptivity to the Word of God and subsequent faithfulness and productivity depends on the heart of the hearer. Four different heart conditions (hardened, shallow, divided, good and honest) correspond to four soil types (path, rocky, thorny, good).

Support: Matthew 13:1-9; 18-23

I. Greeting

- a. Good morning!
- b.

2. Introduction

- a. In our lesson last week, we learned that Jesus relied more heavily on parables after a major conflict with the Pharisees and scribes.
 - i. God had blessed them with eyes to see, yet they closed them from seeing the divine origin of Jesus' miracles.
 - ii. God had blessed them with ears to here, yet they barely listened to a word of what Jesus had to say.
 - iii. Their hearts had grown dull; they had hardened their hearts towards Jesus and his message.
 1. So from that point forward, because of the mixed nature of the crowds, Jesus spoke more and more often using parables.
- b. Parables are spoken stories "thrown alongside" unspoken spiritual truths.
 - i. They are earthly stories with heavenly meanings.
- c. Jesus used parables to:
 - i. Reveal truth to the open-minded, those with open and honest hearts.
 - ii. Conceal truth from the closed-minded, those with hardened hearts.
 1. The former would hear the story and discern the spiritual truth, adding to their knowledge, and have an abundance as a result.
 2. The latter would hear the story, discount it, and further harden their hearts.
 - a. Over time, what little truth they did know would be taken away from them.
 - b. Parables further separated the haves from the have-nots; they were, in effect, a judgment against those that had hardened their hearts.
- d. Finally, we learned proper interpretation of them is vital.
 - i. They are a large part of Jesus' teaching, and by their nature, they are not to be taken literally.
 1. As a result, they can be misinterpreted, so we must take great care in interpreting them.



3. This morning, let us turn our attention to one of the more famous parables, the Parable of the Sower. This parable directly addresses why Jesus spoke in parables in the first place. Jesus says in Mark 4:13, if you don't understand this one, you are not going to understand the others. So, let us take some time to understand this parable. The Parable of the Sower is found in Matthew 13:1ff.

a. ¹ That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. ² And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³ And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵ Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, ⁶ but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷ Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸ Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹ He who has ears, let him hear."

- i. Despite the significant changes in agriculture, the earthly story here is pretty easy to understand.
 1. A sower is sowing seeds; he is planting seeds by reaching into his seed bag and casting them out.
 2. The seeds sown fell of four very different soil types, each producing very different results.
 - a. Some seeds fell on the path.
 - i. The birds ate these seeds.
 - b. Some seeds fell on rocky soil.
 - i. These seeds immediately sprang up, since there wasn't much soil.
 - ii. But then the sun came out and scorched them; they withered because of the lack of roots.
 - c. Some seeds fell on thorny soil.
 - i. Thorns grew up with the plants and eventually choked them.
 - d. Some seeds fell on good soil.
 - i. These were the only seeds to produce grain.
 - ii. Some produced 100x, some 60x, some 30x.
- ii. Jesus concludes the parable in **13:9**. He says, "He who has ears, let him hear."
 1. God gave you ears.
 2. God gave you eyes.
 3. God gave you brains.
 4. Jesus is telling us to use our faculties to understand the spiritual truth within this parable.
 - a. We live in an interesting culture.
 - i. The average American family possesses four Bibles.



1. And these four Bibles are revered so much so that they are left in pristine, unopened conditions.
 2. We may own a lot of Bibles, but very few of us actually read them, much less take the time to understand them.
 3. According to a 2007 Time magazine cover story:
 - a. Only 1/2 of U.S. Adults could name just one of the four gospel accounts.
 - b. Fewer than 1/2 knew the name of first book of the Bible (Genesis).
 4. On a recent Jay Leno broadcast, he asked his audience about the Ten Commandments.
 - a. No one he asked even knew one of the ten.
 - b. One brave soul did venture a guess, "God helps those who help themselves?"
 - c. During the same broadcast, no one could name an apostle, but everyone knew the names of all four of the Beatles.
 - ii. Our society is Bible illiterate.
 1. We have all of these Bibles, but virtually no one takes the time to read, much less understand, what they have to say.
 5. Jesus says, "He who has ears, let him hear."
 - a. Brothers and sisters and friends, on that day, ignorance will not be an excuse.
 - b. God has given you eyes to see, ears to hear, and brains to think.
 - i. You need to use your faculties.
4. **Let us use them. Let us move on to the spiritual truth of the parable. Jesus interprets the parable for us a few verses later in Matthew 13:18-23. Jesus explains:**
- a. ¹⁸ "Hear then the parable of the sower: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. ²⁰ As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, ²¹ yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. ²² As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. ²³ As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word



- and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."
5. **The Parable of the Sower emphasizes the role of the listener in the success of the gospel. According to Jesus, the success of the gospel depends, for the most part, on the heart condition of the hearer.**
 - a. **The same teacher teaching the same message will get vastly different results depending the heart of the listener.**
 - b. **Just like the same sower sowing the same seed will get vastly different results depending on the type of soil on which the seed lands.**
 6. **Thus, the four different types of soil correspond to the four different types of hearts.**
 7. **The first soil (soil on the path) represents the hardened heart.**
 - a. **13:19**, "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path."
 - i. **Romans 10:17**, "¹⁷ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."
 1. Paul says the only way we can develop faith (believe, trust, confidence) in Jesus Christ is by hearing or studying the Word of God.
 2. Satan knows this, and he is a crafty fellow.
 - a. He uses any means he can to snatch the word right out of the heart, before that seed can become implanted.
 - i. In Luke's account of the Parable of the Sower, we read in **Luke 8:12**, "¹² The ones along the path are those who have heard. Then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved."
 1. The devil hardens peoples' hearts, so the word cannot be implanted, making it easy for him to snatch it right out of their hearts.
 3. Satan's main tool for hardening the hearts of people is sin.
 - a. The Hebrew writer states in **Hebrews 3:13** that people "may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."
 - i. Satan can make sin look so attractive.
 1. Drinking, pornography, immorality, lying, stealing, anger, greed.
 2. These things can look so attractive to people, but Satan is using these things to trap them.
 3. Slowly, but surely their hearts harden against God and his word as they get more and more enmeshed in sin.
 - b. Finally, these people are so comfortable in sin, their hearts are so hard, that they "refuse to love the truth and so be saved" (**2 Thessalonians 2:10**).



- i. They are so in love with sin, they refuse to love the truth.
 - ii. They harden their hearts to God's word, the devil snatches it from them, and they are unable to believe and be saved.
 - ii. The soil on the path represents the hardened heart.
- 8. **The second soil (rocky soil) represents the shallow heart.**
 - a. **13:20-21**, ²⁰ "As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, ²¹ yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away."
 - i. The rocky soil represents the shallow and superficial individuals.
 - 1. They are super excited to hear the gospel.
 - a. They obey it in short order.
 - b. All of the Christians say, "Wow isn't it great they obeyed the gospel. They are so zealous. They are on fire for Christ."
 - c. Unfortunately, this is just a veneer.
 - 2. Eventually, they are forced to face a trial or persecution on account of Jesus.
 - a. Immediately they fall away, because they are not well grounded.
 - b. This type of person withers in the face of tribulation and persecution, just like the shallow-rooted plant withers in the sun.
 - 3. Jesus says in **Luke 9:23**, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."
 - a. James writes in **James 1:12**, ¹² "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him."
 - i. If you want to wear the crown, you have to bear your cross.
 - ii. The shallow-hearted, however, avoid the cross, and thereby forfeit the crown.
 - b. The shallow heart is represented by the rocky soil.
- 9. **The third soil (thorny soil) represents the divided heart.**
 - a. **13:22**, ²² "As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful."
 - i. The thorny soil represents individuals with divided interests.
 - 1. Instead of seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness (**Matthew 6:33**), these individuals are wrapped up in:
 - a. The cares of this world.
 - b. The deceitfulness of riches.
 - c. The desires for other things (**Mark 4:19**).
 - d. The pleasures of life (**Luke 8:14**).



2. They fall in love with the world, and eventually fall out of love with God.
 - a. The apostle John writes in **I John 2:15**, “¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”
 - b. Jesus says in **Matthew 6:24**, “²⁴ "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”
 - i. Those with divided hearts attempt to love the world and God.
 - ii. They attempt to serve both money and God.
 - iii. They get so wrapped in this life, that they forget their citizenship is supposed to be in heaven (**Philippians 3:20**).
 3. Consequently, the word is choked from their lives, and their lives prove to be unfruitful.
 - b. The divided heart is represented by the thorny soil.
10. **The fourth soil (good soil) represents the good and honest heart.**
- a. **13:23**, “²³ As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”
 - i. The good soil represents individuals with honest and good hearts (**Luke 8:15**).
 1. Unlike those with hardened hearts, these individuals hear and understand the word.
 2. Unlike those with shallow hearts, these individuals hold fast to the word and endure persecution.
 3. Unlike those with divided hearts, these individuals keep God front and center in their lives, bearing fruit.
 - a. The good and honest heart is a heart where the seed can germinate, and grow, and ultimately bear fruit for God.
 - b. The good and honest heart results in a mature Christian producing spiritual fruit in his life, glorifying God in the process.
 - i. Jesus says in **John 15:8**, “⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”
 - ii. Paul encourages us “ to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God” (**Colossians 1:10**).
 - b. Good and honest hearts are represented by the good soil.

11. Conclusion

- a. The sad reality of the situation of the situation is this: good and honest hearts are few and far between.

- i. Sure, Americans own a lot of Bibles, but most of them remain in unopened, pristine condition.
- ii. Sadly, most Americans don't really care a whole lot about God, his word, or his plan to save humanity through Christ. Their hearts have been hardened by sin.
- iii. Of the relatively few that do care somewhat:
 - 1. Many have shallow hearts and do not persevere through persecution, forfeiting their crown.
 - 2. Others have divided hearts and place God in second or third or fourth place in their lives. In so doing, they never bear fruit.
- iv. At times, it can be so easy to get discouraged, until you happen along an individual with a good and honest heart.
 - 1. "[T]his is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty" (**Matthew 13:23**).
 - a. This is the one who will be saved on the last day.
 - b. Finding and evangelizing this one more than makes up for all of the discouragement from the others.
 - c. We're looking for good and honest hearts.

12. Invitation

- a. What is the condition of your heart?
 - i. Is your heart hardened against the truth?
 - ii. Is your heart shallow and superficial?
 - iii. Is your heart divided?
 - iv. Or is your heart good and honest and ready to receive God's Word?
 - I. Our sincere hope this morning is that everyone in this room has a good and honest heart.
 - a. A heart ready to hear and obey God's Word.
- b. God's Word says that you can be saved from your sins through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - i. Believe it! Put your faith in it! And express this faith:
 - 1. Repentance.
 - 2. Confession.
 - 3. Immersion.
- c. At the point of immersion, the scripture says your sins are forgiven, you are given the gift of the Holy Spirit, and you are added to the kingdom.
- d. If you are ready to obey the gospel this morning or you have a care you'd like to bring before the church, won't you please come forward as we stand and sing.
- e. Let us stand and sing.

