

“Secrets of the Kingdom”

“The Sower & the Seed”

Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23

Big Idea – I need to sow the seeds of God’s Word everywhere.

We began the series last week by looking at the big picture of the kingdom of God. In this series of parables, Jesus explained the course of the Gospel in the world.

If Israel had received Him as King, the blessings would have flowed out from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. But the nation rejected Him, and God instituted a new program on earth. During this present age, "the kingdom of heaven" is a mixture of true and false, good and bad, as pictured in these parables. It is "Christendom," professing allegiance to the King, and yet containing a lot contrary to the principles of the King.

When we say, "Let me plant this thought in your mind," we express the idea of this parable. The seed is God's Word; the various soils represent different kinds of hearts; and the varied results show the different responses to the Word of God. Jesus explained this parable so there is no doubt of its meaning.

1. Explanation of the Parable

The Sower

Notice vs.37, where in an explanation of " the Wheat & the Tares" Jesus explains "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man"

the "sower" in this parable referred to Jesus, but now pertains to anyone who faithfully proclaims the message of the Son of Man

The Seed

The seed is *"the word of the kingdom"* – Matt. 13:19a

Matthew 13:19 "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom..."

the gospel of the kingdom was the theme of Jesus' preaching

Matthew 4:23 "Jesus went everywhere in Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the Good News about the kingdom of heaven, and healing all the people’s diseases and sicknesses."

Luke 8:11 "...the seed is the Word of God."

Four Types of Soil

"The Wayside" (The First Soil)

represents one who *"hears...and does not understand"*- Mt 13:19a

those who have hardened their hearts prior to hearing the Word - cf. Matt 13:15

"birds" represent "the wicked one" (the devil" in Lk 8:12), who snatches away the Word from those whose hearts are hardened

Their condition therefore is one of being "blinded" by Satan to the gospel - 2 Co 4:3-4

2 Corinthians 4:4 "The devil who rules this world has blinded the minds of those who do not believe. They cannot see the light of the Good News—the Good News about the glory of Christ, who is exactly like God."

Satan contributes to their blindness, but it is precipitated by their own hardness of heart!

"The Stony Places" (The Second Soil)

This soil represents the one who...

"this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for awhile when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles" Matthew 13:20, 21

Some people hear the Word and receive it with great joy...But with no root, they are not grounded in the Word, so that when troubles arise, there is no endurance and stumbling occurs.

We learn that an emotional reception without a strong foundation based upon the Word will not enable one to stand against tribulation and persecution.

The sun represents persecution that comes because of the Word.

Persecution helps believers grow. But the sunshine will kill a plant with no roots.

This explains why some "believers" do not last: Their faith was weak, their understanding was meager, and their decision was not sincere.

Sad reality is that it is possible to "believe" and yet not be saved.

John 2:23 When Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Passover Feast, many people believed in him because they saw the miracles he did.

24 But Jesus did not trust himself to them because he knew them all.

25 He did not need anyone to tell him about people, because he knew what was in people's minds.

Unless there is fruit in the life, there is not saving faith in the heart.

Among the Thorns (The Third Soil)

soil represents the one who...*"hears the word"* - Mt 13:22a, but whose ability to bear fruit is choked by: *"the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches"* - Mt 13:22

The "pleasures of life" (added in Lk 8:14)

How these three "thorns" can cause us to be unfruitful is explained in other portions of God's Word...

The cares of this world:

Can cause us to be unprepared - cf. Lk 21:34

Luke 21:34 "Watch out! Don't let your hearts be dulled by carousing and drunkenness, and by the cares of this life. Don't let that day catch you unaware..."

The evil in cares and anxieties is that they can distract our minds from what is truly important - cf. Lk 12:29-32

The deceitfulness of riches

1 Timothy 6:9 "Those who want to become rich bring temptation to themselves and are caught in a trap. They want many foolish and harmful things that ruin and destroy people."

10 The love of money causes all kinds of evil. Some people have left the faith, because they wanted to get more money, but they have caused themselves much sorrow."

The evil in riches lies in diverting our attention away from God, and feeling self-sufficient - 1 Titus 6:17

1 Timothy 6:17 "Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment."

Pleasures of life - Those involving the flesh in particular divert our minds from the things of the Spirit - cf. Gal. 5:17; Sowing to the flesh make it impossible to reap of the Spirit! – Gal. 6:7-9

Good Ground (The Fourth Soil)...

This soil represents the one who:

"hears the word and understands it, ...bears fruit and produces" – Matt. 13:23b

Luke adds that he hears:

"the word with a noble and good heart" and then "keeps it and bears fruit with endurance" - Lk 8:15

Those with "a noble and good heart", then, are the ones...Who will understand the Word and will keep it, and with patience/endurance produce fruit in their lives!

They will be like the Bereans, who were commended for being "fair-minded":

"they received the word with all readiness and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" Acts 17:11

Note the importance of "understanding" in relation to "bearing fruit"...

Jesus connected them in this parable - Matt 13:23

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" - Co 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!

What kind of "fruit?"

The fruit of winning souls to Christ – Rom. 1:13; Prov. 11:30

Romans 1:13 "... I planned many times to visit you, but I was prevented until now. I wanted to work among you and see spiritual fruit, just as I have seen among other Gentiles."

Proverbs 11:30 "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he that wins souls is wise."

The fruit of practical holiness - Rom 6:22

Romans 6:22 :But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life."

The fruit of sharing material things - Rom 15:27

Romans 15:27 They were glad to give this offering because they feel they owe a real debt to them. Since the Gentiles received the spiritual blessings of the Good News from the believers in Jerusalem, they feel the least they can do in return is to help them financially.

The fruit of the Spirit (i.e., a Christ-like character) - Ga 5:22-23

Galatians 5:22, 23 "...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering

The fruit of good works – Col. 1:10

Colossians 1:10 "...you will live the kind of life that honors and pleases the Lord in every way. You will produce fruit in every good work and grow in the knowledge of God.

The fruit of praise & thanksgiving - Heb 13:15

Hebrews 13:15 "...let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

Notice, not all will bear the same amount...

"some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" - Mt 13:23

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 (5 bags silver, 2 bags, 1 bag)

Whatever our ability, we should exercise it accordingly

1 Peter 4:10 "Each of you has received a gift to use to serve others. Be good servants of God's various gifts of grace."

2. Application of the Parable

Are you like the wayside?

If you have heard the gospel of Christ and His kingdom, but are not yet a Christian, you may be in the process of hardening your heart the longer you wait! 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!

Are you like the stony places?

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

Are you like the soil among the thorns?

If you responded to the gospel at one time, but are becoming too preoccupied with the cares, riches, and pleasures of this world...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

Are you like the good soil?

If you have responded to the gospel, and are bearing fruit...you've demonstrated several important things:

You have a good and noble heart!

You have come to understand the Word!

You have been keeping it with patience, so the Word of God has been able to produce its intended effect in you!

CONCLUSION

When Jesus finished telling His parable of the Sower, He cried out:

"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" - Matthew 13:9

we learn that not all those who have ears to hear, really listen!

It is important that we listen well when God's Word is being proclaimed, for that is how faith is obtained
- Romans 10:17

Romans 10:17 "So faith comes from hearing the Good News, and people hear the Good News when someone tells them about Christ."

