

A Sower, the Seed, and the Soil

Matthew 13: 1-9; 18-23

As I begin to deal with the parables of Jesus in Matthew 13, I feel the need to lay some groundwork first. As one reads the Scriptures, it is revealed that Jesus came unto the nation of Israel as their promised Messiah. Although He presented Himself as such, with many undeniable truths, Israel rejected Jesus as the Christ. They denied His deity and consented to His crucifixion. Following the rejection of Jesus by Israel, the Gospel was taken to the Gentiles. Take a moment to consider [Matthew 12:14-21](#), particularly [Vv.18, 21](#). The parables Jesus gave in our text chapter follow this rejection. Jesus now speaks of what is commonly known as the church age, the period of time following His rejection and crucifixion until His second coming. The parables we will consider deal with the day in which we now live.

This parable is likely the best known of Jesus' parables. Many refer to it as the parable of the sower. It deals with a sower, the seed he sowed, and the soil in which the seed was sown. Each of these three elements are vital to ensuring a harvest. Many like to focus on the sower primarily, but the other two elements are just as important, if not more important. I want to examine the [principles](#) Jesus reveals as we consider: [A Sower, the Seed, and the Soil](#).

I. Jesus spoke of a Sower (3) – As Jesus begins the parable, He spoke of one who went forth to sow seeds. Consider:

A. His Wisdom (3) – [And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow.](#) Jesus doesn't reveal a lot of detail about the sower. We don't know his name, how old he was, or even how long he had been sowing and harvesting. All we know is that he went forth to sow. Although we don't know much, we do discover the wisdom the sower possessed. It is apparent that he knew the value and potential of the seed. The sower knew the seed would never produce a harvest unless it was sown.

- This likely sounds elementary, but it deserves our attention. You don't have to possess a degree in agriculture to know that seeds need to be sown if there is to be a harvest. We will look at the seed in a moment, but the potential of the seed will never be known until it is sown. If people are to embrace the Gospel, resulting in a harvest (the salvation of their souls,) we must be willing to sow the seed of the good news of Jesus Christ.

B. His Work (3) – [And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow.](#) The sower knew the seed must be sown in order to receive a harvest. Such wisdom is

valuable, but wisdom alone is not enough. In order for there to be any chance of harvest, the sower must sow the seed. It would never produce a harvest unless it was sown. The sower had to take the seed he possessed and sow it in the ground.

- Many believers understand the principles in sowing and reaping, and yet the majority are unwilling to sow the seed. We possess the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Those who receive Christ by faith are saved by His grace, forgiven of sin, reconciled to God, placed within the body of Christ, and guaranteed eternal life. Wouldn't you agree that everyone needs such grace? If they are to have any chance of salvation, the Gospel seed must be sown. It is not enough to know the doctrines of grace. One must receive them. It is not enough for us to simply know the way of salvation. We must be willing to do the work and sow the seed if there is to be a harvest.

II. Jesus spoke of the Seed – In this parable, Jesus also refers to the seed sown. Consider:

A. Its Power – In the parallel passage in Luke, Jesus clearly declares the seed is the Word of God. **Luke 8:11 – Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.** Paul declares that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. **Isaiah 55:11 – So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.** **Heb.4:12 – For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.** There is power within the Word of God; it is living and able to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. God's Word has the ability to convict of sin and reveal Christ as the Savior. We don't possess that power, but we can sow the seed and allow the Spirit to work through the Word.

- We live in an impatient world. We have grown accustomed to immediate results. Anyone who knows anything about planting and harvesting knows that it takes time for the seed to germinate in the soil, producing a plant, which in time produces fruit. We don't have the ability to save; the power lies in the Word. In fact, if we do see the harvest, it will be the result of the Spirit's work over time. We cannot expect to receive an immediate harvest every time we sow the seed, but we must be faithful to sow. Once the seed is planted, it is up to the Lord to give the increase!

B. Its Potential (8; 23) – **But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.** ^[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.** A tiny seed has the potential to produce a great harvest. Every seed planted won't necessarily produce such a harvest, but the potential is always there. Jesus declares that

some of the seed produced a thirty-fold harvest, some sixty-fold, and others even a hundred-fold. Doing the math, one seed has the potential to produce between a 3,000% yield all the way up to a 10,000% yield. That reveals that one tiny seed has the potential to multiply itself 10,000 times.

- We know this principle is true in regard to plants, and it is also true in a spiritual sense. Once the Word of God is planted in favorable soil, a prepared heart, it has unlimited potential. Now we know that Jesus declares we can do nothing apart from Him. He is the vine and we are the branches. The vine produces the fruit, while the branch merely holds the fruit. However, the Gospel seed planted in the right heart has the potential to produce an abundance of fruit for the glory of God and the advancement of the Kingdom. Never underestimate what the Lord is able to do with one seed being sown in the right place. *Guiding and touching just one life can impact multitudes. For example, a Sunday School teacher, a Mr. Kimball, in 1858, led a Boston shoe clerk to give his life to Christ. The clerk, Dwight L. Moody, became an evangelist. In England in 1879, he awakened evangelistic zeal in the heart of Fredrick B. Meyer, pastor of a small church. F. B. Meyer, preaching to an American college campus, brought to Christ a student named J. Wilbur Chapman. Chapman, engaged in YMCA work, employed a former baseball player, Billy Sunday, to do evangelistic work. Billy Sunday held a revival in Charlotte, N.C. A group of local men were so enthusiastic afterward that they planned another evangelistic campaign, bringing Mordecai Hamm to town to preach. During Hamm's revival, a young man named Billy Graham heard the gospel and yielded his life to Christ.*ⁱ Do you see the exponential effect one seed sown in the right place can produce?

III. Jesus spoke of the Soil – Jesus dealt with four types of soil where the sower sowed the seed. In the later verses, He defines each type of soil. He spoke of:

A. The Trampled Soil (4, 19) – *And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:*^[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.* The way side speaks of the paths along the fields where people traveled. This soil was trampled down and hard. The seed had no chance of making its way into the ground, and thus it never germinated to produce a harvest. In fact, the seeds that fell by the way side, on hard and trampled ground, were quickly devoured by the birds. Jesus declares that Satan likes to steal the seed away before it has the opportunity to take root.

- Many hearts today are like the soil found along the way side. It has not been prepared to receive the seed and is quickly stolen away by Satan. This results from many factors. Maybe they are engaged in sin and have no desire for the Lord. Maybe their hearts are hard and cold toward the things of God. Whatever the case, the seed is removed before it has the chance to produce.

B. The Thin Soil (5-6, 20-21) – 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. ^[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. Living in the region we do, I often thought of this type of soil as that which had rocks and stones scattered throughout. Actually in and around Jerusalem, there were large layers of limestone just beneath the surface. On top it looked good for planting, but the soil was very thin, and provided no depth for the plant to produce a good root system. When the sun bore down, the moisture quickly dried up, and the plant perished in the dry, arid, heat.

- Some gladly receive the Word, but there is no depth in their lives. They are not rooted in the faith, and when trials and adversity come, they abandon their faith. These are what my grandmother used to call, “convenience Christians.” These never make a genuine commitment to the Lord and are quickly gone with the first storm or trial.

C. The Thorny Soil (7, 22) – And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: ^[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. This type of soil produces a similar result to the stony places. These tend to last a bit longer than those grown on thin soil, but the end result is the same. This seed takes root deep within the soil, but along with the plant, thorns and weeds also grow. The thorns and weeds rob the plant of sunlight, water, and rich nutrients in the soil, slowly choking the life out of the plant. It may look like the plants around it, but it will never produce fruit.

- Jesus described these as those who are choked out by the cares of the world and the lure of riches and the flesh. They started out well, but soon fell prey to the environment around them. Their desire for the things of the world that please the flesh led to their demise. This illustrates the great importance to rid our lives of those things that hinder our relationship with Christ.

D. The Tender Soil (8, 23) – But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. ^[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. This soil pictures the heart that has been properly prepared by the Spirit to receive the seed of the Word. It isn't hard and trampled by sin. It isn't shallow and lacking in depth. It isn't competing with the cares of life. This heart receives the Word, becoming deeply rooted in the Lord, and produces much fruit. This type of heart produces genuine salvation that impacts others for the Lord. This soil results in fruit for the Kingdom.

Conclusion: This has been an interesting look at the sower, the seed, and the soil. In each scenario the sower and the seed were the same. There were similarities in three of the results produced by various types of soil, but only one produced fruit. That is the indicator of salvation. Jesus reveals that many show interest in the Gospel, but not all receive it. Of the seed that was sown, only 25% produced fruit. Those who are abiding in the vine, saved by the grace of God will bear fruit for the Lord.

Jesus died for the sin of humanity, offering Himself our atoning sacrifice. He rose triumphant over death, securing eternal life for all who receive Him by faith. The seed has been sown yet again today. What type of soil pictures your heart? Are you hard hearted and cold, having the seed stolen before you leave the service? Are you shallow in faith, yet unsure of Christ? Maybe you have heard the Gospel many times, and yet desire the pleasures of the flesh more than a relationship with the Lord. Only a heart that is properly prepared will result in salvation. Are you among the 25% that received the Word in good soil? If not, I urge you to respond to the call of salvation.

Church we have no way of knowing the condition of the heart, but we must do as the sower and faithfully sow the seed. It is up to God to prepare the heart and give the increase.

ⁱ Mattoon's Treasures - Mattoon's Treasures – Treasures from The Sermon on the Mount, Volume 1.