

## MEDITATION 36

Mark 4: 14-20

Jesus explains the parable of the Sower to his disciples in this way: "The sower sows the word. <sup>15</sup> These are the ones (persons) on the path where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. <sup>16</sup> And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: when they hear the word, they immediately receive it with joy. <sup>17</sup> But they have no root and endure only for a while; then, when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.<sup>□</sup> <sup>18</sup> And others are those sown among the thorns: these are the ones who hear the word, <sup>19</sup> but the cares of the age and the lure of wealth and the desire for other things come in and choke the word, and it yields nothing. <sup>20</sup> And these are the ones sown on the good soil: they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold."

Jesus describes 4 kinds of persons, or at least, 4 kinds of experiences that can happen when the seed that is the word of God in Jesus is scattered upon persons who hear it.

For some, the word never gets past the hearing stage. The resistance or rejection in them is interpreted as "Satan" who represents all that is evil, bad and fearful in the world. The word is "taken away" from them. It never gets a chance to enter in. Tragic, but sadly a reality.

For some, the word is received with enthusiasm and joy. But over time the enthusiasm and joy wanes and nothing deeper takes root. Any opposition or oppression from outside further blocks the word from taking deeper root.

For some, the word is received and it does go deep, beyond the enthusiasm and joy of discovery. But life's troubles, concerns, anxieties and distractions fill up one's inner space and the word is choked and dies away.

Finally, for some, the word lands. It is received with enthusiasm and joy, and it establishes some deep roots even through times of trouble, anxiety, concern and distraction from worldly desires for money and recognition. And so it yields fruit, astonishingly so, abundant, rich and a blessing to the world around.

So where do you fit into this parable? Are you one who has never absorbed the word of gospel love? No. You wouldn't be taking in this meditation if you had no desire planted in you.

Are you one who has received the gospel of love with enthusiasm and joy, but soon after lost that high and are searching for it again? People's questioning and criticizing have further dampened the certainty you felt for what you once had.

Are you one who has received the gospel of love and it has sunk deep inside you. But life's troubles, anxieties, concerns, preoccupations and distractions have choked the seed of such love in you as the core driver and energizer in your life? God's love in you falls away and other currents take over.

Or finally, are you one in whom the seed has entered, built deep roots, and despite life's many travails and concerns has grown, flourished and produced wonderful fruit?

Maybe you've had your seasons in all of these conditions and cannot simply claim to be one person. Maybe you are currently in one particular season now. Maybe you are being called to move through so that you cultivate deeper roots or that you redirect your focus so that the roots smothered by thorns are allowed to grow and blossom again or in a new way...

Where are you on the journey Jesus has called you by planting the seed of his gospel love in you?

PRAYER: We want to grow, O God. We want your seed of love to produce fruit in us, fruit that not only makes us flourish with inner spiritual health, but fruit that also nourishes those around us...

Help us... raise us up... Wherever there is resistance... Is it from outside, pressing in on us?... Is it resistance from within us to what your love demands of us? ... Is it fear of what may come if genuine love has it's way in what we need to speak, do or change?...

You have never promised us a trouble-free life, O God... What you have promised us is a life of flourishing, even when it includes trouble in our lives... Whether the trouble simply comes from the chance and random accidents of life, or whether the trouble comes from the fear and struggle that grows within us... May the seed of your love planted in us grow strong roots, deep roots, and may it produce fruit that may bless us and the world around us... It is never too late... and it is time... Amen.