



## Beware the Land of Make Believe: The Parable of the Sower

The Parable of the Sower is found in Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8. While this is a familiar parable, few stop to consider what is being said and the application to the “modern church.” Let’s put some of the phrases side-by-side with the explanation Jesus provides as to the meaning of each phrase and consider how each of the “soils” might relate to various people groups today.

Look at the picture found with this blog. This is an actual photograph taken in Nazareth, Israel a few years ago. In ancient Israel some of the “farmland” of that area would have

looked like this rather than the wide open spaces we often envision when thinking about farming. These were hard surfaces cut (trampled) into paths along the side of a slope or hill. The pathways were hard from foot travel (human and animal). Next to the path is a rocky area that builds up the path to make it somewhat level, there is a weedy/untilled area and then a small amount of actual “farmable” area where a few things could be planted and harvested. I don’t know the ratio of each of these sections, but I can assure you that the ratio of the farmable portion to the other three is quite small. Still people need to eat, so they farmed what they could. Right?

Before we jump in let’s consider the players/parts of this parable:

The **SOWER** is Jesus (the Son of Man – see v.37 in the next parable where Jesus clearly states this) – He is the One Who “sows” the seed.

The **SEED** is the Word of God – the Greek word used here is *logon*. *Logo* or *logon* is a common term used 330 times in the New Testament that indicates a person sharing a message. It is used of Jesus in John 1:1 – with Jesus being the physical expression of the Father.

The different **SOILS** are human beings who “hear” the Gospel of Jesus Christ and their various responses to what they “hear.” This is not a representation of the church; it is a representation of all the world. With this picture in mind, let’s break down what Jesus says in Matthew 13:1-23.

**1.** v.3 *“Behold, the sower went out to sow;”* Imagine a person walking along this pathway, a cloth bag slung over his shoulder that is filled with seed. He reaches his hand inside the bag, grabs a handful of seed and begins to scatter it, almost indiscriminately, toward the prepared soil. Perhaps the wind catches some and blows it in various directions. Because the “good soil area” is so small some of the seed invariably gets into the other areas. The sower doesn’t seem worried about this at all.

**2.** v.4 *and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up.* Jesus provides the explanation of this part in v.19 *“When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path.”*

The “message about the kingdom” is the Gospel – the good news of Christ Jesus’ salvation offer. The “evil one” is Satan (represented by “the birds”) who causes these people to quickly forget what they heard, it means nothing to them. It produces nothing in them. It is interesting to compare the condition of this “soil” to the condition of one’s heart. Hard heart = hard soil, nothing ever sinks in because some simply don’t want it to. That is their choice.

All of the next three soil types may be found inside the church, but all are not true believers as you will see.

3. v.5 *"Others [seeds] fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. 6 But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away."*

Again, Jesus provides the explanation: v.20 *"The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away."*

If you watch what happens when a seed is planted, it works first on its root system to establish itself against adversaries (wind, excessive sun, pests, etc.) and to find water for survival and growth. Only after it has expended time and energy to do this will the top of the plant begin to grow much. In this case, however, only a small amount of soil exists so the plant doesn't establish its root system and thus begins to grow above ground too quickly and doesn't last long.

This time Satan doesn't "steal" the Word from the people. The people actually "receive" the Word, at least in their mind (intellectual and emotional acceptance) and with great enthusiasm (joy). This is QUITE COMMON in the modern Western church. When the message of the church is non-stop "don't worry, be happy" and/or presenting the idea that Christianity is based on a health or wealth mentality (the worldly things you will receive if you follow their faith), beware. This group is all about "feelings" – it's all about the emotional "high" found in the church service or the excitement they feel when telling others about the incredible (material) things "God" has done for them.

People practicing this kind of Christianity will often have the appearance (above the soil) of believing, but when true Christianity begins to show itself, their Christianity will fail, and they **will** fall away. (Note: John 16:33 *"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world"*)

4. v.7 *"Others [seeds] fell upon the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out."*

Let's see what Jesus says about this one: v.22 *"The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful."*

Again, these people hear the Word and may intellectually accept it, but it doesn't go very far, both problems and success are an impediment to the belief system of these people.

**Satan** is the issue for the first soil type (along the path). **The flesh** took out the rocky ground folks. These are the ones who attend church – all the time! They are highly emotional and have the appearance of great zeal during the service times. But otherwise, don't produce anything because they have no true depth.

**The world** grabs the weedy-ground folks and chokes the Word out of them. This could be all the way from poverty and illness to great health, wealth, and prosperity, either end will do.

Note that **none** of these first three are true believers. While they have all heard the Word, they have either rejected it or have only professed to have received it but have not done so in their heart of hearts

(employing intellectual or emotional assent rather than true faith and absolute trust in Jesus as Savior).

**My friends, we would do well to examine our own hearts to be certain that we are truly IN THE faith. Only those in the final category (the good soil below) will be raptured in the days ahead as they alone represent the true church - despite who shows up on the weekends in the various buildings we call churches.**

Let's move on to see what happens when the seed gets into "good soil."

5. v.8 *"And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."*

*EXPLANATION:*

*v.23 "But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."*

This same parable is provided in Mark and Luke's Gospels:

Luke 8:15: *"But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop."*

Mark 4:20 *"Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."*

Note the two-part explanation of the good soil, someone who: (a) hears the Word and (b) understands it or retains it or accepts it. The result will be a production of a crop (for some a large crop, for others not so much, but it seems that the bottom line expectation is that those who accept it WILL produce fruit). Jesus goes on to tell His disciples the difference between themselves and the "general public" by way of a prophesy given in Isaiah 6:

*v14 "In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'You will keep on hearing but will not understand; You will keep on seeing, but will not perceive; For the heart of this people has become dull, With their ears they scarcely hear, And they have closed their eyes, Otherwise they would see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, And understand with their heart and return, And I would heal them.'*

*v10 "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted."*

His closing remarks are: *v16 "But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear."*

**I repeat my prior admonition, we would be wise to test ourselves – do you have eyes to see and ears to hear?** If so, you are truly blessed my friend, and so am I, for we have been saved by grace.

**Make sure you experientially (not intellectually) "know" the Gospel message, that you know in your mind AND heart Who Jesus is and what He did FOR YOU, that you know Him not just about Him!** Your actions, your behavior, will provide the "evidence" of your faith and gratitude. (James 2:18-19 *"Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder."*)

If you are truly saved, the question should not be whether or not you are producing fruit, the only question that should remain is ... how much: 30 times, 60 times or 100 times what was sown?

**How much fruit are you producing?**

Maranatha! My Friends!