

The Parable of the Sower **(Mark 4:1-9)**

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¹ And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea. ² Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching:

³ “Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. ⁴ And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. ⁵ Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. ⁶ But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. ⁷ And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. ⁸ But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.”

⁹ And He said to them, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

The Point of the Parable

- Parables are earthly stories with heavenly meanings.
 - Jesus preached in parables to separate those who earnestly desire truth from those who do not (**Mark 10:11-12; Matt. 13:12-15**).
- The Parable of the Sower appears in three of the four gospels (**Matt. 13:1-9, 18-23; Mark 4:1-9, 14-20; Luke 8:4-8, 11-14**).
- This parable pictures:
 - A sower planting seed in various types of soils to various levels of success.
 - The proper soil was missing in all three cases of failure, even though good seed was used and the sower did his job in planting it.
- The seed represents the Word of God (**Luke 8:11**).
- The various soils represents different types of listeners.

Sowers Sow

- Sowers have a responsibility to sow a specific seed: the Word of God (**v.14; 1 Pet. 1:22-23**).
 - Sowers do not sow their consciences, politics, opinions, etc.; they sow the Word of God (**2 Tim. 4:1-5**).
 - Only the Word of God produces the appropriate harvest (**Rom. 1:16; Heb. 4:12**).
- Sowers must sow, even if there will be no harvest or if he does not personally enjoy the benefits of it (**v.3, 14; 1 Cor. 3:6-8; Matt. 28:20**).
 - Whether or not we see a bountiful harvest, God's Word is still fulfilling its purpose (**Isa. 55:11; 1 Cor. 1:18-31; 1 Pet. 3:1-2**).

“Are you sowing the seed of the kingdom, brother?”

Wayside Soil

- The first soil mentioned is wayside soil (**v.3-4**).
 - Wayside soil is one who hears the Word of God and does not understand it (**Matt. 13:19**).
 - The problem is not with the seed.
 - The Word of God can be understood (**John 17:17, 12:48**).
 - The problem is with the soil (**Matt. 13:15; 1 Cor. 2:14**).
 - Satan snatches the seed out of the person's heart (**Matt. 13:19; 2 Cor. 4:3-4; 2 Thess. 2:10-12**).
 - It is also possible the sower was careless in how he planted the seed since it “**fell**” by the wayside (**v.4**).
 - Sowers must be careful how they plant seed (**1 Tim. 4:6, 16; 1 Pet. 4:11; James 3:1**).
 - Listeners must take heed how they hear the seed (**Luke 8:18**).
 - The sower and soil bear equal responsibility for how they plant and receive the seed (**Matt. 15:14**).

Stony Soil

- The second soil mentioned is stony soil (**v.5-6**).
 - Seed planted in stony soil experiences growth for a time until eventually stumbling due to lacking a “**root in themselves**” (**v.16-18**).
 - Four things can lead to destruction of the crop:
 - Temptation (**Luke 8:13**).
 - Tribulation (**Matt. 13:21**).
 - Persecution (**v.17**).
 - Affliction (**v.17**).
 - Rather than allowing these to prevent a harvest, we must work to respond to these things with joy, knowing the outcome (**Matt. 5:10-12; Rom. 5:3**).
 - It is common for new converts to start out fervently growing only to eventually wither away because they are not properly rooted (**Heb. 6:1-6, 5:11-12**).
 - We must root ourselves deeply in God’s Word (**Col. 2:6-7; 2 Pet. 3:14-18**).

Thorny Soil

- The third soil mentioned is thorny soil (**v.7**).
 - This type of listener puts cares of this world ahead of spiritual matters (**Matt. 13:22**).
 - Nothing in this present world can come before spiritual matters (**Matt. 6:33**), especially the “**deceitfulness of riches**” (**Matt. 13:22; Matt. 6:34; 1 Tim. 6:10**).
 - Consider the rich young ruler (**Matt. 19:16-21**).
 - Carnality chokes out the seed and prevents good fruit from being produced (**Gal. 5:19-26, 6:8; Rom. 8:6-8; Matt. 7:15-20**).
 - We have a responsibility to bear much good fruit, otherwise the Lord will cut us down (**John 15:1-8; Matt. 7:19; Rom. 6:21-23**).
 - Demas may be an example of thorny soil (**2 Tim. 4:10**).

Good Soil

- The fourth soil mentioned is good soil (**v.8**).
 - This is the only soil that produced a crop.
 - These are listeners with good and honest hearts (**Luke 8:15**); they honestly and critically examine themselves against the truth (**2 Cor. 13:5**).
 - These are people who hear the Word of God, understand (accept) it, do not allow Satan or the world to overcome them, and bear good fruit (**Acts 2:38-47**).
 - This requires total dependance and dedication to God (**Jer. 17:7-8**).
 - Even good soil can eventually fall prey to Satan and the cares of this world; when such occurs, a specific good fruit must be produced (**Matt. 3:8; Rev. 2:4-5**).
 - Good soil will eventually become a sower (**Heb. 5:12; Acts 18:24-26, 8:1-4**).
 - Good soil requires upkeep, maintenance, etc. – we must not let good soil get burnt out (**Gal. 6:9**)!

What Type of Soil Are We?