



The Parable of the  
**SOWER**

· Mark 4:1-20

**The Sower [The Four Soils]  
(Mt 13:3-9,18-23)**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. As Jesus went about preaching the gospel of the kingdom of heaven (cf. **Mt 4:17,23**), He did not always find a receptive audience...
  - a. Even where He did mighty works, some did not repent - **Mt 11:20-24**
  - b. Some sought to trick Him, so they might have reason to accuse Him - **Mt 12:9-14**-- It was for this very reason that Jesus began teaching publicly in “parables” - **Mt 13:10-13**
  
2. The problem Jesus faced was that many people, though they had ears to hear, their ears had become “hard of hearing” - **Mt 13:14-15**
  
3. To illustrate this problem, Jesus told a parable that has come to be known as “**The Parable Of The Sower**”
  - a. It can also be properly called “**The Parable Of The Four Soils**”
  - b. Or “**The Parable Of The Seed**”-- It was told by Jesus to illustrate different reactions to the gospel message
  
4. The parable itself is recorded in **Mt 13:3-9** (also **Mk 4:3-9; Lk 8:4-8**) - PLEASE READ
  - a. It is one of the few parables in which we actually have Jesus’ own interpretation of the parable
  - b. The significance of this particular parable is enhanced by the words of Jesus recorded in **Mk 4:13**.

***“Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all parables?”***

[The value of this parable becomes clearer in the light of Jesus’ explanation, for by it we can see ourselves as we really are in regards to how we have received the Word into our lives...]

## **I. EXPLANATION OF THE PARABLE**

### **A. “THE SOWER”**

1. Not specifically mentioned, but compare **Mt 13:37**
  - a. This is in explanation of “**The Parable Of The Wheat And The Tares**”
  - b. In which Jesus explains “*He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man*”
2. So it is likely that the “sower” in this parable had immediate reference to Jesus
3. But it is a fair use of the parable to apply it today to anyone who faithfully proclaims the message of the Son of Man

### **B. “THE SEED”**

1. The seed is “**the word of the kingdom**” - **Mt 13:19a**
2. I.e., the gospel of the kingdom, which was the theme of Jesus’ preaching - **Mt 4:23**
3. It was also an important element of apostolic preaching - cf. **Ac 8:12; 28:30-31**

### **C. “THE WAYSIDE” (The First Soil)**

1. This soil represents one who “hears....and does not understand” - **Mt 13:19a**
2. Most likely, these are those who have hardened their hearts prior to hearing the Word - cf. **Mt 13:15**
3. The “**birds**” represent “**the wicked one**” (called “the devil” in **Lk 8:12**)
  - a. Who snatches away the Word from those whose hearts are hardened
  - b. Their condition therefore is one of being “blinded” by Satan to the gospel - cf. **2 Co 4: 3-4**

4. While Satan contributes to their blindness, it is precipitated by their own hardness of heart!

**D. “THE STONY PLACES” (The Second Soil)** 1. This soil represents the one who...

- a. “hears the word and immediately receives it with joy” - **Mt 13:20**
- b. “yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while” - **Mt 13:21a**
- c. “when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles” - **Mt 13:21b**

2. Some hear the Word and receive it with great joy...

- a. But with no root, they are not grounded in the Word
- b. So that when troubles arise, there is no endurance and stumbling occurs

3. Here we learn that an emotional reception without a strong foundation based upon the

Word will not enable one to stand against tribulation and persecution

**E. “AMONG THE THORNS” (The Third Soil)** 1. This soil represents the one who...

- a. “hears the word” - **Mt 13:22a**
- b. But whose ability to bear fruit is choked by:
  - 1) “the cares of this world” - **Mt 13:22b**
  - 2) “the deceitfulness of riches” - **Mt 13:22c**
  - 3) “pleasures of life” (added in **Lk 8:14**)

2. How these three “thorns” can cause us to be unfruitful is explained in other portions of

God’s Word...

a. *The cares of this world*

- 1) Can cause us to be unprepared - cf. **Lk 21:34-36**
  - 2) The evil in cares and anxieties is that they can detract our minds from what is truly important - cf. **Lk 12:29-32**
- b. *The deceitfulness of riches*

- 1) The danger is described in **1 Ti 6:9-10**

- 2) Again, the evil in riches lay in diverting our attention away from God, and feeling self-sufficient - **1 Ti 6:17** c.

***Pleasures of life***

- 1) Those involving the flesh in particular divert our minds from the things of the Spirit
- cf. **Ga 5:17**
- 2) Sowing to the flesh make it impossible to reap of the Spirit!  
- **Ga 6:7-9**

**F. “THE GOOD GROUND” (The Fourth Soil)** 1. This soil represents the one who...

- a. “hears the word and understands it” - **Mt 13:23a**
- b. “indeed bears fruit and produces” - **Mt 13:23b**

b. Luke adds that he hears “the word with a noble and good heart”, and then “keeps it and bears fruit with patience” - **Lk 8:15**

2. Those with “a noble and good heart”, then, are the ones...

- a. Who will understand the Word
- b. Who will keep it, and with patience produce fruit in their lives!

3. They will be like the Bereans, who were commended for being “fair-minded”, as manifested in the way they:

- a. “received the word with all readiness”
- b. “searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” - **Ac 17:11** 4. Note the importance of “understanding” in relation to “bearing fruit”...

- a. Jesus made the connection between the two in this parable - **Mt 13:23**
- b. 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!

5. And what kind of “fruit” will one bear? There are different kinds...

- a. The fruit of winning souls to Christ - **Ro 1:13**

- b. The fruit of practical holiness - **Ro 6:22**
  - c. The fruit of sharing material things - **Ro 15:27**
  - d. The fruit of the Spirit (i.e., a Christ-like character) - **Ga 5:22-23**
  - e. The fruit of good works - **Co 1:10**
  - f. The fruit of praise & thanksgiving - **He 13:15**
6. An important observation is that not all will bear the same amount...
- a. “some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” - **Mt 13:23**
  - b. As 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**
  - c. Whatever our ability, we should exercise it accordingly - cf. **1 Pe 4:10-11**

[With the explanation provided by Jesus Himself, we should have little problem understanding The Parable of The Sower and the spiritual truths Jesus was teaching.

However, it is one thing to understand it, quite another to make application of it. Seeking to make application in a thought-provoking way, let me ask “**What kind of soil are you?**”]

## **II. APPLICATION OF THE PARABLE**

### **A. ARE YOU LIKE “THE WAYSIDE”?**

1. If you have heard the gospel of Christ and His kingdom, but are not yet a Christian...
2. You may be in the process of hardening your heart the longer you wait!
3. 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!

### **B. ARE YOU LIKE “THE STONY PLACES”?**

1. If you responded to the gospel at one time, but are not being grounded in the faith...

2. You will likely fall away when persecution or temptation comes your way!

**C. ARE YOU LIKE THE SOIL “AMONG THE THORNS”?**

1. If you responded to the gospel at one time, but are becoming too preoccupied with the \_\_\_\_\_ cares, riches, and pleasures of this world...
2. You will not be able to bear much fruit!  
-- And remember what Jesus said about branches that don't bear fruit! -

**Jn 15:1-6**

**D. ARE YOU LIKE “THE GOOD SOIL”?**

1. If you have responded to the gospel, and are bearing fruit...
2. Then you have demonstrated several important things:
  - a. You have a good and noble heart!
  - b. You have come to understand the Word!
  - c. You have been keeping it with patience!
3. And so the Word of God has been able to produce its intended effect in you!

**CONCLUSION**

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

***“He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” - Mt 13:9***

2. Clearly from the explanation of Jesus Himself, we learn that not all those who have ears to hear, really listen!
3. It is important that we listen well when God's Word is being proclaimed, for that is how faith is obtained - **Ro 10:17**
4. How well have YOU listened to this parable of Jesus and His explanation?
  - a. If you are anything other than that like “the good soil”, you need to repent today!

- b. For in the next study, we learn what Jesus will do when He comes to gather His kingdom! - cf. **Mt 13:24-30,36-43**

Dear friends and brethren, may you truly have a good and noble heart...hear, examine, understand, and accept the gospel of Christ and the gospel of His kingdom!