

8/2/20

**The Gospel And Man's Heart**  
**Mk. 4:1-20**

The Bible is forever warning us and clearly teaching the evilness of man's heart since the fall, "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the **thoughts** of his heart was only evil continually." Gen. 6:5

1. Jeremiah tells us that the heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked, and that God alone knows the heart of man. Jer. 17:9

2. Jesus confirmed this declaring, "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. Matt. 15:18-19

3. All warning to not be deceived, drift, backslide, depart from the living God or apostatized is to believers, not unbelievers!

We want to look at the Parable of the Sower, which is found in all three synoptic gospels and by comparing them much is gained. Matt. 13, Lk. 8

1. Jesus has now turned to the open-air meeting for the synagogue has become hostile towards Him.

2. The emphasis is on how and what a person hears regarding the Kingdom of God.

The Parable of the Sower is characterized by three things. Mk. 4:1-20

- I. The proclamation of the Parable of the Sower. vs. 1-9
- II. The elaboration on the purpose for teaching the Parable of the Sower. vs. 10-12
- III. The interpretation of the Parable of the Sower. vs. 13-20

**I. The proclamation of the Parable of the Sower. vs. 1-9**

\* The parallel passages. Matt. 13:1-9; Lk. 8:4-8

**A. The setting for the teaching. vs. 1**

1. The location was the Sea of Galilee, "And again He began to teach by the sea." vs. 1a
  - a. The word "again" refers to having withdrawn from the synagogue, due to all the opposition. Mk. 3:7
  - b. On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea." Matt. 13:1
2. The situation was still demanding, "And a great multitude was gathered to Him." vs. 1b

\* The people sought Jesus out constantly.
3. The alteration for His teaching, "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." vs. 1c-d
  - a. The word boat "ploion", indicates a larger vessel, not the smaller one "ploiarion". Mk. 3:9; Matt. 13:2

- b. The multitude faced the sea providing a natural amphitheater to hear Jesus.
- B.** The method of teaching. vs. 2
1. The teaching was new, “Then He taught them many things by parables.” vs. 2a
    - a. The word parables “paraballois”, means to throw alongside. Mk. 3:23; 2:19-22; Matt. 13:3
    - b. Parables use a common understood truth, placed alongside the unknown to know the unknown.
    - c. Parables have a central theme and a punch-line, spiritualizing and allegorizing parables destroys their message.
    - d. Not every detail is to be given a meaning nor interpreted or it will corrupt the true meaning and message intended.
    - e. Only when the parable gives the particular meaning to certain details given in the parable, such as we will see in interpretation by Jesus about the Parable of the Sower.
    - f. Parables do one of two things, either compare or contrast.
  2. The Lord Jesus began to teach, “and said to them in His teaching.” vs. 2b
    - a. The phrase is used seventy-one times in Mark’s gospel.
    - b. Sixteen times it appears to the apostles.

- C.** The introduction of the parable. vs. 3
1. The emphasis is on attentiveness to understand the important truths, “Listen!” vs. 3a
    - a. The word listen “akouo”, means to attend to, consider what is about to be said and perceive the sense of it. vs. 9, 13, 23, 34
    - b. Truths never revealed before, they were to hear. Matt. 13:35; Mk. 4:9, 13, 23, 34
    - c. Mark records the parable in this chapter only, Matthew records many more called “The Kingdom Parable. Matt. 13
  2. The familiar imagery for the parable, “Behold, a sower went out to sow.” vs. 3b-c
    - a. The word Behold “idou” means to see, an imperative command in the aorist middle voice, indicating each person is responsible to pay attention themselves.
      - 1) **It is an imperative command, aorist middle voice, each person must obey to pay attention for themselves.**
      - 2) It is emphatic being at the beginning of the sentence.
    - b. Sower is the Son of Man, Jesus, secondly believers. Matt. 13:37; 1Cor. 3:5-8
    - c. The sowing is the seed, the word. Mk. 4:14; Lk. 8:11
    - d. The soil is the hearts of sinners. vs. 15
    - e. Jesus stated this is the key parable to understand all parables. vs. 13

**D.** The four kinds of soil. vs. 4-9

1. The first ground, “And it happened, as he sowed, *that* some *seed* fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it.” vs. 4
  - a. The four soils are said to represent the hearts of sinners hearing the word of the kingdom, their receptiveness or not. Mk. 4:15; Matt. 13:19; Lk. 8:15
  - b. The wayside “*hodos*”, means the hard ground at the edges of the field where the farmer walked on.
    - 1) So, the seed did not penetrate the soil, but simply laid on the surface of the ground.
    - 2) Therefore, the seed did not germinate.
  - c. Consequently “the birds of the air” devoured “*katesthio*”, the seed, which simply means to eat the seed.
    - 1) Birds consistently represent evil in Scripture, unless otherwise noted in the context. Matt. 13:4
    - 2) Jesus interprets the birds to be evil, the wicked one (Satan) comes and snatches away “*harpozō*”, the seed, suddenly and violently, same word for the rapture. Matt. 13:19; Mk. 4:15
    - 3) These are unresponsive unbelievers to the gospel having a hard heart.
2. The second ground, “Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth;

and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no depth of earth.” vs. 5-6

- a. The stony ground indicates shallow ground with bedrock under it not allowing roots to go down deep.
    - \* This is a common occurrence in Israel
  - b. The outcome is that the sun scorched “*kaumatizo*”, burns it, having no root it withered away, but clearly germinated.
  - c. The words of Jesus “they heard the Word and received it”, the problem was the heart. vs. 16
3. The third ground, “And some *seed* fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop.” vs. 7
    - a. The thorns indicates ground that is crowded with weeds that deplete the nourishment of the seed and choke the seed, Jesus will give the specifics. vs. 17
    - b. Once again the heart is the soil, the problem, a divided heart, allowing things of the world to crowd out the Word.
  4. The fourth ground, “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.” vs. 8
    - a. The good ground is turned over, stones and weeds are removed, the seed penetrates deep to grows and be fruitful.

- b. Notice not all produce the same amount of fruit, 30, 60 and 100 fold!
  - c. This is the committed heart, abiding in Christ.
5. The exhortation, “And He said to them, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” vs. 9
- a. The word hear "akouo", depicts the endowment and faculty of being able to hear, no one is at a disadvantage.
  - b. The point being that just as there are varieties of soils, so there are varieties of men’s hearts towards the word of God. Mk. 4:15
  - c. The problem is not with the seed or the sower, but with the heart of the hearer!

### Illustration

When a woman is pregnant and she has a miscarriage, delivers a still born or a healthy child, were not all three children conceived and human beings?

\* So, the second, third and fourth seed, they received the word and germinated, but two fell away!

### Application

1. Sometimes Pastors teach that the Parable of the Sower teaches that one out of four are saved.
  - a. I don't think that it is the central message.
  - b. Jesus is merely illustrating four kinds of soils or conditons of man’s hearts that hear the word of God and their individual responses.

- c. I believe the Parable of the Sower is a strict warning to all to not spurn or reject the gospel message when a person hears it.
    - \* “For He says: “In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of **salvation** I have helped you.” Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of **salvation.**” 2Cor. 6:2
2. The fault of not being save is clearly on the individual heart.
    - a. The One sowing is Jesus, He cannot be faulted.
    - b. The word is perfect, it cannot be faulted.
    - c. The one hearing and responding is the problem.
      - \* “The heart *is* **deceitful** above all *things*, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?” Jer. 17:9
  3. The Parable of the Sower is a simple illustration of four kinds of hearts, but we have to be careful that we not come to wrong conclusions through logic or reason, when the Scriptures reveal the opposite.
    - a. A person with a hard, stony or thorny heart could die in that condition and be lost, but equally repent and become a fruitful believer.
    - b. Equally the believer is to abide in Christ, not to backslide or go back into the world and apostatize, for all the warnings are to believers, not unbelievers.
      - 1) Listen to the words of Jesus, “**Abide** in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you **abide** in Me. “I am the

vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. “**If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered**; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned.” Jn. 15:4-6

- 2) “Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, **lest we drift away.**” Heb. 2:1
- 3) “Beware, **brethren**, lest there be in any of you an evil **heart** of unbelief in **departing from the living God**; but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” **lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.**” Heb. 3:12-13

*This is the proclamation Parable of the Sower!*

## II. The elaboration of the purpose for teaching the Parable of the Sower. vs. 10-12

\* The parallel passages. Matt. 13:10-17; Lk. 8:9-10

- A. The question about the Parable of the Sower is presented to Jesus. vs. 10
  1. The time is indicated, “But when He was alone.” vs. 10a
    - a. The manner of teaching in parables was new to them.

- b. Though they were with Jesus, both the many disciples with the twelve the did not understand the parable.
  - \* Jesus will remove them, “And He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?” vs. 13
2. The ones asking the question are identified, “those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable.” vs. 10b
  - a. The first group identified is “those around Him”, meaning Jesus.
    - 1) These were the many disciples following Jesus, seventy were sent out to preach to lost sheep of the house of Israel were probably from them.
    - 2) These “around Him” without doubt were the many that responded when Jesus called them to select twelve to be apostles on the mountain after an entire night in prayer. Matt. 10:1-2; Mk. 3:13-14; Lk. 6:12-13
  - b. The second group identified is, “the twelve”, as we have seen comprising of three groups of four each with a leader in each group, be it in the gospels or Acts.
    - 1) The first group of four were the most intimate in fellowship with Jesus, Peter, Andrew, James and John.
      - \* Peter was the leader.

- 2) The second group of four, were less intimate in fellowship with Jesus, Philip, Bartholomew or Nathanael, Thomas and Matthew.  
\* Philip was the leader.
  - 3) The third group of four, were the least intimate in fellowship with Jesus. James the son of Alphaeus, Labbaeus or Thaddaeus, Simon the Cannanite and Judas Ischariot.  
\* James the son of Alphaeus was the leader.
- c. The man Peter was a disciple and apostle that stood on top, the first of the twelve.
- 1) Four times the list appears and every time Peter is the first. Matt. 10:2-4; Mk. 3:16-19; Lk. 6:14-16; Acts 1:13
  - 2) The only other this is true of is Judas Iscariot, he is last.
  - 3) The three most intimate in fellowship were Peter, James and John, Andrew was not in that inner circle, which Jesus gave greater privilege, being on the Mount of Transfiguration, the raising of the daughter of Jairus and to be with Jesus in the Garden as He prayed to the Father about the cross. Matt. 17:1; Mk. 5:37; 14:33

- B.** The distinction between those that believe the gospel and those that reject the gospel is explained. vs. 11-12
1. First are the ones that believe the gospel and repent, “And He said to them, “To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God.” vs. 11a-b
    - a. The twelve had been born again and selected to be apostles by Jesus to reveal the mystery of the Kingdom of God.
      - 1) The word mystery “mysterion” means something previously hidden, but now made known by Jesus.
      - 2) The Kingdom Parables in Matthew were the fulfillment of revealing “things kept secret from the foundation of the world”. Matt. 13:35
      - 3) Every time the word is used in the New Testament it refers to something revealed clearly, not hidden. Rom. 11:25; 1Cor. 15:51; Eph. 3:5; 5:32; 2Thess. 2:7; 1Tim. 3:15; Rev. 1:20
    - b. So Jesus explained all to them because they believed in Him.
      - 1) They were born again.
      - 2) They were disciples of Jesus.
      - 3) They were apostles of Jesus.
  2. Second are the ones that do not believe and reject the gospel, “but to those who are outside, all things come in parables.” vs. 11c-d

- a. The ones “outside” are the unbelievers.
  - b. These “outsiders”, the unbelievers can not make any sense of the parables, being closed to the Holy Spirit’s intent to illuminate and convict them of their sin.
2. The problem again is with the heart, “so that ‘Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And *their* sins be forgiven them.’” vs. 12
- a. At first it seems Jesus is teaching the purpose of the parables was to hinder or obstruct understanding and forgiveness.
  - b. But Matthew says he is quoting “Is. 6:9-10”, the context is where Isaiah tells God to send him to proclaim His word and God described the results due to the condition of Israel’s stiff neckness and hardened hearts by rejecting His word, ending up in greater spiritual dullness and blindness.
    - \* Matthew said this was fulfilled by the Jews. Matt. 13:14-15
  - c. The parabolic method was not to hide or hinder their understanding, but rather to stimulate and cause them to think in hope that they come to the truth of the parable.
    - 1) Common words and language had been rejected by the people at this point and time. Matt. 13:13

- 2) Again, the Parables would be used to prompt curiosity and stimulate the mind and heart to understand the message and revelation in hope that they would see their need to repent.
- 3) If you say that the purpose of parables is to hinder revelation and truth, then you would have to say that those who have been hindered are set free from personal responsibility to respond to the gospel, yet the Bible teaches all are responsible and accountable to God, being able to respond, but choosing not to respond!
- 4) The greater exposure brings greater responsibility. Matt. 11:23-24

### Illustration

Calvinist do not believe man has a free will and all things happen by the “decrees of God” based on His predestination. Therefore in affect they accuse God of predestinating Judas to betray Jesus of betraying Jesus against his will? Listen to the words of Judas, “Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, “**I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.**” And they said, “What *is that* to us? You see *to it!*” Matt. 27:3-4

\* Judas betrayal was his own decision, God did not predestine it or God would be unjust to judge Judas!

**Application**

1. There will not be one person at the White Throne Judgment that will be able to say to God.
  - a. I rejected You because You did not choose me.
  - b. You predestined me to hell, not to heaven.
  - c. You never gave me an opportunity, I never heard the gospel while I was alive on the earth.
    - 1) “And this is the condemnation, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved **darkness** rather than the Light, because their deeds were evil.” Jn. 3:19
    - 2) “The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should **perish** but that all should come to repentance.” 2Pet. 3:9
2. Every person that stands before the White Throne Judgment will give an account for their sins having rejected the gospel offer to forgive their sins.
  - a. The Judge will be Jesus, “And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another **book** was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.” Rev. 20:12
  - b. The eternal abode of the unbeliever will be real, and certain “And anyone not found written in the **Book of Life** was cast into the lake of fire.” Rev. 20:15

- c. Heaven is sinless, being the dwelling of God, “But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s **Book of Life**.” Rev. 21:27
- d. The garments of the saints is the righteousness of Jesus having responded to the gospel, “He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not **blot out** his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.” Rev. 3:5

*This is the elaboration on the purpose for teaching the Parable of the Sower!*

### III. The interpretation of the Parable of the Sower. vs. 13-20

- \* The parallel passages. Matt. 13:18-23; Lk. 8:11-15
- A. The interpretation of the first heart. vs. 13-14
  - \* These are the conditions of the hearts of sinners regarding the gospel, interpreted by Jesus Himself!
  - 1. The mild reproof to the many disciples and the twelve, “And He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?” vs. 13
    - a. They had the capacity, otherwise the reproof is unjust.



- b. The Parable of the Sower is the key foundational Parable to understand all the other Parables by the words of Jesus.
- c. If we get this one wrong, we will misinterpret the other parables!
- 2. The proclaimer of the gospel, “The sower sows the word.” vs. 14
  - a. Jesus.
  - b. All to follow Him.
- 3. The hard-hearted hearers, “And these are those by the wayside, where the Word is sown. And when they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the Word that was sown in their hearts.” vs. 15
  - a. The hard hearted are sinners unwilling and unable to receive by their own doing, the only one not born again.
  - b. Satan takes away the word sown in their hearts, they do not receive it, therefore it does not penetrate, let alone germinate.
    - \* The birds are symbolic of Satan and evil. Matt. 13:19; Mk. 4:4
- B. The interpretation of the second heart. vs. 16-17
  - 1. The shallow hearted, “These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the Word, immediately receive it with gladness.” vs. 16
    - a. These receive the gospel and the Word germinated with joy!
    - b. They are born again.

- 2. The reason for their departure, “And they have no root in themselves, and so endure for a time. Afterward when affliction or persecution arises for the Word's sake, immediately they stumble.” vs. 17
  - a. The shallow-hearted person endures for a season, due to not getting rooted and grounded in the word of God. vs. 17a-b
    - 1) The rooting comes through the study of the word, prayer and being filled with the Holy Spirit.
    - 2) The gathering together with the saints, the church in fellowship.
  - b. The two things that cause them to depart from Christ afterwards are stated. vs. 17c
    - 1) Affliction “Thlipsis” means a pressing together, pressure, anguish or trouble.
      - \* The word is used 45 times for Christians in the New Testament.
    - 2) Persecution “diogmos” from the root “dilo”, to make to run or flee, being harass or mistreated. Matt. 5:10-12
      - \* They love their lives more than giving them up for Christ!
  - c. Therefore after a time of gladness are “immediately they stumble for the word's sake.” vs. 17d
    - 1) The word offended “skandalizo”, means the Word became a stumbling block or impediment to trip or fall.

- 2) Causing a person to distrust and desert one whom he ought to trust and obey.

C. The interpretation of the third heart. vs. 18-19

1. The divided heart, “Now these are the ones sown among thorns; *they are* the ones who hear the word.” vs. 18
  - a. The word hear “akauo”, means to be endowed with the ability to hear.
  - b. Having the given ability to understand, perceive what is being said.
2. The reason for their departure is stated, “and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.” vs. 19
  - a. The divided heart allows the word and Jesus to be crowded out by having wrong priorities, those of the world system and cares, anxieties and worry. vs. 19a
    - \* They are not seeking the Kingdom of God first, then all other things to be added on by God. Matt. 6:25-34
  - b. The deceitfulness of riches. vs. 19b
    - \* “For the **love** of **money** is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” 1Tim. 6:9-10

- c. The desire for other things entering in choke out the Word, and it becomes unfruitful. vs. 19c-d
  - 1) The things not in accord with God’s will or word hindering them to grow, develop and mature, being born again.
  - 2) Notice “become unfruitful”, meaning they bore fruit, then stopped!
    - \* “**Hell** and **Destruction** are never full; So the eyes of man are never satisfied.” Prov. 27:20

D. The interpretation of the fourth heart. vs. 20

1. Those with an open and tender heart to the gospel of good news, “But these are the ones sown on good ground. vs. 20a
  - \* They agree with God about their sinfulness and need of salvation.
2. Those yielding to be illuminated and convicted by the Spirit and repent, “those who hear the word, accept *it*.” vs. 20b-c
  - \* They are open and receive God’s word to penetrate and break up the hard heart.
3. Those who are committed to abide in Christ, “and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.” vs. 20d-g
  - a. The result is allowing God to cleanse, prune and nourish them day to day to become fruitful.
  - b. Growing, developing and maturing spiritually constantly throughout life.

- \* “For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the **latter end** is worse for them than the beginning.”  
2Pet. 2:20

### Illustration

Gardens that are beautiful have been broken up, rocks removed, fertilized, planted and constantly cultivated to remove weeds, it is a daily commitment.

### Application

1. Every person falls into one of these four hearts.
  - a. Hard heart.
  - b. Shallow heart.
  - c. Divided heart.
  - d. Tender heart.
 

\* “And if it seems evil to you to **serve** the LORD, **choose** for yourselves this day whom you will **serve**, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will **serve** the LORD.” Josh. 24:15
2. Every person has to acknowledge certain things.
  - a. There is nothing wrong with the seed, the word of God!

- b. There is nothing wrong with the sower, the preacher, unless he is not preaching the gospel!
- c. There is only one problem, the soil, the heart!
 

\* “Say to them: ‘As I **live**,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked **turn** from his way and **live**. **Turn, turn** from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?’” Ezk. 33:11

\* As Christians we need to heed what we hear, who we hear, for to those that much is given much is required. Mk. 4:24; Lk. 8:18; 12:48

*This is the interpretation of the Parable of the Sower!*

### Conclusion

The Parable of the Sower is characterized by:

- I. The proclamation of the Parable of the Sower!
- II. The elaboration on the purpose for teaching the Parable of the Sower!
- III. The interpretation of the Parable of the Sower!