

Strong Man - Jesus will bind the strong man - plunder people

Mark 4:1 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.

Jesus often used a boat as His platform for teaching. It gave Him room to breath from the press of the crowds. Good acoustics, and it was probably a nice backdrop.

2 Then He taught them **many things** by parables, and said to them in His teaching:

Many things - this was something that Jesus did often with many topics

Parables - The word parable comes from the idea of "to set along side." As Jesus used parables, the idea was to set a spiritual truth along side a daily truth of living.

3 "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow.

Listen - Behold - attention and amazement - some are intrigued - others are indifferent

Jesus described something they were all familiar with – a farmer casting seed on the ground and the seed falling on different types of soil.

Though this is commonly called the parable of the sower, it should really be called the parable of the soils. The difference is never the seed, but on the kind of soil it falls on.

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."

Nothing mindblowing - nothing even spiritual at face value. Kingdom of God? Where?

Generous with seed - even though mostly failure

Of the seed that fell on the good ground, all of it produced – but not all produced to the same degree.

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

I've given you something - there is a message about the Kingdom of God - about the truth of God - that is in there, and it is there for those who are really listening beyond the obvious - your perception of Jesus - belief about Jesus will change how you hear the parable.

10 But when He was alone,

The miracle seekers and the self-righteous have gone home, (staying outside)

those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. 11 And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God;

Those who stuck around, had ears to hear, by asking Jesus - they were given the truth - not left to figure it out the mystery on their own.

but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, 12 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.' "

Those who weren't there, (outside), the story stays a story - babble - "Don't cast your pearls before swine" -

One idolatry to another - Jewish idolatry to Christian idolatry - and receive a false sense of forgiveness of sins - Christian idolatry is still saving self - you do things to forgive your own sins.

Keeps them in a place to be more open to revelation - imagine overhearing taxpayer and sinners experiencing and solid theology and sharing solid theology

13 And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?"

In the Bible, a mystery isn't something you can't figure out. It is something that you would not know unless God revealed it to you.

Jesus states a rhetorical question- not a shaming question - hopeful question - you are not supposed to know a mystery on your own, I will (Spirit) will give understanding.

14 The sower sows the word.

Jesus said that the word of God is like a seed. It gets planted in our hearts and then has the potential to bear fruit. But not every seed grows into a plant and bears fruit. The depth of the seed in the soil it lands on makes all the difference.

15 And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.

People like the wayside are hard to the word of God, and they allow no room for the seed of the word in their lives – it never enters. - zero depth

16 These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; 17 and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble.

They receive the seed of the word with a flash of enthusiasm that quickly burns out.

Surface depth - springs up - doesn't go down

18 Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, 19 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.

The seed (roots) doesn't go deeper than the weeds. They receive the word but allow the interests and cares of this world to choke it out.

Conflict in your belief - heart - divided - value of Jesus is too low - value of stuff is too high

Still looking to this world to give you life - identity - strength - value - meaning - comfort

20 But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."

Some people are like the good ground, and they accept the word, and bear fruit, thus fulfilling the purpose of the seed.

This parable shows that when the word is received as it should be, something happens – fruit is produced. If nothing happens, then the word is not being received as it should.

Jesus says the way He changes a life is by having the Gospel - the word act like a seed in your heart - if you receive the Gospel as a seed and treat it as a seed it will change your life

Like a seed the Gospel has power, releases power, and the secret of its power is hidden by it's weakness.

The gospel has power The Gospel has re-creative power -

James 1:18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

1 Peter 1:23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,

The power of the Gospel is like a seed - it releases power when it is planted.

Plant a penny, glass, stone, fertilize, water, sunshine - they don't grow They don't have the power of biological life in them.

The word of God is a seed, because it has the power spiritual life

When the word of God - the Gospel - takes seed in you - it results in eternal life - or spiritual life - and you begin to experience reality with spiritual abilities, that you didn't have until the Gospel took seed.

The holiness of God, the Father's love, heaven and hell, the hope of the future resurrection. Become realities for those whom the Gospel has taken root. These things become real, solid, vivid, controlling, affecting, sweet realities to the soul.

Is the goodness of God so real to you that when life isn't good, it doesn't derail you. Can you fortify yourself with the love and goodness of God.

Is the Father's love of you in Christ, is his delight in you, is the applause of God, the accolades of God, is God's delight of you in Christ more real to you than criticism and failure? Is it sweet? Is it powerful? Is it glorious? Is it beautiful? Does it affect you? Is it real to you?

Jesus came to abolish religion - Religion is, "I obey. Therefore, God accepts me, and now he owes me." The gospel is, "God accepts me through the radical grace of Jesus; therefore, now I want to obey."

Religion and the gospel will both produce change - Mechanical growth vs organic growth

Religion will change you mechanically. Building a brick wall - busy - lots to do - places to be - activities to participate in - more to do -

Organic growth is like a bulb growing into a tulip. It's organic. It's from the inside out. It's an organism becoming more and more complex and richer and more beautiful. The way you know you have organic growth is you're getting wiser and richer and deeper and more and more like Jesus.

You find, on the one hand, yourself getting actually stronger and tougher and yet at the same time considerably more feeling and sensitive or more confident and bold, but at the same time more humble and less focused on yourself, more generous, more able to love people who are different than you, whom in the past you couldn't stand, more forgiving.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes,

Power = the ability to do work in you.

How the gospel releases that power

The seed releases its power by going in deep. Seeds release their power only if they go in deep. Look at the three soils that don't produce the organic growth.

The first soil doesn't produce any life because the seed doesn't go in at all.

The second soil doesn't produce life because it doesn't go in deep enough.

The third seed, interestingly enough, goes in deep, but it goes in at the same level of weeds and thorns. Other concerns are just as important as the gospel

taking the information, the word of God, the gospel of God and listening and thinking and reflecting and discussing and applying over and over again. It's working it in.

The gospel is not something that does something to you without you.

You work it in through thinking, through listening, through hearing, through understanding more and understanding more. It's fascinating and it's gradual and it's sustained.

Have we as Christians really worked the gospel down into the roots of our lives so we can trust our imaginations, so we can trust our instincts? That's how it gives life. It's a seed. It has to go all the way to the roots, and you have to keep working it in. The more you do, the deeper it goes, the more the life comes.

The gospel's weakness is the secret of its power

think about the image Jesus has chosen for the Word of God, for the gospel. He chooses a seed, and a seed is weak, a little thing.

Three out of the four soils reject the power of the word. The first one doesn't let it in at all. The second one is excited about Jesus but really just wants miracles, really just wants good times, really wants just needs to be met. The third group, of course, is very, very concerned about what the world thinks and about the issues of the world and gets choked.

Extrinsic faith is serving God for what you get, serving God for what he can do for you, serving God to get things, but intrinsic faith is serving God to get God, serving God for his own sake.

The first three are people who, for various reasons, are not interested in Jesus for who he is but only what they can get out of him.

The first group gets nothing out of him.

The second group gets something out of him.

The third group gets a lot out of him but, at the same time, wants to make sure they're getting worldly approval and worldly status and that sort of thing.

There's only one group that is actually breaking through all that.

If we think a little bit more about the metaphor, let's admit seeds have a paradoxical weakness and strength.

- Acorn - can make enough wood to cover the earth with wood

Granites curbs moved by trees

Every single soil is somebody's response to Jesus.

The first soil is the Pharisees and the religious leaders. They rejected him.

The second soil is the crowds. They're happy with him but as long as he's doing miracles.

The third soil is his family, who's very upset with the fact that they're losing face and the fact of the shame and the fact that they're losing honor because of what he's doing.

In other words, the parable of the soils is not just a parable of how people respond to the Word but how people respond to Jesus

Jesus did not come as a hammer. Jesus did not come as a fire. Jesus did not come as a sword. He came, not to judge, but to be judged, not to be strong, but to be weak and to die, because seeds only release their power if they fall into the ground and die.

He says it himself in John 12. "Unless a seed falls into the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed, but if it dies, it produces much fruit."

He became voluntarily weak for us. He became a seed that goes into the ground and dies, but that is the secret of the gospel's power, because the power of the word is the weakness of the Lord.

When you see him doing that for you, if you see him doing that for you, if you see the beauty of his weakness, that comes into your life, and that's the power that will change you.

Nothing else will change you like seeing the beauty of his weakness for you, his willingness to be the ultimate seed.

It actually changes you from the inside out. It changes your motivation. It changes your identity. It changes the very inside, your structure, so it's organic growth, not mechanical growth

This passage ends on a note of triumph, because even though three out of the four soils resist the power of the word, the last one ... thirty-, sixty-, a hundredfold. That's supernatural.

Conventional agriculture, even today's agriculture, can't produce that kind of yield. Why? Because Jesus is saying it's supernatural. If you do let it in, it's supernatural.

I don't care what kind of addiction. I don't care what kind of fear. I don't care what kind of alienation. I don't care what kind of absolutely loathsome self-image. I don't care what anybody has ever done to you. I don't care how messed up you are on the inside.

If you bring this in, if you have faith as a mustard seed it has the power to move mountains.