

The Parable of the Sower and Soils
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Original: 9-10-23

Text: Mark 4:1-9

Gospel of Mark: [Bibliography](#) or [Manuscripts and Greek Exegesis](#)

UBS 4th Edition Paragraph Topic: The Parable of the Sower

Central Idea of Message: The parable of the sower and the soils provides a vivid illustration of the preaching of the gospel [good news] of the kingdom of God and Jesus was the sower.

Introduction: Jesus uses this seaside sermon to a large crowd to introduce the parable of the sower and the soils. At the time, probably nobody in the crowd thought that Jesus was the sower and they were the soil.

Maybe some listening today will get the whole picture and realistically examine their own hearts to see what kind of soil is there for the seed of God's word to fall on.

I. Teaching with Parables (vv. 1-2)

- A. Jesus resumed his teaching (v. 1)
 - 1. Teaching was the primary emphasis of Jesus' ministry because he was making and building disciples (Matt. 28:18-20)
 - 2. He is by the sea again, probably the Sea of Galilee
 - 3. A great multitude is gathered again, so large, in fact, that he gets into a boat just offshore so that he can turn and face the crowd and not get pressed upon
 - 4. The whole crowd was on the seashore
 - 5. Acoustics on the seashore were probably very good
- B. Jesus taught many things using parables (v. 2)
 - 1. **A parable is a story or illustration tossed alongside a situation where parallels can be drawn in order to learn kingdom truths**
 - 2. **Parables often appeal, reveal, and conceal**
 - a) They appeal to listeners by employing common items or situations
 - b) They reveal truths

- c) They also conceal other information, almost secretly, perhaps in order to inspire deeper and further thought
- 3. **Parables are not allegories**
 - a) **Allegories have multiple components which each represent [symbolize] something else, so every detail is important**
 - b) **Parables generally intend to teach a simple truth and not every component is symbolic of something else**

II. **The Parable of the Sower and Soils (vv. 3-9)**

- A. "Listen to this!" (v. 3)
 - 1. Imperative! Even Jesus had to urge people to listen to him!
 - 2. The sower went out to do what a sower does - sow seed
 - 3. We are not told what kind of seed this was but we can conclude that it was good seed
- B. Some seed fell beside the road (v. 4)
 - 1. Not a good seed bed to begin with but the Galilean farmers sowed before they plowed (cf. Lane 153; Turlington 296)
 - a) I have sown quite a bit of grass seed over the years and some of it gets blown off course such that it lands out of my intended bounds
 - b) When it lands outside the soil I raked and prepared to receive it, it is basically useless for its intended purpose
 - 2. In this parable, the seed that fell by the hardened, beaten road became an easy meal for birds unless the farmer was diligent to plow quickly
 - a) Still did not go to waste in God's economy
 - b) But also did not achieve its intended purpose
- C. Some seed fell on the rocky ground (vv. 5-6)
 - 1. Where it did not have much soil (v. 5)
 - a) Rock covered with a thin layer of soil which the farmer would not have known about until he plowed, unless he had plowed there before
 - b) Not a good seed bed either
 - c) It had enough dirt to spring up quickly because there was no depth of soil

- d) But what springs up quickly usually does not have a strong root system as a lasting foundation
- 2. Then the sun rose (v. 6)
 - a) The rising of the sun brought scorching heat
 - b) The root system of the plant would meet its first test
 - c) And it would fail, because it had no root, it withered
- D. Some seed fell among thorns (v. 7)
 - 1. Not a good seed bed either
 - 2. Competition for nutrients and moisture
 - 3. The thorns grew and choked out the plant of the seed such that it yielded no crop
- E. Some seed fell onto good soil (v. 8)
 - 1. Finally!
 - 2. Soil which had been prepared for seed, full of nutrients and having access to moisture
 - 3. The seeds gave rise to plants and many seeds yielded a favorable crop that increased greatly
 - a) Producing more seed
 - b) Spreading
 - (1) Statistically, at least in this parable, only 25 percent of the soils produced a crop, whereas the other 75 percent of the soils produced nothing
 - (2) 10:1 was considered outstanding in Palestine (cf. Brown 50)
 - (3) Generating a crop thirty [30:1], sixty [60:1], and a hundred [100:1] times greater than the amount of the original seed that was sown!
 - (4) **Never focus on the supposed enormity of the wasted seed here, but rather on the enormity and magnificence of the coming kingdom's harvest!**
 - (5) Harvest also implies judgment and consummation, so this parable has eschatological implications (cf. Lane 155)
 - c) **The truths of God's word have the potential and power to mass-produce incredible results!**
- 4. **There was nothing wrong with the seed, in fact, proof of the goodness of the seed is provided by**

its production of large crops when it landed on good soil

- F. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (v. 9)
1. "A first responsibility of everyone is the stewardship of the ear" (Luccock 696)
 2. Another way of saying, "You better think this through very carefully"
 3. "There is more to this story than appears on the surface" (Lane 155)
 4. This verse implies that those who choose to believe Jesus and accept his message are the ones who really hear, whereas those who choose not to believe Jesus or receive his message show that they are, in reality, spiritually deaf by their own decisions
 5. Seed-sowing results depend on the nature of the human heart in which the seed lands
 6. ["Adrienne Johnson: Why I Am No Longer an Atheist"](#) [10:28 video]

Conclusion: Principles.

(1) The parable of the sower and the soils provides a vivid illustration of the preaching of the gospel [good news] of the kingdom of God and Jesus was the sower.

(2) All seed-sowing involves some measure of loss.

(3) Plenty of people have made themselves "gospel-proof."

(4) The type of soil that seed falls on seems to be more important than the type of seed itself, so we must each one make sure our personal soil is fertile enough [receptive] to receive good seed [kingdom/spiritual truth].

(5) Good seed that falls on bad soil yields no crop.

(6) Good seed needs to fall on good soil to produce a good crop.

(7) Response to the gospel of the kingdom will vary.

(8) All sowers of gospel seed must be patient and relentless, because making disciples (Matt. 28:18-20) takes much time and effort, and making disciples means building people of the faith and building the faith of people, so keep sowing the seed and cultivating it!

What kind of sower or soil are you?