

“The Field of Souls”

(Luke 8:1-15)

Introduction

- The eighth chapter of the Gospel of Luke subtly reveals a major turning point in Jesus' ministry. During the second year of His three-year public ministry, Jesus' popularity rose exponentially and His opposition intensified immensely. In response to this, Jesus made a drastic change in His ministry. A change that most did not understand at that time, and a change that most do not understand even today.

What was this radical change? He began speaking to the crowds in parables.

- This may not seem like that big of a deal. But this was neither a cosmetic nor a frivolous change. While Jesus often spoke illustratively, and analogously, His specific use of parables took over the last half of His ministry. In fact, from this point on (in the second year of His three-year public ministry), Jesus exclusively taught the crowds using parables.

Matt 13:34-35 ~ “All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. ³⁵This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: ‘I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.’” [Ps.78:2]

- Contrary to popular thought, this was not to keep His messages simple, or to help people understand. Often, Jesus' parables were offensive and confusing – even to His apostles. Technically, Jesus was not merely a “story teller” or narrative preacher. He did not follow the K.I.S.S. acronym (“keep it short and simple”, etc.). The crowds who heard Jesus teach and preach were often astounded (Matt.7:28) and even offended (Matt.15:12) by His words – and even tried once to throw Him off a cliff (Lk.4:29).
- Jesus' parables were not simple stories with simple truths to simple people. Jesus used parables like a sword, separating believers from unbelievers – the saved and the condemned. In our passage this morning, Jesus not only told a parable and explained the parable but also stated the very reason why He spoke in parables.

Luke 8:1-15 ~ “Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, ²and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, ³and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means. ⁴And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable,

⁵‘A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. ⁶And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. ⁷And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. ⁸And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold.’ As he said these things, he called out, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear.’

⁹And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, ¹⁰he said, ‘To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that 'seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.'

¹¹Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹²The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. ¹⁴And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. ¹⁵As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.”

- As we will see, this parable does not illustrate a person's (or Christian's) spiritual growth or spiritual maturity. This parable does not explain four different types of Christians (or even two or three types of Christians). There is only one true Christian represented in this parable – all the rest are different types of unbelievers (those who are not saved). Specifically, the four “soils” in this parable represent the four conditions of the human heart in response to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- In Luke's Gospel, this parable is contained within a larger biblical narrative. This narrative can easily be divided into five main headings.

1. The Setting for the Parable (vs.1-3)

- At this midway point of His three-year public ministry, Jesus is relentlessly preaching, teaching, and performing miracles while traveling all throughout New Testament Palestine. His itinerant ministry was at an exhausting pace (thousands of miles, by foot), with large crowds of people following Him – some clamoring for Him, others criticizing Him, and some even plotting to kill Him. Humanly speaking, the fact that Jesus even made it to the cross was no small feat.
- These verses, Luke 8:1-3, are unique to Luke's Gospel. Jesus is still in Galilee (the northern region of Palestine) going *“through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God”* (vs.1). Again, we are shown that Jesus was not simply a miracle-worker – He was a Preacher and Evangelist. And, again, we see that His sermons were not ego-boasting, self-help, feel-good, humorous messages. He did not preach politically charged, psychologically driven, or pragmatically minded messages. As we will see, contrary to what many people think and say, Jesus' sermons were not filled with stories and analogies to keep His audience entertained, amused, or unoffended.

Essentially all of His preaching (*“proclaiming”*, vs.1; *kēryssō*) fell under the heading of *“bringing the good news”* (*euangelizō*) *“of the kingdom of God”* (vs.1). That is, He preached biblically based Gospel centered sermons.

Luke 4:42-43 ~ “And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them,⁴³ but he said to them, ‘I must preach the good news [*euangelizō*] of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.’”

Mark 1:14-15 ~ “Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,¹⁵ and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.’” (see Mk.1:38-39)

- We are also told, in Luke eight, that *“the twelve were with him, ²and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, ³and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means”* (vs.1-3). This is quite a group! You have the twelve apostles, including Jesus (who would be possessed by Satan and who would betray Jesus; Lk.22:3-4), and women whom Jesus healed of their demon possession (*“healed of evil spirits”*; vs.2) and various *“infirmities”* (vs.2; *astheneia*).
- ✓ **Illust:** “Not only were the twelve men traveling with Jesus, but, surprisingly, also some women. For a rabbi to have women accompanying Him was virtually unprecedented. Like many others in the ancient world, the rabbis had a low view of women and refused to teach them. Jesus' action was politically incorrect; it flew in the face of conventional wisdom. Given the lowly status of women in Jewish society, they had little influence they could use to help Him. But despite that these women traveled with Jesus, though not necessarily all the time, or all at once. They had been healed spiritually of evil spirits and physically of sicknesses. How many there were is not stated, but Luke names three of the many others who followed the Lord. This entourage made Jesus socially unacceptable when measured by rabbinic standards” (John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Luke*; 8:2-3a).

➤ The women named in Luke's Gospel are: *"Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out"* (vs.2), *"Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager"* (vs.3), *"and Susanna"* (vs.3). Both Mary and Joanna are prominent figures in the biblical accounts of Jesus' resurrection, which implies that they were faithful servants of Jesus for at least a year before Jesus' crucifixion. This is the only mention of Susanna in the Bible.

In addition to these women, there were *"many others, who provided [diakoneō] for them out of their means"* (vs.3). These disciples gave of their own money and resources to support Jesus' (and the apostles') ministry.

2. The Teaching of the Parable (vs.4-8a)

➤ In addition to the entourage of people (disciples) who were following Jesus, there were times when the number of people swelled around Him. We see this in verse four: *"And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him"* (vs.4; e.g., 5:15; 6:17; 7:11). It was in the context of this sizable crowd, and in this period of His ministry, that Jesus taught in parables.

➤ In verse four, we read: *"he said in a parable"* (vs.4). The Greek word translated *"parable"* (*parabolē*) could literally be translated "to throw alongside." A parable is a simple story (often an extended simile) "thrown alongside" a spiritual truth. Parables have been called "an earthly story with a heavenly message." The Gospels record dozens of parables that Jesus told.

Without an interpretation (or without context) a parable is not easily or readily understood – it could mean virtually anything. Thankfully, as we will see, Jesus gave us the interpretation of the parable commonly called "The Parable of the Soils" (see vs.11-15).

➤ This parable is recorded in all three (synoptic) Gospels: Matthew 13:3-9, Mark 4:3-9, and Luke 8:5-8. While its words are simple, and its message straightforward, its meaning is not immediately clear (see vs.9; Mk.4:10). With His apostles and disciples with Him, and the great crowd surrounding Him, Jesus said: *"A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. ⁶And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. ⁷And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. ⁸And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold"* (vs.5-8).

While the meaning of the parable is hidden, the story itself is rather simple (especially to Jesus' immediate audience).

A. The Sower

The *"sower"* (vs.5) was simply a person who was tasked with planting seed in a field.

B. The Sowing

Known as the broadcast method, the sower would scatter (*"sow"*; vs.5) seed as widely and evenly as possible. He would walk along the furrows of a field, take a handful of seed out of his seed-bag and throw them out into the field.

C. The Seed

The *"seed"* (vs.5) generally refers to any seed that was used to grow a crop.

D. The Soils

No matter how diligent the sower is, the broadcast method of sowing seed inevitably resulted in the seed falling in various locations. Jesus named four of them.

1) *"some fell along the path"* (vs.5)

The *"path"* (vs.5) refers to the portion of the field in which people walked. This is the part of the field that was never plowed, and regularly *"trampled underfoot"* (vs.5). The seed had no chance of penetrating the hardened soil, which resulted in the seed being *"devoured"* (vs.5; *katesthiō*) by *"the birds of the air"* (vs.5).

2) *“some fell on the rock”* (vs.6)

The seed that *“fell on the rock”* (vs.6), or *“rocky ground”* (Matt.13:5), could never penetrate deeply into the soil. While it initially showed signs of life, *“as it grew up”* (vs.6), the rocks meant that it *“did not have much soil”* (Matt.13:5), and consequently *“had no root”* (Matt.13:6), which is why it *“withered away”* (xērainō) – *“when the sun rose”* and *“scorched”* the plant (Matt.13:6) – *“because it had no moisture”* (vs.6).

3) *“some fell among thorns”* (vs.7)

The seed that *“fell among the thorns”* (vs.7) did penetrate the soil, but the *“thorns”* also *“grew up”* with the plant and ultimately *“choked it”* out (vs.7) – and *“it yielded no grain”* (Mk.4:7).

4) *“some fell into good soil”* (vs.8)

The *“good soil”* (vs.5) is the only “soil” which enabled the seed to produce grain – and the harvest *“yielded a hundredfold”* (vs.8).

✓Illust: “The expression speaks of the return on the farmer’s original financial investment. For every denarius spent on seed, he earned a hundred denarii in the sale of his crops. Tenfold would thus be quite a healthy return. Thirty or sixty would be something spectacular [Matt.13:8; Mk.4:8]. “A hundredfold was a staggering profit” (John MacArthur; *Parables*; p.21).

➤ This parable is simple yet confounding. For without the context of Jesus’ teaching, and particular His interpretation of this parable (vs.11-15), its meaning is left up to each individual hearer.

3. The Purpose of Parables (vs.9-10)

➤ One of the most common misconceptions of Jesus’ teaching is that He taught in analogies and parables to keep His messages simple – short, clear, inoffensive, and easy to understand. This is simply not true. This false paradigm is used as an attempt to “justify” shallow, illustrative, and pragmatic sermons today (e.g., the “preacher” who drove a Bentley onto the stage). Jesus did not preach in parables to entertain, amuse, or attract the crowds. He did not use parables to keep people from being confused or feeling stupid. He did not use parables in an attempt to make the crowds like Him or like His teaching. In fact, it was His parables that often confounded and offended His listeners.

➤ Thankfully, Jesus explained exactly why He spoke in parables: *“And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, ¹⁰he said, ‘To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that ‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand’”* (vs.9-10). Clearly, the purpose of parables was not to amuse or please the crowds!

Jesus use of parables, His reason for teaching in parables, was two-fold: 1) to reveal and 2) to conceal. Through parables, Jesus revealed God’s truth to those who would believe and concealed God’s truth to those who rejected Him. At the same time, Jesus’ parables both saved and condemned – softened the hearts of believers and hardened the hearts of unbelievers.

➤ Without an explanation, from the one teaching, a parable is nothing more than a senseless riddle – its meaning obscure and subjective. Jesus did not teach parables knowing that His disciples would “get it” and others would not (for even His disciples did not understand; vs.9). Jesus would explain the parables to His disciples and leave the parable unexplained to those who did not believe.

It was *“when his disciples asked him what this parable meant”* (vs.9) that Jesus said: *“To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that ‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand’”* (vs.10).

➤ Jesus then quoted from the prophet Isaiah: *“so that ‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand’”* (vs.10). Isaiah 6:10 is quoted five times in the New Testament – all of the Gospels (Matt.13:15; Mk.4:12; Lk.8:10; Jn.12:40) and the book of Acts (28:27).

Isa 6:1-7 ~ “In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one called to another and said: “‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!’ 4 And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 And I said: ‘Woe is me! For I am lost [*dāmā*; “destroyed” (NET), “ruined” (NAS), “undone” (KJV)]; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!’ 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 And he touched my mouth and said: ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.’”

Isa 6:8-13 ~ “And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ Then I said, ‘Here I am! Send me.’ 9 And he said, ‘Go, and say to this people: **‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive. 10 Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.’**”

¹¹Then I said, ‘How long, O Lord?’ And he said: ‘Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste, ¹²and the Lord removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. ¹³And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled.’ The holy seed is its stump.”

➤ The Gospel of Matthew gives us a more detailed reason as to why Jesus spoke in parables. Following Matthew’s account of “The Parable of the Soils”, we read:

Matt 13:10-17 ~ “Then the disciples came and said to him, ‘Why do you speak to them in parables?’

¹¹And he answered them, ‘To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. ¹²For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ¹³This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:

‘You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. ¹⁵For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’ [Is.6:9-10]

¹⁶But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. ¹⁷For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”

➤ Jesus would indeed explain this parable to His disciples, and not to the crowds and religious leaders, but first He explained to them the reason why He spoke in parables: *“he said, ‘To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that ‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand’”* (vs.10). God is sovereign over all His creation, which includes His sovereignty over humans and over salvation.

Jesus’ parables were a pronouncement of divine judgment against those who rejected Him, and a pronouncement of salvation to those who would believe. Only God can change the heart if the unbeliever, making their heart receptive to His Word.

Ezek 36:26-27 ~ “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.” (see Jer.13:23; 17:9; Rom.9:14-20; Rom.8:7-8)

Mark 4:10-12 ~ “And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. ¹¹And he said to them, ‘To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, ¹²so that ‘they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.’” (Is.6:9-10)

Mark 4:33-34 ~ “With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. ³⁴He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.”

- The spiritual (salvific) truths of God are not knowable by human insight or intuition. No one is saved by their own goodness or wisdom. No one is saved by the evangelist’s eloquence or intelligence. No one is saved by “finding the key” to his/her heart. Salvation, first and foremost, comes to those whom God sovereignly blessed with saving mercy and grace (Jn.6:44, 65; Acts 13:48; 16:14).

This understanding must guide and drive our evangelism. Too many Christians think they can save “anyone” if they just use the right approach and the right words. Then, when the person rejects Christ the evangelist often feels like a failure. The goal of evangelism is not “success” but faithfulness. Only God can convert the sinner – it is the message, not the messenger, that can save the sinner (Rom.1:16; 1Cor.2:1-5). We must keep in mind that, like Isaiah, God may be using our evangelistic efforts to harden the hearts of unbelievers as well as soften the hearts of those who will believe. As the Puritans used to say, “The same sun that melts the wax, hardens the clay.”

Isa 55:10-11 ~ “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, ¹¹so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”

1 Cor 2:11-14 ~ “For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. ¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”

4. The Interpretation of the Parable (vs.11-15)

- As Jesus made clear, this parable does not teach that there are different seasons or stages of the Christian’s life. There is only one soil, the last one, that produced any harvest at all. The first three represent those who are not saved, those who do not receive the Word of God.

A. The Sower

While the sower is not mentioned in Jesus’ interpretation of “The Parable of the Soils” [in Matt.13:37 we read that “*The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man*”, but that is a different parable]. I think the anonymity of the sower, in “The Parable of the Soils”, references anyone who correctly proclaims the Word of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

B. The Sowing

The method of sowing is also not mentioned in Jesus’ interpretation of the parable, which seems to imply that the method is largely inconsequential (Rom.1:16). Again, a person is not saved by the evangelists tricks or techniques.

C. The Seed

What is consequential is “*The seed*” which “*is the word of God*” (vs.11; see Rom.1:16).

D. The Soils

Once again, as Jesus made clear, the different soils are not different stages or seasons of a Christian's life. These soils do not represent any progression of spiritual growth. The first three soils represent all the unsaved, and only the last soil represents those who are saved.

1) The hard / unreceptive heart – “the path” (vs.12)

The first soil is known as the path. Jesus explained: *“The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved”* (vs.12). It is soil that has been packed down by the foot-traffic of countless people, animals, carts and carriages. This soil does not represent the fertile soil of the field, nor is it really a part of the field in any way. For it runs along the borders of the field, enabling people to walk through or around the field without ever actually stepping on the field (in order not to pack down the good soil). Make no mistake, there is no hope that the seed will cultivate upon the path. In fact, the seed never even penetrates into the soil.

This is a sobering warning to all who are indifferent to the Gospel: *“the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved”* (vs.12). Satan, though always under the sovereign ultimate authority of God, is on the prowl looking for some hard-hearted unbeliever to devour. Satan is ever-lurking over the unconverted in order to snatch up the Word of God so that they will not hear and believe.

2 Cor 4:4 ~ “In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

1 Peter 5:8 ~ “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

2) The shallow / superficial heart – “the rock” (vs.13)

The second soil has only a thin veneer of soil, which keeps the seed from being deeply rooted. Jesus said, *“And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away”* (vs.13). These are professing Christians, who love all the “benefits” of Christianity but do not truly love Christ.

Matt 13:20-21 ~ “As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, ²¹yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.”

The rocky ground serves as a warning that true saving faith runs deep in order to endure the trials and tribulations that come from following Christ and obeying His Word. Shallow or superficial Christians want the benefits of Christianity but not the sufferings of Christ.

Mark 13:13 ~ “And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”

Heb 10:36 ~ “For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.”

1 John 2:19 ~ “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.”

3) The infested / worldly heart – “the thorns” (vs.14)

The third soil is the heart infested with noxious weeds: *“And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature”* (vs.14). This soil is so weed-ridden

that the seed (the word of God) is ultimately suffocated. This parable serves as a grave warning to those who profess to believe in Christ and yet are overly preoccupied and infatuated with this world and the things of this world.

Matt 13:22 ~ “As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.”

Luke 16:13 ~ “No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

1 John 2:15-17 ~ “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life – is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”

James 4:4 ~ “You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

4) The soft / fruitful heart – “*the good soil*” (vs.15)

The fourth soil is the only soil that represents the true Christian. “*As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience*” (vs.15). The true Christian truly seeks to obey, please, and glorify Christ. The “*fruit*” here is not just the “Fruit of the Spirit” (Gal.5:22-23) but all that comes from living a Christlike (godly) life.

Luke 6:46-49 ~ “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you? ⁴⁷Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: ⁴⁸he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. ⁴⁹But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.”

John 15:4-8 ~ “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”

This fourth soil, “*the good soil*” (vs.15), is the only soil that is truly and completely fertile ground. It is not the soil that has been packed down and hardened by the world. It is not the soil that is shallow with a layer of rock just under the surface. And it is not the soil that is weed-infested and unable to produce any lasting crop. The true Christian bears Christian fruit with “*patience*” (*hypomonē*; perseverance) – not perfection.

5. The Application of the Parable (vs.8b)

➤ After first teaching the parable, before given the purpose of parables and the interpretation of this parable, Jesus implored His listeners to truly listen to His teaching. He “*called out, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear’*” (vs.8b). In effect, Jesus was saying, “Pay attention!” “Don’t let my words go in one ear and out the other.”

James 1:22 ~ “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”

Conclusion

- It is important to note the similarities and the differences within this parable. The sower is the same. The sowing method is the same. The seed is the same. The only difference is the soils.

Rom 1:16 ~ “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

John 12:36-44 ~ “When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. ³⁷Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, ³⁸so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

‘Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’ [Is.53:1]

³⁹Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said,

⁴⁰‘He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.’ [Is.6:10]

⁴¹Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. ⁴²Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.”

Acts 28:23-28 ~ “When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. ²⁴And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved. ²⁵And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: ‘The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet:

²⁶‘Go to this people, and say, ‘You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. ²⁷For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’ [Is.6:9-10]

²⁸Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.””

- As Christians, our job is to faithfully the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Matt.28:18-20; Mk.16:15; Acts 1:8). We are called to indiscriminately scatter the Word of God to everyone. We cannot convert the sinner. People will either believe or disbelieve the Gospel; they will either receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior or reject Him.

✓ Illust: “Finally, this parable is a reminder that when we proclaim the gospel or teach the Word of God to our neighbors and loved ones, the results will always vary according to the condition of the hearts of our hearers. Success or failure does not hinge on our skill as sowers. Some of the seed we disperse will fall on hard, shallow, or weedy ground. But there’s nothing wrong with the seed. If you are faithful at the task, some of the seed you throw will find well-cultivated soil, and the result will be abundant fruit” (John MacArthur; *Parables*; p.38).