

The Parable of the Sower – Lesson 1

Matthew 13:3-23 (NASB) 3 And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow; 4 and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. 5 "Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. 6 "But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. 7 "Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. 8 "And others fell on the good soil and *yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. 9 "He who has ears, let him hear." 10 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" 11 Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. 12 "For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. 13 "Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 "In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE; 15 FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES, OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.' 16 "But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. 17 "For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. 18 "Hear then the parable of the sower. 19 "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. 20 "The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. 22 "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. 23 "And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."

- I. **3 And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow;**
 - a. Have you ever wondered why Jesus spoke in parables?
 1. **Parables** - parabolē (pā-rā-bo-lā')- an example by which a doctrine or precept is illustrated, a parable: an earthly story with a heavenly meaning
 - b. Why did Jesus use parables?
 - c. The disciples ask Jesus this very question in this passage.
 1. **Matthew 13:11,13-15 (NASB)** 11 Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted...13 "Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 "In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE; 15 FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES, OTHERWISE THEY WOULD SEE WITH

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d. *“Our Lord’s parables contain great volumes of truth in very few words—and His parables, rich in imagery, are not easily forgotten. So, then, the parable is a blessing to those with willing ears. But to those with dull hearts and ears that are slow to hear, the parable is also an instrument of both judgment and mercy.”*

e. **13 ...Seeing they do not see, hearing they do not hear nor do they understand**

1. The group of people (Jewish) that Jesus was speaking to, for generations had:
 - i. **Seen the Law** (they were the ones who it was delivered to!)
 - ii. **They’d heard the Law**
 - iii. Notice a very important point at the end of the passage: **They didn’t understand it!**
 - a. The Law is to be meditated and pondered.
 - b. If we understand it, it will be because He has revealed it to us through His Spirit.
 - c. Jesus in His own merciful way was presenting it in a way that they might be able to connect with yet He was still doing it in a way that they must take time to ponder to understand.
 - iv. Jesus was NOT going to take away an incredibly important truth, that truth is that each of us must come to belief on our own with the Holy Spirit’s drawing. We cannot be “forced” to believe, that’s not faith or belief.

f. **3...Behold, the sower went out to sow**

1. An important yet subtle point here. Many times, this passage is referred to as the parable of the soils. I think it’s important to point out that this is not what Jesus calls this parable. Notice what Jesus calls this passage:
 - i. **18 "Hear then the parable of the sower.**
 - a. Jesus calls this the parable of the Sower. Why is this important? It’s important because it tells us who the parable is about.

II. **3 And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow;**

- a. Notice the first thing the sower did: **“The sower went out”**
- b. It’s amazing to me at times how understated the Bible can be.
- c. We know that the sower in this parable is Jesus. So, we know that Jesus went out. What is the significance of **“went out?”**
 1. **Went Out** - (exerchomai) eks-e'r-kho-mī - where one is said to have gone forth to do something, and it is obvious that he has gone forth from his home, or at least from the place where he has been staying.
 - i. In order to truly grasp what “went out” means here we need to understand what “went out” means in light of where Jesus “went out” from.

d. **HE LEFT A SEAT OF AUTHORITY & GLORY**

1. **John 17:5 (NASB)** "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I **had** with You before the world was.
 - i. In order to appreciate what Jesus went out from let's begin by looking at what one of Jesus' enemies treats Him:
 - a. **Mark 5:5-7 (NASB)** 5 Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones. 6 Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; 7 and shouting with a loud voice, he *said, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!"

e. **IT WAS JESUS WHOM GOD MADE THE WORLD THROUGH**

1. **Colossians 1:15-17 (NLT)** 15 Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, 16 for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see-- such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. 17 He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together.

f. **JESUS LEFT ALL THAT BEHIND**

1. **Philippians 2:6-7 (NASB)** 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.
 - i. When Jesus says the sower "went out", this is what "went out" means. Jesus "went out" from an existence that He didn't have to leave, He laid aside a glory and privilege that He did not have to lay aside.
 - ii. He did it to:
 - a. To display His love for the Father and submission to His plan.
 - b. To display His love for us.

III. **4 and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up.**

- a. **Seeds** - What are the seeds here? In verse 19 Jesus tells us that the seeds are the ***"Word of the Kingdom."***
- b. **What is the Word of the Kingdom?** It's essentially this: That Jesus Christ is the long awaited and promised Messiah and to believe this.
- c. What an interesting thing that Jesus was willing to do with the Gospel Message!
 1. Jesus sowed it on ground that would not accept it.

2. I envision a place beside a road where birds commonly gather, a very dense, hard and compact soil that birds are attracted to.
3. Jesus went and sowed His message here.
4. He sowed His message with individuals whom He knew wouldn't accept it. I find this fascinating that He would go and spread a message, the message of life to individuals who wouldn't accept it.
5. Why did He do this? To demonstrate His fairness

i. **Romans 3:23-26 (NLT)** For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. 24 Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. 25 For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, 26 for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he declares sinners to be right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.

6. If we have established, then, that all of have sinned and that God is fair, then because of who God is, the fact that He is fair, His message of reconciliation to Himself through Jesus will be given to every man. Including this first soil that will not accept it.

i. **1 Timothy 2:3-4 (NASB)** 3 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

7. So, if everyone has been given the opportunity to hear the message how is it that not all will accept it?
8. We see what Jesus tells us here in our passage:

i. **18 "Hear then the parable of the sower. 19 "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.**

a. **Understand** - syniēmi (sün-ē'-ā-mē) - to set or join together in the mind.

9. When a person becomes a believer the truth of who Jesus Christ is and what He's offering is miraculously understood. We will talk about this miracle further when we look at the other soils.
10. It is a work of the Holy Spirit and God drawing.

d. For this soil, the first one, what do we see?

1. We see that the individual does not come to a point where they understand it.
2. For whatever reason that moment of it coming together in their mind doesn't happen, maybe it's because they don't ponder on the message long enough for the Holy Spirit to reveal it or some other reason but the reality is they don't.

- e. When they don't, we then see:
 - 1. **The evil one comes and snatches away** - The evil one is Satan. Notice that Satan plays a role in an individual not coming to Christ.
 - 2. I want you to notice **when** though. It is not before they have the opportunity to hear and understand (believe) the message it comes after.
 - i. **2 Corinthians 4:4 (NASB)** in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
 - a. Satan is a powerful enemy of ours but this will not prevent individuals from hearing the gospel message.
 - b. All will hear it in some way but when they reject it Satan is ready to pounce and take the message away.
 - f. Which brings us to a question: *"Why would Satan not want that seed of the gospel message to linger on that hardened soil of a person's heart?"*
 - 1. I wonder if it's not because he knows if left there the message would eventually sink in because it's that potent and effective.
 - g. **GOD'S WORD IS POWERFUL**
 - 1. **Jeremiah 23:29 (NASB)** "Is not My word like fire?" declares the LORD, "and like a hammer which shatters a rock?"
 - h. God describes His word like a hammer that shatters a rock. Which is interesting when one considers that our hearts are equated to a stone before becoming believers:
 - 1. **Ezekiel 36:26 (NASB)** 26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.
 - i. The Word is Christ. In this parable we are seeing that Jesus comes to each of us and delivers His message of redemption. Each of us has a choice, we can accept His message or we can reject it. When we reject, Satan immediately plucks the message away.
- IV. I was at a conference a few years ago for CFA. At that conference CFA's Chief Marketing Officer Jon Bridges was talking about what CFA could do to help our world. I thought he said a very profound thing:
- a. He said first that the world, by and large, is lonely.
 - b. What he thought CFA could do for the world was simple, he said "We can care for them, what the world needs to know is that someone cares for them."
 - 1. I remember finding that very interesting to think about the fact that at no other time in history have people been more connected, more easily accessible but yet in all reality the world is as lonely as it's ever been.

2. What the world doesn't realize they need, the reason the world is so lonely is that the world needs a relationship with its Creator.
3. It is substituting that relationship with so many other things but the reality is that it needs Him.
 - i. **John 1:1-2,14 (NASB)** 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God...14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus Christ is the Word; He is the Message. He is who God is using to bring people into relationship with Himself. I wonder if Satan knows that if he didn't pluck that seed, if he didn't keep people from looking at Christ, Jesus would capture their hearts and they'd never be the same. Because if they looked long enough they've discover that He's exactly what they need and the enemy can't allow that.

