

The Parable of the Sower and the Seed

- **Scriptures**
 - Matthew 13:1-23
 - Mark 4:1-20
 - Luke 8:1-15
- **Context**
 - **Location & Audience**
 - Matthew
 - Jesus left a house & went to the seaside
 - Jesus is sitting in a ship, teaching the multitudes
 - Mark
 - Jesus is sitting in a ship, teaching the multitudes
 - Luke
 - many people came to Him out of every city
 - 12 disciples were with Him
 - certain women were with them (Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and others)
 - Sea of Galilee (Wikipedia)
 - **Note:**
 - parable told to all
 - explanation only given to the disciples (Matthew 13:10; Mark 4:34; Luke 8:9)
 - **Previous Scriptures**
 - look at the end of Matthew 12 & Mark 3 & Luke 8:19
 - religious leaders reject Jesus
 - accuse Him of being devil possessed
 - *Mark 3:21 – "And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself."*
 - *"He is beside himself"* – friends' reaction
 - Jesus' family came to Him
 - "The members of his family had come to take him, because they thought him beside himself. No doubt the Pharisees had so represented his ministry to his relatives that they thought they had better restrain him." (Spurgeon)
 - **NOTE:** this is told before the parable in Matthew & Mark (chronological order) and after the parable in Luke (linking with the 4th type of ground) – logical order
 - who is truly part of the Kingdom of God?
 - not the religious, unbelieving leaders
 - not Jesus' family (at that time – later they believed)
 - not just hearers but doers (Matthew 12:49-50; Mark 3:34-35; Luke 8:21)
 - the Parable of the Sower was given to explain that not all who hear are a part of the kingdom
 - **Main Point**
 - All three Gospels tell us this is a parable
 - What is this parable explaining?
 - *Matthew 13:11 – "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven"*

- *Mark 4:11 – "to know the mystery of the kingdom of God"*
- *Luke 8:1 – "preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God"*

- **Customs**

- agriculture society – very familiar with planting and harvesting
- most of Jesus' listeners were farmers
- at this time, it was common to sow seed and then plow the ground
- Jesus sat; the people stood
 - at that time, common practice for rabbis/teachers and those who were being taught
- "In Palestine the common ground was divided into long, narrow strips which each man could cultivate as he wished. There was no wall or fence around the strips, but between each of them ran a narrow ribbon of ground, perhaps no more than three feet across. These were rights of way. Anyone could walk up and down them. The result was that they were beaten as hard as pavement by the feet of countless passers-by. Any seed falling there would be like seed falling on our paved roads today." (Barclay)

- **Outline of the Parable**

- **Key words**

- **Emphasis on "hear"**

- *Matthew 13:9 – "ears to hear, let him hear"*
- *Matthew 13:13 – "hearing they hear not"*
- *Matthew 13:18 – "hear ye the parable of the sower"*
- *Mark 4:9 – "ears to hear, let him hear"*
- *Mark 4:3 – "hearken"*
- *Mark 4:12 – "hearing they may hear, and not understand"*
- *Mark 4:24 – "Take heed why you hear"*
- *Luke 8:8 – "ears to hear, let him hear"*
- *Luke 8:10 – "hearing they might not understand"*
- parable will show different types of "hearing"
 - all hear with physical ears
 - few hear with spiritual ears
- *"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear"* – phrase also in the 7 Letters to the 7 Churches (Revelation)

- **Key Points**

- (Discuss/read story)
- Who is the sower?
 - *Matthew 13:37 – "He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man."*
- The seed is the Word of God (Matthew 13:19; Mark 4:14; Luke 8:11)
 - this is what is "heard"
- The soil represents people who hear the Word
 - Matthew – *"he that heareth the word"*
 - Luke – *"they that hear"*
 - Mark – *"when they have heard the word"*
 - four kinds of people (or hearers)

- **Four types of soil**
 - four different responses to hearing the Word
 - **Wayside Ground**
 - lays on top of the ground
 - soil is unaffected by the seed
 - snatched away immediately – birds ate it
 - never went below the surface
 - represents people who hear the Word but remain completely unaffected
 - reject it
 - someone snatches it away from them before it can take root
 - **Rocky Ground**
 - seed began to grow
 - often easy to become a Christian (to start)
 - emotions
 - no moisture because of the rocks
 - not much earth
 - no depth
 - did not give much thought to being a Christian
 - no Bible study
 - withered away
 - represents people who receive the Word
 - but when trials come (hard places), they give up
 - **Thorny Ground**
 - seed began to grow
 - thorns choked them out
 - represents people who receive the Word
 - but things in life choke out the things of God, and they bear no fruit
 - little or no time for prayer or Bible reading
 - **Good Ground**
 - took root
 - sprang up
 - brought forth fruit
 - this is the good listener
 - doesn't just hear, but says/thinks, "What does this mean?"
 - accepts the Word into his/her mind
 - Luke 8:15 – holds the word fast (AMP)
- **Interpretation**
 - This is one of the few parables where Jesus gave an explanation
 - Matthew 13
 - explains wayside ground
 - *verse 19 – "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side."*
 - explains stony ground

- verses 20-21 – *"But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."*
 - emotional responses – no depth
 - small amount of soil with lots of rocks
- explains thorny ground
 - verse 22 – *"He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful."*
 - thorns compete for space in a garden
 - thorns are in competition with the good plants
 - thorns grow automatically
 - thorns are anything that crowds God out of our lives
- explains good ground
 - verse 23 – *"But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."*
- **Questions**
 - Why would a "sower" (farmer) plant seed in thorny, rocky or wayside places? Isn't that just wasting the seed?
 - perhaps the wind caught it
 - perhaps despite the sower's carefulness, some seed fell in these areas
 - *Isaiah 32:20 – "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters"*
 - still reaped a great harvest
- **"He that hath ears to hear"**
 - seven parables (Matthew, Chapter 13) – seven letters (Revelation, Chapters 2 & 3)
 - the Gospel was being sown in the morning time
 - Jesus walked up and down the shores of Galilee, sowing the seed
 - the letters bring understanding to the parables
 - Revelation lets us know the fowls are false ministers

Sources:

- <http://www.journal33.org/other/pdf/sower2.pdf>
- <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/mark-4/>
- <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/matthew-12/>
- <http://www.gospelgazette.com/gazette/2000/feb/page2.shtml>
- <http://www.intothyword.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=78397>
- <http://biblehub.com/mark/3-21.htm>
- *Parables of Jesus* by William Barclay