

THE GATHERING OF THE INLAND VALLEY

PARABLES OF JESUS: THE SOWER AND THE SOILS_CELL CURRICULUM

Parable of the Sower & The Soils

I. THE USE OF PARABLES

- A. Parable—a comparison, analogy, proverb, adage, or simile often used by our Lord as a teaching aid cast alongside a truth being taught. This casts more light onto the truth by using familiar concepts and/or illustrations from everyday life. Sometimes these analogies are metaphorical or fictitious but not always.
- B. Strong's 3850 (parabole/par-a-bol-lay)
- C. The parable of the Sower and the Soils according to Jesus is the key parable to *understanding* all the other parables. Rarely do the scriptures explain the symbolism in the parables of Jesus, however this parable is explained thoroughly by Jesus himself, and it is the opinion of this writer that the truth contained in this parable is the key which unlocks the understanding of all the other parables. This parable also found in Matt 13 & Luke 8

Mark 4:13 And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables?"

- D. Much of Jesus teaching is contained in His parables so consequently this parable holds a lot at stake for understanding the Kingdom of God as Jesus proclaimed it.

II. EXPLANATION OF SYMBOLS Mark 4:13-20

- A. Sower—the one preaching/proclaiming/sharing the Word of God [the gospel of the Kingdom]
- B. Seed—the Word of God/good news/gospel
- C. Birds=Satan
- D. Soils=Heart of man

III. THE FOUR SOIL CONDITIONS WHO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD

- A. *By the wayside or beside the road*—Those who are on the 'outside' and reject the Word proclaimed to them. These are people who reject the message of salvation through Jesus Christ, their hearing is so dull as to be devoid completely of faith. As a result they do not consider the Word sown into their life to have any value so they reject it and Satan comes and steals it.

Romans 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ

John 10:10 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy..."

GQ: What area of life do you consider to be rocky ground? Why do you think this?

GQ: What might be some Bible verses or passages you could decree to build faith for this area?

1. Satan comes to steal the eternal seed from the hearers. Satan knows the value of the eternal which is sown into the hearts of man and devours it before it can produce fruit unto salvation.

1 Peter 1:23 ...for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God

2. The imperishable seed does not produce the same results in everyone, it depends upon the soil conditions where it is sown as evidenced by this parable. For one hears with their ears but one understands with their heart. It is the inner part of man which understands the truths being spoken. Therefore the result of the seed is not dependent on the seed but on the soil. The incorruptible seed of Christ is good seed and is guaranteed to germinate and bear fruit, but where the heart is calloused and the mind is darkened the result will be nil. [see 2 Cor 4:3-4, Eph 4:17-19]

Ephesians 4:17-19 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

GA: Take a moment as a group and pray for one another that our minds would be enlightened in areas where we feel our understanding needs to be increased.

- B. Rocky ground-The eternal seed is the Word of Life and comes with the intent to bring life and that more abundantly and will spring up anywhere, however that doesn't mean it will survive and bear fruit. The seed on the rocky ground springs up and brings joy with it of course but it is unable to survive due to the rocks preventing the seed from getting rooted and grounded allowing for sustainability. The roots are unable to go down deep enough to find the proper moisture needed to thrive long term and come to maturity. These are the people who are blown along by the wind from place to place and vanish just as quickly as they sprang up.

1. The hearers with the rocky soil receive the Word with gladness but as soon as persecution or affliction arises in their lives they immediately fall away. This is not because the afflictions are too heavy to bear but they are weak in the ability to resist the devil because they have no root, for our afflictions are light and not too heavy to bear. [2 Cor 4:17, 1 Peter 5:10]

1 Cor 10:12-13 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

2. The rocky soil condition along with the wayside soil condition becomes a source of food for the devourer as well. They do not resist the devil so the devil does not flee and they become a food source for the devil. This group of people start out with a bang in the beginning but ends very poorly just as quick as they started.

James 4:7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you

GQ: Name some practical ways we can submit to God?

GQ: How does the practical submission to God help to insulate us from the traps and snares of the devil?

GQ: How do we spring the traps of devil before we step in them?

GQ: What is my role to my fellow Christian when I see them heading for a snare? What wisdom do I need to operate in when speaking the truth in love vs. using truth as a club?

C. Thorny ground-A third soil type in the parable of the sower whereby this group of people do not bear fruit either. This group of people have a divided heart. The Word is received and seed again sprouts up and begins to grow but the Word is held in their hearts on par with other things which chokes out the Word causing it not to come to maturity and bear fruit.

1. Worries of the world (v.19)-We are commanded not to be anxious and to cast our care upon Him. [**Phil 4:6, 1 Peter 5:7**]

Phil 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

2. The deceitfulness of riches (19)-Proverbs tells us not to wear ourselves out trying to get rich. Wealth is not an evil thing, but when the Word is held on a par level with riches our hearts become divided and will eventually lead us to becoming distracted. If this attitude is not repented of it will eventually ultimately distract us rendering us unfruitful.

GQ: How are riches deceitful? What potential lies or pitfalls come with wealth as a Christian?

GQ: What is some evidence of a divided heart?

GQ: Is God calling us to be poor? Why or why not?

GA: Complete this statement; I believe God should open the windows of heaven over my life because....

Proverbs 4:23 Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.

GQ: What does it mean to watch over our heart with all diligence?

3. The desire for other things (19)-The deceitfulness of riches are not the only things we need to be guarding our hearts from for there is an abundance of other things we can hold on par level with the Word in our hearts. The result of a divided heart is disastrous. Our heavenly Father knows everything we need before we even ask of it. The problem is the desire of other things, the problem lies in the priority we allow our hearts to have for them above the Word of God. If we do not give first place in our hearts to God we are sure to be on the pathway to unfruitfulness. [**Matt 6:25-34**]

Matt 6:33-34 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

GQ: Where am I tempted in my life to desire other things as much as God and His ways?

4. If we seek FIRST the Kingdom of God then all these things will be added to us, if we apply this principle we will thrive like a green leaf, but if we fail to prioritize properly we will become unfruitful.

D. Good soil-These are the ones who hear the Word with honesty, keep it, persevere and bear fruit.

Luke 8:15 But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an HONEST and good heart, and hold [KEEP] it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.

1. Just like in the natural where good soil conditions consists of several variables so it is in the soil conditions of our hearts. Our hearts must be pliable, well watered, weed seeds removed, fertilized, worked over [cultivated].
2. In the natural the soil must hold plenty of moisture and oxygen to produce the right conditions for germination, likewise our hearts must have the right environment and strike a delicate balance. Our hearts must be able to remain warm and tender, able to hold other elements like faith and honesty in order for the sown seed to root and produce fruit.

IV. CONSIDER HOW YOU HEAR THE WORD

Luke 8:18 Therefore consider carefully HOW you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them."

- A. We are to be fruit bearing. [Some 30, 60 and 100 fold.]

Matt 3:8 "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance

1. We must throw ourselves onto the mercy of God and not trust our lineage, status, education, or anything produced by self effort.

GQ: How is trusting in our lineage, status, education etc. a bad thing?

GQ: Why doesn't the above things curry me favor with God?

- B. Christ the Branch has been sent into the world and has branched out among the nations [people groups] of the earth.

Zechariah 6:12 "Then say to him, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the LORD.

- C. There are consequences for NOT bearing fruit. The implication of the gospel is a sense of urgency. Indeed it is good news however it calls for a response of the hearer. Once our knowledge has increased we become responsible for what we hear, and if we do not listen well our rejection will increase the measure of our guilt.

John 15:2 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off [removes] every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

John 15:5-8 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Therefore consider carefully HOW you listen...Luke 8:18

GQ: The thought of being unfruitful in my walk with God makes me feel...?

GQ: On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the highest, where do you rank wanting to be fruitful at?

GQ: What does Jesus mean by bearing much fruit?

GQ: What other scriptures helps to shed light on the kind of fruit Jesus is talking about?

GA: How fruitful am I being in this present season?