

The Parables of Jesus

“The Parable of the Sower”

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23; Mark 4:1-9, 13-20; Luke 8:4-8, 11-15

v. 1-2

The Crowds Gather

- Jesus leaves the house that He was teaching in and goes outside to sit by the sea.
- Of course the crowds followed Him there and probably even more gathered around.
- Jesus sees the amount of people there and decides to get on a boat and push out from the shore a little ways.
- The reasons for this would have been several.
 - 1) He was able to put space between Himself and the crowds
 - It was common for the crowds to press upon Him while seeking a healing of disease, deliverance from demons, etc.
 - Jesus gave Himself the space so that the people could focus on what He was saying, not simply what they could get from Him.
 - 2) Everyone could see Him.
 - With distance comes a better vantage point.
 - Only those close to Jesus would've been able to really see Him and now He could be seen by everyone who was in attendance.
 - 3) Better acoustics
 - Sound travels really well over flat surfaces, especially the surface of water.
 - Jesus would not have had to strain so hard in order for the crowd to hear His voice clearly.
 - It is obvious that this was a time of teaching and instruction not miracles.

v. 3

Teaching in parables

- This is the first time that we encounter Jesus teaching and not using plain language.
- The reason for this is found in Matthew 13:10-17
- He was hiding the truth in plain sight for a perverse generation who equated His works with the works of Satan.
- While He has the crowd captive on the beach, He teaches them not just one parable but many parables.
- Our focus for tonight is the parable of the sower.

v. 4-9

The Parable of the Sower

- Jesus tells them of a story of a man who goes out to sow seed.
- He then tells them of different scenarios involving the seed, the environment, the yield, and other individual elements involved.

Elements of the Parable

1) The Sower

- The Sower is God

2) The Seed

- The seed is the Word of God. More specifically the Gospel.

3) The Ground

- This is the heart of man.

4) The Fruit or Grain

- This is the evidence of salvation.

A Sower Sows

- Here we see a sower has gone out to disseminate the seed that he has collected from last year's crop yield.
- The goal is that the seed would implant itself into the soil and bear fruit for the reapers.
- We look at this and we see the environments in which the sower is sowing and we question His aptitude regarding seed planting.
- In modern day we till the soil, we rake the rocks out, we fertilize, we turn it over several times all before we ever plant our seed.
- This is not the case with Israel of antiquity.
- They would scatter the seed and then turn the soil over but it was nothing more than a single instrument no more effective than a stick.
- They would scatter seed in all environments imaginable.

The Path

- Some seeds would have found their way to the walking path in which the Sower was walking.
- This provided very little if any protection from birds that would come and eat the seeds that laid on top of the bare ground.
- The ground would have been hard and packed down and therefore the seed would have just laid there.
- The birds would have come and eaten their fill.
- This is why we place straw over freshly seeded yards.

The Rocks

- Some seeds would've found their way to rocky soil.
- The problem with this is that rocks are dense and take up lots of space.
- Because of this there would not be enough soil to support a full grown plant.
- The seed would have enough resources to spring up quickly but it would not have had the depth of root to produce anything useful so it withered away quickly.

The Thorns

- Some seed found its way to the thorny areas.
- It doesn't seem like such a terrible situation at first.
- There is plenty of soil for roots to grow.
- There is stability from the structure of the thorns.
- Then as the plant grows something happens.
- It begins to require more nutrition and the thorns simply won't allow that.
- The thorns take up the resources and the plant is choked out.

The Good Ground

- Finally, some seed would have landed in good, fertile soil.
- These seeds would have had enough resources, stability, space, etc. to grow strong and yield a good crop.
- Some would yield 100, some 60, and some 30 but they would all yield good fruit or grain.

He Who Has Ears, Let Him Hear

- Everyone in that crowd would have had physical ears with the ability to catch sounds..
- They wouldn't be there listening if they didn't have the capacity of hearing.
- Jesus is using spiritual language when teaching in parables and He is saying that whoever has spiritual ears to hear, let them hear.
- The message that Jesus brought was for the people of God that He had set His love on from before the foundation of the world.
- These are people who have been given the ability to hear, see, and perceive spiritual truth by the working of the Holy Spirit.

v. 18-23

Explanation of the Parable

- As we established last week, the purpose of Jesus teaching in parables was to veil the truth to the carnal minded and reveal the truth to those who had spiritual ears to hear and spiritual hearts to understand.
- Here we see that the disciples are having some difficulty understanding why Jesus shifted from plain speaking to parables so He explains it to them.

The Path

- Those who hear the Word and do not understand it have it snatched away from them by Satan.
- Just as the birds who take the open seed and devour so does Satan overwhelm the seed planted in those who do not understand.
- This is not mere human understanding.
- These are those whose hearts are still dead in their sin.

The Rocks

- These are those who hear the Word and joyfully receive it immediately.
- They have no root in themselves and therefore wither when the sun comes up.
- The sun is analogous to trials and tribulations related to being a believer.
- This is not talking about simple inconveniences and hardships that come with being a human being but rather persecution deriving from their faith in Christ.
- Once the persecution comes they wither under the pressure and die.

The Thorns

- These are those who have received the Word, begun to grow, and then are overwhelmed by the cares of this world to the point that the implanted Word is choked out.
- They have gone after the things of the world instead of pursuing the things of God.
- This would likely fall under the category of the “carnal Christian”.
- The carnal Christian is someone who claims Christ but has no distinguishable fruit in keeping with Christ.
- This is a person that the Bible knows nothing of.
- These people receive the Word and then produce no fruit.

The Good Soil

- These are the ones who receive the Word and understand it by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- They are regenerated and no longer dead in their sins.
- This is the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation.
- The person is able to hear it and understand it because the Holy Spirit has given them the ability to do so.

This whole parable is a story of God's sovereignty in salvation.

- God spreads the seed indiscriminately but due to our rebellion against Him only those whom He has granted the ability to will receive it, understand it, and bear fruit.
- We do not have the ability to conjure this up within ourselves.
- We do not possess a special holiness that would cause God to save us.
- It is a work of grace.
- A gift that is not owed.

Ephesians 2:8-9

- Think of someone you know that has heard the Word and rejected it or embraced it but never bore fruit.
- Now think of yourself.
- Why did you accept it and now bear fruit?
- Was it because you were somehow more holy or smarter than the one who didn't?
- Obviously the answer is no so what's the only conclusion left?
- God is the One who must do it.
- If there is something within us that allows us to do it then we have reason to boast in ourselves and not Christ.