

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 NIV

The Parable of the Sower!

Two Levels of Understanding:

Seed and Soil

Word and Heart

Sunday, July 13 at 9:00 + Monday, July 14 at 7 PM

5th Sunday after Pentecost / 4th Sunday after Trinity – 2014

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: Today we will briefly consider parables in general; then we will focus on Jesus' important parable of the sower, which draws a parallel between seed and soil – *on one level*, **and** word and heart – *on a much more important level*. May the Holy Spirit enable us to *understand *rightly* and *benefit *eternally!*

1. **Parables in General:** ¹ **That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake.** ² **Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore.** ³ **Then he told them many things in parables... //**
 - a. Three related ways to think about a parable:
 - i. An *earthly* story with a *heavenly* meaning!
 - ii. A *physical* story with a *spiritual* meaning!
 - iii. A *temporal* story with an *eternal* meaning!
 - b. Three statements about parables (www.easyenglish.info):
 - i. Jesus' stories were about things in ordinary people's lives – *like farming*.
 - ii. Jesus' stories made people think about their meaning – *how the earthly/physical/temporal relates to the heavenly/spiritual/ eternal*.
 - iii. People who wanted to obey God would understand these stories – *because God had*

prepared their hearts for understanding, but others continue in their hardheartedness.

2. **The Parable of the Sower:** Jesus spoke these words to large crowds (v. 2): **“A farmer went out to sow his seed.** ⁴ **As he was scattering [thus sowing] the seed,**
 - a. Path: **some [seed] fell along the path [thus beside the road], and the birds came and ate it up.** // I recently sowed some grass seed near my driveway; some went into the dirt, some went on the driveway.
 - b. Rock: ⁵ **Some [seed] fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow.** ⁶ **But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root.** // The shallow soil is heated by the rocks underneath, which *promotes growth but prevents deep roots*.
 - c. Thorns: ⁷ **Other [seed] fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.** // So the *more mature thorns* suffocated the *new seedlings*.
 - d. Good: ⁸ **Still other [seed] fell on good soil, where it produced a crop--a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.** ⁹ **He who has ears [to hear], let him hear.”** // So the combination of *seed* and *good soil* is necessary for a good crop!

Jesus Explained the Purpose of Parables in vv. 10-17: Some gladly receive God's Word, while others continue to reject it:

- The Lutheran Study Bible – regarding the **receivers**: **“Jesus pronounces His disciples blessed because they have seen and heard and believed. Christians today are also blessed, for the Holy Spirit has given us eyes that see and ears that hear.”** (1607)
- Dr. Kretzmann – regarding the **rejecters**: **“...the understanding of their soul would become duller with the passage of time. Their heart would become [senseless], they would have ever greater difficulty in hearing the voice of God, [and] their eyes**

would become closed to the offering of His mercy. That is the judgment of God upon those that harden their hearts against the Gospel of mercy..." (NT I:73)

3. **The Parable of the Sower – Explained**: Jesus spoke these words to His disciples (vv. 10-11): ¹⁸ **"Listen then to what the parable of the sower means:**

- a. Path: ¹⁹ **When anyone hears the [Word] about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.** // Dr. Kretzmann described such people: "...there is no understanding, they literally do not take [the Word] into their hearts and minds, the Word never becomes a real factor in their lives... [Luther explained such a man:] ...the devil has sat down in his heart and snatches the seed, the Word of God, away, [so] that he does not believe and is not saved." (Ibid., 73-74)
- b. Rock: ²⁰ **The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy.** ²¹ **But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.** // Such people are temporary Christians☹! Again, Dr. Kretzmann explained: "Their faith, though genuine, is not rooted deeply enough to withstand disappointment, especially tribulation, suspicion, hatred, enmity, and the resulting open or hidden persecution on account of the Word. Their rapid acceptance of the Word is equaled only by their hasty offense when they are asked to suffer for the sake of Christ. They want the crown, but not the cross." (Ibid., 74)

- c. Thorns: ²² **The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.** // Such people hear about God's gift of eternal life, *which sounds good to them!* **BUT** they love their *earthly stuff more* than their *eternal Savior*; therefore, *concerned about what they have and wanting even more*, the Word of God is ultimately choked and fruitless☹.
- d. Good: ²³ **But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.** // So how does the soil of a person's heart become "good"? God does such work through His Word of Law by showing us ♦what is right and ♦where we have done wrong; also, by showing us ✓the punishment we have earned and ✓our inability to escape. Then, *seeing our need and knowing of our helplessness*, →the soil is ready, →the seed of the Gospel is sown, and →the crop is abundant!

Conclusion: The parable of the sower is easy to understand on an earthly / physical / temporal level: When the seed enters the good soil, the crop is abundant for *this life*; you can apply that principle when you plant grass seed!

BUT much more important is the heavenly / spiritual / eternal level; when *God's Gospel-Word* enters a *Law-Prepared Heart*, the crop is abundant for *eternal life!*

Dear friends: May God's Word of Law *strongly convict us*; then, may God's Word of Gospel *eternally save us!*

And all God's people said: **Amen!**

For Much More: www.BethlehemLutheranChurchParma.com

Having been saved thru Jesus, let us live for Him and share the good news!
Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Rd., Parma, Ohio 44134, 440-845-2230