

July 16, 2023

“The Sower and the Seed”  
Lesson 2

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

**Intro**

A parable is generally defined as a story, usually made up, that tells of an event that develops a moral or spiritual point. Jesus frequently taught in parables so people could understand spiritual matters and truths about God and His kingdom. But even His own disciples, who were with Him a greater amount of time than the crowds, didn't always understand the point of the parable. They often asked Him to explain what the parable meant. The parable in today's lesson is one of the most well-known, and shows how Jesus explained what the parable meant. This explanation could also be considered a guide into how to correctly understand any and all of Jesus' parables.

**Read Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23**

1. vs. 1: Jesus' base of operations was in Capernaum on the north western edge of the Sea of Galilee  
He was teaching in the synagogue in chapter 12  
This verse says he “went out of the house”  
It appears Jesus went back to the house he was staying in after the synagogue  
He went to the shore of Galilee, likely to be accessible to more people than in the city
2. vs. 2: Jesus uses the elements present to create the best possible stage for speaking  
He gets in a boat so the people can't press around him  
The water allows sound to carry well and clearly, so all can hear Him  
  
It's possible the boat belonged to one of the disciples who had been called from fishing  
It's also likely the boat was bigger than most art of this scene show  
A boat from this time period was recovered in Galilee's mud in 1986  
It was 27 feet long and over 7 feet wide
3. vs. 3: Jesus begins to teach them, using a parable  
Mark 4:34 says that Jesus didn't teach the crowds without using parables  
Here he begins to teach the parable of the sower and the seeds  
It is likely he used the same parables many times as he spoke to different crowds  
The details of the story may have changed slightly with various tellings  
Mark and Luke's versions of this may reflect hearing/writing different versions  
They all begin with the farmer going to sow the seeds in his field
4. vs. 4: As he is tossing the seeds, some fall on the ground  
No method at this time would guarantee that none of the seed would be lost  
The birds come and eat the seed; it will certainly not grow sitting on the pathway
5. vs. 5: The rocky soil here refers to bedrock not far below the surface of the ground  
It's not implying that there are rocks in the soil, which could be removed  
A farmer wouldn't plant in that area knowing it was bad; the rocks are unseen

6. vs. 6: These seeds sprout quickly because they can't dig deep roots due to the rock  
This causes them to die quickly as well  
The lack of depth in the soil means the roots can get enough moisture to survive  
The hot sun scorches them, and they quickly wither
7. vs. 7: The third soil for the seeds has thorns (weeds) which prevent the plants from growing  
Today's farmers have access to weed-controlling elements that farmer then didn't have  
Good soil then would be a place where both plants and weeds could grow well
8. vs. 8: The final soil is called good soil  
The seeds produce an abundant crop  
Jesus says the return will be between 30 and 100 times what was sown  
This is a huge amount  
    In Jesus' day, a yield of 6 or 10 times as much was considered excellent  
The kind of return these seeds will produce is beyond what the people have experienced  
This is miraculous, possible only with God's divine help
9. vs. 9: Jesus finishes this section by saying, "Whoever has ears, let them hear."  
He means those who can hear "spiritually", to the deeper meaning behind the story  
Some were not able to, but Jesus is encouraging a deeper look and understanding
10. vs. 18: From verses 10-17, Jesus explains to the confused disciples why He teaches in parables  
He explains the spiritual nature of understanding or not understanding them  
In vs. 18, He begins to explain the sower parable that they do not yet understand
11. vs. 19: Jesus explains several aspects of the elements used in the parable  
The seeds sown are referring to the gospel message  
Each person telling that message is like a farmer, sowing seeds  
This is the seed which ends up on the path  
The birds, says Jesus, are like Satan (the evil one) snatching away what was said  
    He is the one who wants to prevent people from hearing Jesus' words  
In some versions, the ground is described as hard  
    This well describes the hearts of those who won't hear the message  
    "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" says Paul  
    If people won't hear, they make it impossible to understand spiritual truths
12. vs. 20: The rocky ground seed are shown to be people who respond positively to the message initially  
Jesus uses the phrase "at once"—they immediately respond with joy
13. vs. 21: However, these people do not continue to grow or have joy  
They have not developed in their spiritual lives  
When challenges come (the "scorching sun" of vs. 6), they wither and die  
    The lack of "roots" causes no growth and inability to handle trouble

14. vs. 22: The seed among the thorns represents an interest lost due to competing interest  
They hear the word willingly at first, but lose that interest due to other things  
“the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth”  
Jesus says “making it unfruitful”, meaning they could have otherwise been fruitful

15. vs. 23: Three things happen to those who are “good soil”  
They listen to the message sincerely and earnestly  
This means they hear the salvation message and respond positively to it  
They understand the implications of accepting or disbelieving it  
They bear fruit, meaning that they lead others into discipleship following Christ

Application: There are two significant ways to look at this parable.

First, it is about us: what kind of soil are we? How do we (continuously) respond to the words of Jesus?

Second, it is about the sower. Those who faithfully spread the seeds of the gospel will encounter various kinds of soil. We don't know what kind of “soil” each person is, so the wisest course is to assume they are good soil. After all, every person not already in Christ needs to hear the message of salvation. Our job is to plant or to water; it is up to the Holy Spirit to draw people to Christ and to enlighten their minds and hearts.

Prayer: Father God, help us to remain faithful to sowing the seed of Your Word. Help us not to prejudge those we meet as not likely to hear / accept the message. We ask that Your Spirit would work in others to bring them into relationship with You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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