

## STUDY ON THE PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

### Parable of the Soils

Read Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15

#### **Parable of all Parables**

We start with this Parable because it is perhaps, the most important of Jesus' parables. Jesus said understanding this parable will be key to understanding all other parables.

*“And He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?” (Mark 4:13)*

Therefore, this parable is key to understanding other parables and particularly, how the Kingdom of God works in relation to you and me.

#### **Parable Explaining Mysteries of the Kingdom of God**

*“And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?” He answered and said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.”” (Matthew 13:10-11)*

The Greek word “mysteries” comes from the root word “mysterion” and means “secrets” or “hidden truths.” The mysteries of heaven’s kingdom realm are spiritual insights into the nature and ways of God.

Understanding the mysteries of the kingdom of God depends on your level of hunger and thirst to know more, to get out of your ignorance, the quest to know deeper things of God.

*“For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore, I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.” (Matthew 13:12-13)*

The way of the Kingdom of God is that the more you know and hunger to know, the more you will know and vice versa. The person who is ignorant of the word of God and is comfortable being ignorant, the word will always be “in parables” to such people.

The parable conceals truth from those who are either too lazy to think or too blinded by prejudice to see. It puts the responsibility fairly and squarely on the individual. It reveals truth to him who desires truth; it conceals truth from him who does not wish to see the truth.

#### **Few Parables Explained**

Not all Jesus' parables are explained. In fact, most are not explained however, this one is explained and the explanation that Jesus gave is our starting point.

*“The seed is the word of God.” (Luke 8:11), “The sower sows the word.” (Mark 4:14)*

The seed is the gospel of the kingdom, and the soil is the human heart. The emphasis is on the various kinds of hearts and how they reject or receive Christ’s message.

*“... the word that was sown in their hearts.” (Mark 4:15)*

Beloved, with every sermon, bible study, personal study time, and prayer time etc., the word of the Lord is being sown in your heart. The main question and the very point of this parable is: “what type of heart do you have or is the word of God fallen into?”

## Types of Soils

### First Type of Soil: Hard Heart

*“... Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them.” (Matthew 13:3-4)*

*“When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.” (Matthew 13:19)*

The **wayside** was the path where people walked, and nothing could grow because the ground was too hard. As the birds devoured the seed on the wayside (Matthew 13:4), so some receive the word with hardened hearts and the wicked one quickly snatches away the sown word. The word has no effect because it never penetrates and is quickly taken away.

*“Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.” (Luke 8:12)*

*“Satan is always on the watch to hinder the Word... He is always afraid to leave the truth even in hard and dry contact with a mind.” (Spurgeon)*

Q: What makes the condition of a person’s heart hard?

### Second Type of Soil: Shallow Heart

*“Behold, a sower went out to sow... Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up, they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away.” (Matthew 13:3b, 5-6)*

*“But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.” (vv20-21)*

The second type of heart stands for a shallow heart. Jesus described this soil as stony places. When the seed falls there, it sinks in but only to a shallow depth. Stony places were where the soil was thin, lying upon a rocky shelf. On this ground the seed springs up quickly because of the warmth of the soil, but the seed is unable to take root because of the rocky shelf.

As seed falling on the thin soil on top of the stony places quickly springs up and then quickly withers and dies, so some respond to the word with immediate enthusiasm yet soon wither away. This soil represents those who receive the word enthusiastically, but their life is short-lived, because they are not willing to endure tribulation or persecution... because of the word.

Many people fit this description. We see them in our churches. Their shallow hearts are attracted to the joy and excitement of a church where much is happening. They hear the gospel and seem to fit in. Many even make a profession of faith but when some difficulty comes – loss of a job, misunderstanding with other Christians, sickness, even a bad romance – and just as suddenly as they seem to embrace the faith, they fall away because they were really never born-again.

Q: What can be done to help the person with a shallow heart?

### Third Type of Soil: Strangled Heart

*“Behold, a sower went out to sow... And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them.” (Matthew 13:3b, 7)*

*“Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.” (v22)*

The third type of heart stands for the strangled heart, strangled by things. The Lord describes those things as thorns, and says, *“the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word”* which makes the word of God unfruitful in a person’s life. Many people’s spiritual life has been choked by riches and quest for riches.

As seed falling among thorns grew, the stalks of grain were soon choked out, so some respond to the word and grow for a while but are choked and stopped in their spiritual growth by competition from unspiritual things.

There is nothing wrong with having things, riches, wealth etc... but it is when they have you that becomes the problem. When God, the word of God, and the things of God takes second fiddle, then there is a problem. John admonishes us:

*“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.” (1 John 2:15-16)*

Q: How do we guard our hearts with regards these thorns?

#### **Fourth Type of Soil: Open Heart**

*“Behold, a sower went out to sow... But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” (Matthew 13:3b, 8-9)*

*“But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.” (vv23)*

The last type of soil – Open Heart – is the one to which this parable had been pointing all along. It is for those who receives the gospel like good soil receives seed. Such soil produces good crop.

This soil represents those who receive the word, and it bears fruit in their soil – in differing proportions (some hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty), though each has a generous harvest.

Q: What type of fruit (harvest) should an open-heart bear?

#### **Summary:**

Therefore, hear the parable of the sower: We benefit from seeing bits of ourselves in all four soils.

- Like the **wayside**, sometimes we allow the Word no room at all in our lives.
- Like the **stony places**, we sometimes have flashes of enthusiasm in receiving the Word that quickly burn out.
- Like the soil **among thorns**, the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches are constantly threatening to choke out God’s Word and our fruitfulness.
- Like the **good ground**, the Word bears fruit in our lives.

*“We notice that the difference in each category was with the soil itself. The same seed was cast by the same sower. You could not blame the differences in results on the sower or on the seed, but only on the soil. “O my dear hearers, you undergo a test today! Peradventure you will be judging the preacher, but a greater than the preacher will be judging you, for the Word itself shall judge you.”” (Spurgeon)*

Even more than describing the mixed progress of the gospel message, the parable of the sower (soils) compels the listener to ask, “What kind of soil am I? How can I prepare my heart and mind to be the *right* kind of soil?” This parable invites *action* so that we would receive the Word of God to full benefit.