

Parables of Seed

S.R. Mark 4:1 - 4

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I. Background of Parables

A. What are parables?

1. (Gk. *Parabole* -“something cast along beside” - one thing laid down beside another, An illustration.

B. Purpose of Parables

1. Reveal God’s truth (Mark 4:9). Some would believe, but many were refusing.
2. Conceal God’s truth (Mark 4:12; Isa. 6:9-10; **Mt. 13:10 – 17**)
 - a. Matthew 13:13 – 15 "Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 "In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive; 15 for the heart of this people has become dull, with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes, otherwise they would see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return, and I would heal them."
3. “Jesus adopted the method of speaking in parables to confuse and confound those who did not want to accept His message... He was glad to explain the meaning...to those who were humble enough to come inquiring.”
4. Blessed are your eyes (Mt. 13:16)

II. Parable of the Sower, Seed, Types of Soil (Matthew 13:1 – 23; Mark 4: 1 – 20; Luke 8:1- 15)

A. Setting – most likely early spring on western slope of Galilee – near Capernaum – Passover of John 6 on the horizon.

1. (Mark 4:1 –2) Great multitudes along the Sea of Galilee.
2. Jesus taught many things in parables. This was the beginning.
3. Kingdom Parables (Matthew 13:11,24,31,33, 44, 45, 47, 52)
 - a. Mark 4:26, 30 “Kingdom of God is like...”
4. A day of parables (Mt. 13:1-3).

B. Who is the Sower? Mt. 13:37 “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.”

1. (tares – weed – looks like wheat)
2. “the enemy who sowed (tares) is the devil”

C. Where does the Sower sow Seed?

1. Jesus, and disciples generously spread seed on all types of ground.
2. Luke 19:10 Seek and save the Lost

D. What is the seed?

1. The seed is the word of God (Luke 8:11)
2. **Meditations on the seed:**
 - a. Jesus explained that the seed represents the word of God (Luke 8:11).
 - b. There are many lessons that can be learned by the analogy between seed and the word.
 - c. For example, seed always produces after its kind.
 - (i) That is, rice seed always produces rice plants, corn seed produces corn plants, and pumpkin seed pumpkin plants.
 - (ii) There are no exceptions.
 - d. What would happen if you merely planted the Scriptures, without mixing in any other teachings?

E. Four Types of Soil: Which describes me? (Mark 4)

1. Road side – along the beaten path – soil packed hard by walking. (8:12)
2. Stony – shallow, thin layer of soil. Quick sprouts, but no depth of root.
3. Thorny – soil is receptive of the seed, but soon choked by thorns.
4. Good – soil that is cultivated and prepared to receive the seed.
 - a. Productive – some thirty plants, some sixty, some one hundred – yield
 - b. Disciples – learners asked more questions – what does this mean?
 - c. Jesus is not hiding the message (**Mark 4:21 – 25, 34**).

F. Soils Represent Hearts

1. The Wayside, Road side
2. Rocky
3. Thorny
4. Good Soil

G. What Kind of Heart is Mine? Hard, Shallow, Thorny or Good?

1. The seed judges the quality of the soil.

III. Parable of the Lamp (Mark 4:21–25)

- A. Jesus compared the Word of God to a lamp. It would be useless to buy a lamp, and then stick it under a bed. After all, a lamp's purpose is to illuminate—if you can't see it, it does no good at all. The Bible is a light. But it is useless if it remains closed on the bookshelf. In order to receive profit, we must open it up and read it.

- B. Although studying the Scriptures is essential, many read the Bible in vain, because they don't read it correctly.
 - 1. It is significant that in the middle of a text stressing the importance of hearing the word, Jesus emphasized the need to be careful how we hear (4:24).
 - 2. The fact that people who read the Bible come to markedly different conclusions about what it means demonstrates that many are not understanding it properly.
 - 3. Some are careless and simply don't put much effort into their study.
 - 4. Others twist the Scriptures intentionally, misinterpreting them to try to confirm the beliefs and practices they have already determined to follow.
- C. What does the lamp in 4:21 represent? Answer: It represents the word of _____.
 - 1. When people do not study the Bible diligently enough, what will result? a) sin, b) false teaching, c) ignorance, d) all the preceding.

IV. Parable of the Seed - (Mark 4:26–29)

- A. Jesus said that the kingdom of God was like a farmer who planted seed.
 - 1. That night he went to bed.
 - 2. The next morning he got up and tended to other responsibilities.
 - 3. Meanwhile, the seed germinated, began to grow and finally bore fruit.
- B. Jesus was teaching several things by this story.
 - 1. **First**, the one who plants the seed is not responsible for its growth; that is, the one who teaches the gospel doesn't control the growth of the word in the heart of the one who heard.
 - 2. **Second**, the growth of the word in a person's life is gradual.
 - a. One does not hear the Bible today and become a mature Christian tomorrow.
 - b. But if the hearer's heart is right he will allow the word to shape and mold his life step-by-step so that he can become the kind of person God wants him to be.
- C. What part did the farmer play in the growth of the seed?
 - 1. Answer: He just planted the _____.
 - 2. Who decides whether or not a person who hears the word will believe and obey it? a) God decides for the person, b) the person who hears decides for himself, c) Satan decides, d) no one decides.
- D. Comparative study - Parable of the Tares (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43)

V. Parable of Mustard Seed – (Mark 4:30–34)

- A. Jesus said that the kingdom is like a mustard seed.

1. The mustard seed is tiny, but grows to be a great shrub.
 2. So also, God's kingdom began in a small way during the ministry of an impoverished carpenter, Jesus, but gradually became a dominant world force.
 3. Christians' efforts to work for the Lord's kingdom may seem insignificant, but God is able to grow large mustard trees from tiny seeds.
- B. What is the lesson of the mustard seed parable?
- C. Answer: God's _____ began small but would grow and become powerful.

VI. Conclusion:

- A. Mark 4:33 – 34 “With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he **explained everything.**”
- B. What kind of soil am I? I can choose and I can change. I can listen and learn.
- C. Is the kingdom of God transforming you from a small seed into a productive plant?
- D. Is the kingdom of God “within you”? (Luke 17:20 – 21) “Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you. (within you KJV)."
- E. Matthew 6:33 Seek first – God’s will, God’s rule, God’s dominion in My Life.
- F. Do I fully want right now what God fully wants for me right now?