

## Parable of The Sower

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The account in Scripture that has become known as The Parable of The Sower is one of the most widely recognized parables in the Bible. And if you have been a Christian for some time you no doubt have heard lessons on this Parable numerous times. Most sermons I am familiar with focus on the types of soil and their relationship with the types of people to whom the Word of God is presented. Some accepting, some rejecting it and some who having accepted it then turn away for for a variety of reasons. And while this covers part of the account or lesson to be had here, I believe there is more to it than this.

The parable is recorded for us in 3 of the 4 gospels. Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15; and Matthew 13:1-23. And just as others accounts found in Scripture this one is presented by more than one individual. These individual accounts contain certain information presented by one individual that is not mentioned by the others. This is common and should be seen as adding to our understanding rather than distracting from it. For today's lesson our main focus will be on Matthew's account. Matthew would have been an eye witness to the events described in the scene. Note\* I will be using the ESV translation and have included the verse numbers for easy reference purposes.

Here is the account from Matthew -

**1** *That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. 2 And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. 3 And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. 5 Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, 6 but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. 7 Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. 8 Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9 He who has ears, let him hear." 10 Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" 11 And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12 For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:*  
*"You will indeed hear but never understand,  
and you will indeed see but never perceive."*  
**15** *For this people's heart has grown dull,  
and with their ears they can barely hear,*

*and their eyes they have closed,  
lest they should see with their eyes  
and hear with their ears  
and understand with their heart  
and turn, and I would heal them.'*

**16** *But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. 17 For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. 18 "Hear then the parable of the sower: 19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. 20 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, 21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. 22 As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. 23 As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

We begin by breaking down this account into sections.

### **1. The Scene itself**

Here we have Jesus speaking to a rather large crowd of people beside the sea. We are told that Jesus spoke many parables to this crowd on that day. What we are not told is if this was the first, last or in the middle of the parables spoken at that time. But we do know 'many' parables were spoken on this occasion. We also know Jesus' disciples came to him after and ask why he spoke to this crowd in parables and they also wanted to know the meaning of this one particular parable about the sower and seeds.

### **2. The Parable Itself**

This is where most of the lessons I have heard focuses on. The four types of ground - the path, rocky ground, among thorns, and good soil. I think it important to note here that we have an advantage today that the crowd including Jesus' own disciples did not have at the time when Jesus was speaking this parable. That is we have the explanation of what the parable is about.

### **3. The Response of the People and of Jesus' Disciples**

We should 1st note that there is no record presented here of anyone from the crowd asking Jesus for an explanation when he is speaking this parable to them. And that even the disciples themselves did not understand its meaning and had to ask.

2nd here in Matthew's account it appears as though Jesus is offering an explanation without his disciples even asking for one. Where as in Mark's account Jesus asks his disciples - "*Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?*" (Mark 4:13). And in Luke's account is says - "*And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant,*" (Luke 8-9).

There could have been a number of reasons why the crowd or some of those in it did not ask for an explanation. Just to name a few possibilities. They may have not been able to hear all Jesus had said based on where they were physically located. They, like we, may simply have been overloaded with information having heard many parables that day as indicated here in this account. While others may have drawn their own conclusions of what this parable was about etc.

But what we are told is that they were like the people of Isaiah's day. For here Jesus refers to their condition when he says - *"This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:*

*""You will indeed hear but never understand,  
and you will indeed see but never perceive."*

*For this people's heart has grown dull,  
and with their ears they can barely hear,  
and their eyes they have closed,  
lest they should see with their eyes  
and hear with their ears  
and understand with their heart  
and turn, and I would heal them.'* (Isaiah 6:9-10)

#### **4. The Explanation of the Parable Straight from The Account**

**18** *"Hear then the parable of the sower: **19** When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. **20** As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, **21** yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. **22** As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. **23** As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."*

Making note of the underlined passage above we see this is information about The Kingdom. When coupled with the following verses we should well understand this involves you and I and therefore there is pertinent 'important' information for us in this parable. Consider just the few following passages about The Kingdom - *"In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" (Isaiah 40:3)*

*“Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” “Is that your own idea,” Jesus asked, “or did others talk to you about me?” “Am I a Jew?” Pilate replied. “Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?” Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.” “You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.””*

(John 18:33-37)

*“Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done. “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”” (Matthew 16:24-28)*

Thus any message which provides us information about God’s Kingdom is applicable to us.

## **5. Other Things to Consider**

Matthew 13:16-17 - *“But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”*

From where you and I stand in time we have so much more presented to us about God’s plan than those in the past have had.

What is made clear in this parable is that Jesus is telling his disciples that they are receiving information about God’s plan. These disciples were living at a time that the prophet Isaiah had spoken of, as recorded in Isaiah chapter 52-53. Consider these few verses from Isaiah 52 -

*“Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices;  
together they shout for joy.  
When the Lord returns to Zion,  
they will see it with their own eyes.  
Burst into songs of joy together,  
you ruins of Jerusalem,  
for the Lord has comforted his people,  
he has redeemed Jerusalem.  
The Lord will lay bare his holy arm  
in the sight of all the nations,  
and all the ends of the earth will see  
the salvation of our God.”*

And quite literally Jesus own disciples would become eye witnesses of Jesus returning to Jerusalem to offer Himself a sacrifice for our sins, bringing salvation to mankind. And yes Jesus' own disciples who walked and talked with him would find it hard to understand while it was unfolding right before their eyes. Scripture clearly portrays the confusion of those disciples on such matters. Mankind's lack of understanding about the truth of where we come from and God's plan for us is profound.

John records Jesus saying that He came to testify to the truth. So what is the truth Jesus came to testify about? Many consider Christianity to be a religion who's origins date back to when Jesus came to earth. And many consider The Old Testament to be about a Jewish religion which began with Abraham or Moses. But long before people were called Jews and Christians the truth of what Jesus came to testify about existed.

The Psalmist informs us of the following -

*The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.  
Day after day they pour forth speech;  
night after night they reveal knowledge.  
They have no speech, they use no words;  
no sound is heard from them.  
Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,  
their words to the ends of the world.*

(Psalm 19:1-4)

As Christians I think we can agree that truth can be found in God's Word. God created this universe and everything in it, of which we are all a part. We also recognize that God is speaking to us through His Word. John says that Word became flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1:14)

Most of us are blessed with sight and therefore we can see what has been made. Paul refers to this when he writes - *"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.*

For many their minds and hearts have become hardened so as to keep out the Word of God. But perhaps with a little cultivating and the transforming power of The Spirit mankind's ears and eyes can be opened. I will close with two more passages -

*"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Isaiah 52:7)*

*"Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. (Ephesians 6:13-15)*