

Sunday, January 17, 2021 am

TEACHINGS OF JESUS (33)
The Parables of Jesus (2)
The Parable of the Sower
Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23

As we continue our study of the teachings of Jesus, we have begun a study of some of the parables of Jesus. Last week we talked about why Jesus spoke in parables. Today we begin with the Parable of the Sower. This would be one of the better-known parables of Jesus (along with the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son). It is also a good place to begin a study of the parables as it introduced parables in Jesus' teachings.

This particular parable is found in all 3 synoptic gospels (Matthew 13, Mark 4 & Luke 8) and introduces parables into the teachings of Jesus. Within all 3 gospels, only Luke mentions a single parable prior to the Sower, and it is a conversation with Simon the Pharisee who judged Jesus in his home (Luke 7:41-42).

Like Jesus had been teaching for some time and had begun facing opposition and rejection from the religious leaders. As a result, Jesus changed His manner of teaching and began to speak to them in parables (Matthew 13:3, 34-35)

I. The Parable of the Sower

- a. The setting – Jesus is by a seashore. Matthew 13:1 tells us that He got into a boat and sat down and spoke to the multitude who stood on the shore (13:2).
He begins to speak to them in parables.
- b. The parable (we will tie together details from all 3 gospels) –
 - i. **A sower went out to sow** - Some background as to how farming took place in that region back then. Typically, the one sowing would walk on a path either on the perimeter of a field, or in rows that were patted down to walk on. He would carry a seed-bag hoisted over his shoulder. As he walked along the rows, he would grab a handful of seed and “broadcast” it thus scattering it. Obviously, the goal was to get as much seed as possible on the ground, however in that method, some was bound to fall out in unintended areas, OR on soil that was not properly prepared. Several sources say that AFTER the seed was scattered that it was then plowed under and then the wait began.
 - ii. **The seed falls on 4 different types of soil and there is a reaction to each** –
 1. Some fell by the wayside and was trampled down and birds devoured it.
 2. Some fell on stony places where it did not have much earth (it was shallow ground with an impenetrable base). Immediately it springs up, but having no root – it withered away in the heat of the day
 3. Some fell among thorns – this is soil that has not been fully cultivated. Whether through neglect or you just don't see the weeds, they are there and HARD to remove. If you have done any gardening you know how pesky weeds can be. They are very difficult to get rid of, and the longer you ignore them the more root they will take and drastically affect what is supposed to be planted.
In our parable, the thorns sprang up, along with the crop, and the weeds choked out the seed so that it yielded no crop.
 4. Some fell on good ground and grew as intended. It produced a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty and some thirty.
 - iii. **He who has ears let him hear** – a typical admonition of Jesus.
- c. The parable explained
 - i. After the recording of why Jesus spoke to them in parables, Jesus proceeds to explain this particular parable. And it is more complex than others.

- ii. **When anyone hears the word of the kingdom** (18) – Luke 8:11 says, “The seed is the word of God”. One thing to observe is that the SAME message is broadcast to all.
- iii. **The wayside** – he hears but does not understand –
 1. Recall from our last lesson that this is willful rejection. They have chosen to shut their eyes and stop their ears (Isaiah 6:9-10).
 2. Because of hardened hearts – unreceptive to God’s word – “the wicked one” (19) (Satan Mark 4:15, the devil – Luke 8:12) comes and immediately snatches the word away before it can take root.
 3. This was so many of the religious Jewish leaders we have examined who would attack everything Jesus said and did. John 8:44 – Jesus described them as being of their father the devil.
 4. This is descriptive of far too many today – they may hear words being said, but there is no interest in considering, much less responding to what is said. We live in a time when, for the majority, the truth cannot receive a fair hearing in anything unless it happens to fall in line with their way of thinking. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 speaks of the gospel being veiled to those perishing, “whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe...”
- iv. **The stony ground** – a rocky area – describes one who receives the word but it is shallow.
 1. They receive the word with joy (gladness). Superficially they accept the message.
 2. BUT they have not root – they are not grounded.
 3. At the first sign of troubles – whether persecutions or tribulations (a severe test), or as Luke 8:13 says – a time of temptation.
 4. He stumbles or falls away (Luke). He only endures for a little while.
 5. This describes one who is caught up in the moment. Maybe he obeys because he is pressured, or because of an emotional response. BUT others genuinely obey the gospel. However, they do not realize the TRUE and lifelong commitment involved. They have not counted cost and when the price gets too high, they quit. Jesus warned in Luke 9:23-24 that if we desire to come after Him we must deny ourselves and take up our cross. Then in Luke 14:27ff – Jesus actually illustrated counting the cost of following Him. It will cost you everything.
 6. Sadly, many do fall away, some very quickly. Luke 9:62 again Jesus warned of those who looked back not being fit for the kingdom of God.
- v. **The thorny ground** – descriptive of one who hears the word (he receives it).
 1. This one knows the truth and will keep obeying “sort of”. He half-commits to the truth and will do most of what he is supposed to do.
 2. BUT, there are weeds present. Weeds are described as, “the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches” Luke 8:14 described them as cares, riches and pleasures of life. Mark 4:19 talks about the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things. So this involves one who is half-hearted in his service.
 3. These enter in and choke out the word. The word for choke (συμπνίγω, sympnigō) is a word that means to inhibit. The word is used 5 times – 4 of them associated with the parable. The 5th time is Luke 8:42, where it talks about how as Jesus went, “the multitudes **thronged** Him.” Think of a crowd gathering around that prohibited Jesus from easily moving forward. That’s a pretty good description of how the cares of this world can CHOKe out God’s word.
 4. The result is they are unfruitful or as Luke 8:14 says, “they bring no fruit to maturity”.

5. This would be the secret disciple who will not confess Jesus unless it is convenient or safe.

This is the one who may assemble, go through the motions of worship, and check all the right boxes – enough to still be considered faithful.

This is also the one who sows to the flesh, desires to be rich as Paul warned against (1 Timothy 6:9-10), and is weighted down and easily ensnared (Hebrews 12:1), etc. Their life still has worldliness and materialism in it.

6. The amount of fruit they produce is negligible if any.

God is not pleased with the lukewarm and half-committed. Consider also Luke 21:34-35 which deals with coming judgment unexpectedly. The text is probably a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, but it warns of the one who ignores God's coming judgment.

- vi. **The good ground** – this is fertile soil that receives the seed and produces the intended crop.
 1. This one, "Hears the word and understands it" (Matthew 13:23), he accepts it (Mark 4:20), he keeps it (Luke 8:15). All these expressions (and they are different Greek words) describe one who obeys the gospel and KEEPS obeying the gospel.
NOTE: All are present tense verbs.
 2. Luke 8:15 describes him as having a noble and good heart. So, this is one whose heart is right with God.
 3. And in keeping the word, he produces fruit – of differing degrees based upon abilities.
 4. The idea of "fruit" means that which is produced through growth. Christians bear all sorts of good fruits:
 - a. They win souls to Christ – Romans 1:13
 - b. They grow in holiness – Romans 6:22
 - c. They possess qualities that make them godly – Galatians 5:22-23
 - d. They are filled with good works – Colossians 1:10
 - e. They praise God – Hebrews 13:15

II. Lessons to Learn

- a. Why do we call it "the parable of the Sower"?
 - i. Because Jesus did. He did not call it the parable of the soils.
 - ii. Some observe that this could be because it was Jewish custom to use the first words of a text to identify it, rather than the subject (consider, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Matthew 27:46, Psalm 22:1)
 - iii. But I also see in this a message to His disciples, the sowers - Even though the message of the soils is primary in this, I believe part of His point was directed toward His disciples as sowers they would face rejection.
- b. Not all will be receptive – this is a big lesson for us to understand.
 - i. Jesus described 4 different types of reception. The one who outright rejects the truth, and those who receive the truth and then quit or never mature. In many ways, the thorny and rocky soul hurt the worst. But then there is that occasional good heart that receives the word and they faithfully serve God and seek to reach others.
 - ii. All we can do is plant seed and water it. We know it hurts We need to let God give the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). And do not be surprised when many reject you.
 - iii. Even Jesus turned many off by telling them the truth. Even the rich, young ruler turned away from following Him because of the demands
 - iv. So do not get discouraged when one OR many reject the truth. Just "go to the next town"

- c. Sometimes harvesting comes later – another side note (not necessarily a lesson from THIS parable, but Jesus WILL address it in another one – later in Matthew 13).

We must learn that when we plant the seed, sometimes it takes time to germinate and grow. Be patient when studying with someone. And when it comes to winning souls you never know how long it will be before (Or if) they will respond.

These are some lessons we are reminded of in the parable of the sower. I am convinced that EVERYONE has a heart in one of these 4 categories. Which one is yours? If your is not the good and honest heart, then you need to change that. And if there is some way I can help, I am ready. Think about it!