

Sower, Seed and Soil

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2014 Harvest Sunday

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Text: *Luke 8:4-15, 18 (Matthew 13, Mark 4)*

Introduction

Luke 8:4 And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable:

Many times our Lord, in teaching spiritual truths, spoke in parables. And what is a parable?

A parable is a story using things in nature to explain the supernatural or to teach spiritual truth. It is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

And in this parable which Our Lord calls, The Parable of the Sower, He uses farming terminologies, like sower, sow, seed, way side, rocky ground, thorny places, good ground, root, fruit, etc.

So the people that were gathered around Him, hearing the parable were very familiar with the terms our Lord was using, since most of the people in those days were involved in farming one way or another.

Let's look closely at the parable and see what we can learn from it. We will look at the Parable, then the Interpretation and then Applications.

I - The Parable

This Parable speaks of three things - the Sower, the Seed and the Soils.

1. The Sower

Luke 8:5 A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

Matthew 13:3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;

Harvest time is an exciting time. It is a happy occasion. When harvest comes people celebrate. But harvest only comes if the sower go forth to sow. And I am glad the sower in this parable went out to sow.

The sower would carry a seed bag over his shoulder and he would reach in and grab out a handful of seeds. And as he walk down a field, he would cast out the seeds.

2. The Seed

Luke 8:5 A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

When we go to VONS or Albertsons, we buy vegetable and fruit. And where do they come from? The vegetable and fruit we eat comes from a seed. Imagine that, all from a seed!

Where did the seeds come from? God gave us the seeds. He designed vegetables and fruits to reproduce themselves by seeds. If we ever run out of corn seed we will never have corn again. So when you see seeds remember the goodness and the wisdom of God. That's one reasons for having Harvest Sunday! To give thanks unto God for His unspeakable gifts! Temporal and eternal gifts!

3. The Soils

Four types of soils

a. Way side soil

Luke 8:5 A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

Some of the seeds fell on the way side. The way side is a well-trodden down pathway in between the fields, so it is hard and compact. The seeds that fell on this trampled down path, sit out there uncovered with soil, and exposed to the elements.

As the sower casts out the seeds, the birds would follow him and the seeds that would fall on the wayside would be a free meal for the birds. The seeds that fell on the way side had no chance to spring up and grow and bear fruit, for the birds would come and take the seeds away and eat them.

b. Stony soil

Luke 8:6 And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

Matthew 13:5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith (immediately) they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: 6: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

Some seeds fell on stony places. On the surface, stony ground looked like a good soil but it is a shallow ground and just below it, is a hard layer of rock. It is a thin layer of soil with bedrock just below.

The seed that fell upon the stony ground, germinated and sprung up but because there is no deepness and the root could not get into the moisture, when the sun which is vital to the plant's growth and development came out, the sun scorched it and it withered. The sun that should have helped sustain and develop its life, took away its life.

c. Thorny soil

Luke 8:7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.

Mark 4:7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

Some seeds fell among thorns. It fell on the ground with thorn plants or weeds. The seed began to germinate along with the weeds. But the stronger weeds took up most of the space, most of the nutrients, and most of the moisture. So it choked out the life in it and it never brought forth fruit.

d. Good soil

Luke 8:8 And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold.

Mark 4:8 And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.

Some seeds fell on good ground. A good ground is a well-plowed, well-cultivated soil. It was soft, deep, healthy and had no thorn plants or weeds in it. And the seeds that fell on the good ground took root and grew and produced fruit. It brought varying returns, 30 times, 60 times and 100 times.

II - The Interpretation

1. The Sower

The Sower is our Lord. He is the great Sower but we soul winners are the lower or little sowers. We are co-laborers with Him.

2. The Seed

Luke 8:11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

Mark 4:14 The sower soweth the word.

The Seed is the Word of God. The seed is the precious Word of God. The seed is the Gospel we preach. The Gospel, truth which brings life.

Psalms 126:6 He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

3. The Soil

The soil represents the hearts of men who heard and reacted to the Word of God. The four soils represent four different kinds of hearers.

a. Wayside Soil

Luke 8:12 Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

Mark 4:15 And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

Matthew 13:19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

It pictures a thoughtless, careless hearer of the Word of God. He hears the gospel but does not understand its spiritual significance. He considers the gospel foolishness, not worthy of his thought and reflection and consideration. He is not interested! He doesn't see anything in the Gospel that is suitable to his need. So not understanding the Gospel, he does not think upon it and Satan like the birds of the air, snatches away the seed which was cast upon it. The Word of God had no chance at all.

b. Stony soil

Luke 8:13 They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

Mark 4:16 And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; 17: And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

Matthew 13:20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; 21: Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

It pictures a shallow emotional response to the truth. One mark of a spurious believer is that he believes for a period of time but ultimately proves that he had no root in himself.

He hears the Gospel, receives it with joy, convinced that this is what he was looking for, got excited about the benefits of Christianity, but when tribulation, persecution and temptation arise he fell away. This does not mean he lost his salvation, it just revealed that he was a false and spurious believer.

Just as the bright sun which should have helped the plant to grow and develop but instead it scorched it and withered, tribulation, persecution and temptation which are things that God uses to help grow and strengthen the Christian's life and faith killed the faith of a false and shallow believer.

Sadly, this happens in real life. I could give you examples who are false professors who show some semblance of life for a period of time.

Dan Barker, served as a Christian preacher and composer for 19 years, but in 1984, he left Christianity and announced that is a converted atheist.

Ted Turner (founder of CNN, one time owned Atlanta Braves) who in his youth dreamed of being a missionary, now no longer believes and even said at one time, "*Christianity is for losers.*"

What happened? When Ted was young, his little sister, Mary Jean, suffered from a rare form of lupus and endured complications that left her with brain damage and screaming in pain for five years until she died.

"She was sick for five years before she passed away. And it just seemed so unfair, because she hadn't done anything wrong," he told CNN. "What had she done wrong? And I couldn't get any answers. Christianity couldn't give me any answers to that. So my faith got shaken somewhat." - Ted Turner

These are examples of spurious faith which have no depth.

The message heard had a temporary effect in the behavior and conduct but no enduring and lasting fruit.

c. Thorny soil

Luke 8:14 And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

It pictures a man who responds to the Gospel but in his response, there was no real repentance. He is still holding on to his darling sin which in this parable are ...

Mark 4:18 And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, 19: And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

Because there was no real repentance and he still wedded to his darling sin, that darling sin ultimately choked out the word and became unfruitful.

A good example of this is Judas. He was identified as one of the apostles of Jesus.

He followed Jesus and sat under the teaching of Jesus Christ but the *cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things*, exposed that he was not a sincere and true disciple of Christ.

d. Good soil

Luke 8:15 But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

Mark 4:20: And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

Matthew 13:23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

It is a picture of a man who hears the Word of God and understands it, receives it, keeps it, bears fruit some 30 times, some 60 times and some 100 times - in varying degrees, with patience, not just for a week or two but continual. Of all the hearers this is the only one that bear fruit.

III - The Applications

Now, what can we take with us from this parable?

1. Warning to the recipients

Our Lord many times warns us of the great danger of false teachers and false prophets. But here, in this parable, our Lord warns us of the great danger false profession and false hearer.

Luke 8:18 Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.

Be careful not only what you hear but also how you hear.

Whenever the word is preached, the gospel is proclaimed, the truth of God is declared, you are reacting to it. There is no neutral reaction. You are either an careless hearer, emotional hearer, insincere hearer and good and honest hearer.

2. The Issue is the Soil

The problem is not the Sower, not the Seed. No, the problem is the Soil. The issue is the soil. The issue lies at the heart. The heart of the problem is the problem of the heart.

No matter how good or skillful the sower is, if the ground is hard, or shallow or full of weeds, the seed will have no chance. But if the soil is well-plowed, soft, deep, without weeds, even a young boy without farming experience would still get good harvest.

Preachers and SS teachers when preparing and delivering God's Word must strive to be plain, simple, easy to understand, and direct but regardless how much preparation the preacher may have, if the heart is not right, there will be little or no good result at all.

Whenever you come to the House of God, the reception of the Word many times had already been determined before you enter the House.

3. The seed revealed the condition of the soil

The seed, when it landed on the ground, did not create any condition on the soil. All that the seed did was, it revealed the already existing condition of the soil.

The Gospel is the great revealer of hearts. It exposes the true condition of the heart.

The basic principle is - whether or not you are going to receive the word with faith is already settled before you come to church.

Of course there are exceptions, but the general principle is - the sower went forth to sow the seed. The seed fell to the ground and the development of the seed depends on the condition of the soil.

4. The soil must be plowed

What we could learn from this parable is the importance of preparation before coming to a gathering like this.

There must be physical preparation

Saturday evening preparation. Ironing the clothes. Getting the things needed ready if possible put them in the car or van before Sunday.

There must be spiritual preparation

If we are to understand and retain the word of God

Proverbs 4:23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

a. Prayer

Psalms 119

18: Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

34: Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.

73: Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.

125: I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.

144: The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.

169: Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD: give me understanding according to thy word.

b. Meditate

2 Timothy 2:7 Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

Consider - diligent exercise your mind

Think upon it, consider it and the Lord will give you understanding.

c. Resist the enemy

Avoiding any distractions, things that defile, things that will harden the heart, things that would choke the seed, don't let the birds come take away the precious seed. Cultivate, nurture, water, till, break up the fallow ground,

You cannot keep the birds from flying over your head but you can keep the birds from nesting on your head.

Hosea 10:12 Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.

Where are you today? What kind of soil are you? Way side, rocky soil, thorny soil or good soil?

Ezekiel 36:26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart (heart of stone) out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. 27: And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes (be careful to obey my laws), and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Psalm 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.