

Feb 10th, 2019
The Parable of the Sower
Mark 4:1-20

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

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|-------|-----------------|--------|-----------------|
| Feb 3 | Leviticus 8-10 | Feb 7 | Leviticus 19-21 |
| Feb 4 | Leviticus 11-13 | Feb 8 | Leviticus 22-23 |
| Feb 5 | Leviticus 14-15 | Feb 9 | Leviticus 24-25 |
| Feb 6 | Leviticus 16-18 | Feb 10 | Leviticus 26-27 |

Lesson Introduction: *The Gospel of Mark is known for showing us the actions of Jesus more so than giving us glimpses into His teaching. The other gospels feature far more accounts of Jesus' teaching than we find in Mark. However, this week, we come to a place where Mark does stop down to give us some specifics about Christ's teaching. Over the next couple of weeks, we will be spending some time considering the parables Jesus tells in this section. As we dive in this week, we will consider **the purpose of parables, types of soil, and hearing the word.***

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS OF THE PASSAGE:

- **Hearing of the word is God's means of bringing people to faith (V. 3, 9, 14, 20)**
- **We cannot accept the word without having eyes to see and ears to hear (V. 9, 11-12)**
- **The Lord produces a miraculous harvest when His word is sown (V. 8, 20).**

Mark 4:1-20

1 Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. 2 And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: 3 "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. 5 Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. 6 And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. 8 And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold." 9 And he said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

10 And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. 11 And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, 12 so that

"they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven."

13 And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? 14 The sower sows the word. 15 And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. 16 And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. 17 And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. 18 And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, 19 but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. 20 But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."

Discussion Section 1: The Purpose of Parables (V. 10-12)

-What does Jesus mean in verse 11 when He says, **"To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables."**

-What was the reason that some were unable to understand parables?

-What do we learn about Jesus' purpose of using parables in these verses?

Note: *Before we get into the content of Jesus' parable found in verses 1-9 and 14-20, it is important to consider why Jesus chose to speak in parables in the first place. James R. Edwards defines a parable as **"something that is placed alongside something else for the purpose of clarification."** In this case, Jesus tells a story of agriculture in order to make clear how one must enter the kingdom of heaven. What we see in this passage, is that Jesus chose to present these kingdom principles in*

parable form to one group, and then wait until later to explain it to a select few.

Jesus states plainly that the reason He speaks in parables is so those who have been given the secrets of the kingdom of God might understand, while those on the outside might remain veiled. In **verse 12** He affirms this by quoting from **Isaiah 6:9-10**. At that time, Jesus was still only partially revealing Himself to even His disciples. His time had not yet come (**John 7:1-10**). Jesus spoke in parables so that He could teach His disciples whom He had chosen, without revealing Himself fully to those He had not. The Father had a certain plan for when Jesus would be delivered up to be crucified (**Acts 4:27-28**), and thus Jesus often concealed revelation of Himself to the people throughout the gospels, until His time was at hand. We will see later, that it is only when the Lord decides to work a miracle that deaf ears and blind eyes begin to hear and see the truth about Him, and in turn begin to yield a bountiful harvest.

Discussion Section 2: Types of Soil (V. 3-9, 13-20)

- What does the seed represent?
- What do the different types of soil represent in the parable?
- In sharing the gospel, have you ever encountered any of these types of soil? What are some examples?
- What does this parable tell us about our responsibility when it comes to witnessing?
- What do we learn about what true, lasting faith looks like?

Note: After Jesus tells the parable in verses 1-9, He explains it to His disciples in verses 14-20. What we see throughout this parable, is a sower casting seed liberally upon many different types of soil. Jesus explains that the seed is the word of God (**Luke 8:11, Matthew 13:19**), and the soils represent different experiences people have upon hearing the Gospel (we will talk more about hearing and responding to the Gospel in our final section). As we consider this passage, it is important that we consider these types of soil, as well as the sower's method of scattering.

One thing this passage teaches us, is that genuine saving faith is lasting, fruit bearing faith. We see here that there is one place where the seed is scattered where there is no

real effect, it is just simply devoured by birds (or immediately taken by Satan). In other words, the word does not take with such people at all. But all the other soils represent those who at one time or another, seemed to have a genuine experience of taking hold of the word, and trusting Christ. Yet, for one reason or another, that faith did not produce lasting fruit. The answer as to why, is because it simply was never genuine. It is important to understand that genuine saving faith is a faith that will last and bear fruit. Make no mistake about it, the only soil that represents a true Christian in this parable is the final soil, which produces a bountiful harvest. This should cause us to examine our own faith. If we are clinging to a prayer we said one time, or an aisle we walked when we were a little kid, yet our lives have produced no fruit, we should take a serious look at these soils, and consider that perhaps we have never truly known Christ or been known by Him, for if we have, we will remain with Him, not being choked out or scorched by the sun (**1 John 2:19**). Thankfully, for those who are Christians, we are not the ones who are responsible for producing the fruit in other, God does that work. We are free to scatter seed liberally, and trust that God will bring the growth in His timing (**1 Corinthians 3:6-8**).

Discussion Section 3: Hearing the Word (V. V. 3, 9, 14, 20)

- Why does Jesus keep using terminology connected to hearing throughout this passage?
- What is it that causes the good soil to produce fruit?
- By saying fruit is produced up to "**a hundredfold**," what are we to understand about how this harvest comes about?

Note: As this lesson comes to a close, we need to spend some time considering how genuine, fruit bearing faith is produced. Throughout this passage, Jesus continually calls people to "**hear**" what He is saying. He also states that the seed that is scattered is His word. This affirms what we hear in **Romans 10:17**, that "**faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.**" Just as the word of God created light, and mountains, and the oceans, and trees, so His word cultivates the soil of our once hard hearts, and, by His power, brings a miraculous harvest of faith (**2 Corinthians 4:3-6**). May we rejoice in the fact that He has saved us through the hearing of His word, and may we be serious about sowing His word liberally to the world around us!