

PARABLE: SOWER

Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Jesus and his listeners

Key-location: Lake Galilee

Key-repetitions:

- Seed: (Mat 13:3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 19, 20, 22, 23).
- Four types of soil where the seed fell: path (Mat 13:4); rocky places (Mat 13:5); thorns (Mat 13:7); good soil (Mat 13:23).
- Response of the seed to the different kinds of soil: path, birds ate seed (Mat 13:4); rocky soil, sprang up quickly, then withered (Mat 13:5-6); thorns, choked plants (Mat 13:7); good soil, produced a crop (Mat 13:8).
- Comparison of people to the types of soil: path, hears the message, but doesn't understand it and evil one snatches away what was sown (Mat 13:19); rocky soil, receives word, but it doesn't grow roots (Mat 13:20-21); thorns, hears the word, but worries and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word (Mat 13:22); good soil, hears and understands the word, and becomes productive (Mat 13:23).
- Parables: Jesus told many parables (Mat 13:3); disciples asked Jesus why he spoke in parables to the people (Mat 13:10).

Key-attitudes:

- Crowd's desire to see and hear Jesus.
- Jesus' serenity as he sat in the boat and told parables.
- Disciples' curiosity about why Jesus told parables.

Initial-situation:

Jesus was in his second year of public ministry. John the Baptist had been arrested, and the crowds that once followed John were now following Jesus. Although Jesus was popular with the multitudes, religious leaders were beginning to resist him. Jesus had chosen his twelve apostles and performed some miracles.

Initial-problem:

Jesus went to Lake Galilee. The gathered crowd was so large that Jesus entered a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore listening to him speak.

Final-situation:

Jesus spoke in parables when he talked to the people. This was in order to give his disciples secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven and to hide the parable's truth from the crowd.

BIBLE STORY

Jesus left the house where he was staying and sat by Lake Galilee. The gathered crowd was so large that Jesus entered a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. Jesus told the people many stories called parables (Mat 13:1-3).

Parable of the Sower

Jesus told the parable, "A farmer went out to sow his seed. The farmer scattered the seed and some fell along the path; the birds ate it. Some seed fell on rocky places where there was little soil. Plants sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. The sun came up and the plants withered just as quickly, because they had no roots. Other seed fell among the thorn bushes, and the thorn bushes grew up and choked the plants. Some seed fell on good soil where it produced plants that bore grain: some a hundred, others sixty, and others thirty times what was sown. The person who has ears, let him hear" (Mat 13:3-8).

Later when Jesus was alone with his disciples, he told them, "Listen to the explanation of the parable of the sower. The seed that fell along the path is the person who hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. The seed that fell on rocky places is the person who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. However, it does not grow deep roots; it lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away from faith. The seed that fell among the thorns is the person who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and he doesn't bear fruit. However, the seed that fell on good soil is the person who hears and understands the word. This person produces a crop, yielding one hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown" (Mat 13:18-23).

Why Jesus Speaks in Parables

The disciples asked Jesus, "Why do you speak in parables when you talk to the people?"

Jesus replied, "You have been given the knowledge of the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven. This insight has not been given to the crowd. Whoever understands these mysteries will be given more knowledge. Whoever doesn't understand these mysteries, even the little understanding he has, will be taken from him. These people see, but they're blind. They have become closed minded and hard of hearing. Blessed are your eyes because they see, and blessed are your ears because they hear. Many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see and to hear what you hear, but did not get the chance" (Mat 13:9-18).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is a parable?
2. Why did Jesus speak in parables?
3. What do parables accomplish that teaching by stating facts does not?
4. What four types of soil did Jesus mention in the Parable of the Sower?
5. What characterizes each type of soil in regard to hearing the word of God?
6. When Jesus told parables, why was it that spiritually sensitive people heard a message from God, but spiritually insensitive people only heard a good story?
7. What modern analogy could you use to present the truth of this parable to city people with no farm background?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **Storytelling is an effective means of communicating God's word.** Jesus used storytelling as the primary means of teaching (Mat 13:1-3). Jesus was never without a story when he spoke. He would not say a thing to the crowd without telling a parable (Mat 13:33-35).
2. **The parable of the Sower teaches that only the person who receives the word has the ability to prevent its growth.** People obstruct the growth of God's Kingdom when they do not allow the word of God to have spontaneous growth in their lives (Mat 13:1-23).
3. **A person's reception of God's word is determined by the condition of his heart.** Some people are hard-hearted and closed to the word of God, while others are receptive. The parable of the sower teaches that there are different types of soils (Mat 13:1-23; Mk 4:1-20). The church should not abandon unproductive soil; however, it should give priority to proclaiming God's word to people who are receptive to it and where there is the greatest hope for a large harvest.
4. **Those who teach and preach the Bible should not be discouraged if they do not always see results.** The farmer sowed good seed, but not all seed sprouted, and even the plants that grew had varying yields (Mat 13:8). The crop yield cannot be determined when the seed is planted.

5. **People who receive God's word by faith and act on it become productive.** Jesus gave the explanation that the seed that fell on good soil is the person who hears and understands the word. This person produces a crop, yielding one hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown (Mat 13:23).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Pantomime Retelling of the Story:

The storyteller tells the story one time.

- The storyteller asks for four volunteers. Each one will represent one type of soil in the story: path, rocky places, thorns, and good soil.
- The storyteller retells the story with the volunteers pantomiming the part of the story that deals with his type of soil.
- The story is told a third time with each pantomiming participant telling the part of the story that he pantomimed.