

Good Soil; Mark 4:13-20

I. Parable

- A. A narrative or saying (doesn't matter how short or long) designed to illustrate a truth, especially through comparison or simile (comparing two things that are not alike)
 - 1. The parable of the talents compares the kingdom of heaven with a unit of money
 - 2. Those things are not alike, but Jesus uses one to illustrate the other
 - 3. Brave as a lion, crazy like a fox, hit me like a cold bucket of water
- B. Mark 4:10–12; 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."
 - 1. Quoted from Isaiah 6:9-10
 - 2. This is Isaiah's calling by God
 - 3. "Here I am! send me." v. 8
 - 4. Mark 4:33–34; ³³ With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. ³⁴ He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.
- C. "The reason for Jesus' resort to the method of teaching by parables is complex:
 - 1. He did so in order to fulfill prophecy.
 - 2. He did so to confound the spies of the Pharisees.
 - 3. He thus challenged his disciples to greater spiritual discernment.
 - 4. The Hebrew people were familiar with that method.
 - 5. It made his teachings easier to remember.
 - 6. The parables were interesting in the highest degree.
 - 7. They contained the dynamic teaching of Jesus in language which was unsuitable to the court-charges the Pharisees were anxious to make against him.
 - 8. In short, he, by this method, taught those who wished to know the truth and confounded those who sought to oppose him. In the literature of all the world, there is nothing to compare with the parables of Jesus." Coffman

II. The Path

- A. Mark 4:14–15; 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.
- B. The parallel in Matthew 13:19 says, "they do not understand it"
- C. "Take away" - to remove by force, even by killing
 - 1. The word is life; no word, no life
 - 2. John 6:63–68; ⁶³ It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ⁶⁴ But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) ⁶⁵ And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." ⁶⁶ After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. ⁶⁷ So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" ⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life,
- D. Some of Jesus' teachings are not easy, but they are the words of life
- E. No word, no life!

III. Rocky Ground

- A. Mark 4:16–17; 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.
- B. “Receive” - to enter into a close relationship, make one’s own
 - 1. It is very unfortunate that this happens, but it does
 - 2. We all know those who have made the great confession and been cleansed of their sins
 - 3. We see them for a while, encourage them, love on them; then one day they are gone
 - 4. Christianity is not a bed of roses
 - 5. 2 Timothy 3:10–17; ¹⁰ You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, ¹¹ my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. ¹² Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³ while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.
- C. It is not a question of if, but of when we suffer for Jesus
- D. We cannot allow this suffering to shorten our roots

IV. Thorns

- A. Mark 4:18–19; 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.
- B. The world can be a very deceptive place
 - 1. 1 John 2:15–17; ¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.
 - 2. We see this very same thing happening in the Garden with Eve
 - 3. It happens very often, that we let the world intrude on our Christianity
 - 4. We become too involved with what the world can offer us and forget what the world cannot offer us (eternal life)
- C. Recognize the deceitfulness of the thorns
- D. Don’t let it choke out the Word

V. Good Soil

- A. Mark 4:20; 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.”
- B. Pathways, rocks, and thorns can all be tilled into good soil!
- C. We see the criteria of the good soil
- D. Hear and accept the word
 - 1. Sometimes it is hard to accept what God is saying to us (through His word)
 - 2. We don’t want to believe some of the things we read (but some we do want to believe)

3. But this encouragement is to accept the Word of God (all of it)
- E. Bear fruit
1. There is a lot of debate on exactly what this fruit is that we are supposed to produce
 2. Some say the fruit is Christians, or Churches
 3. I think that is a bit ambitious and is dependent upon other people's choices
 4. We are responsible for our own choices, not those of someone else
 5. Let's look at the fruit we are supposed to have.
 6. "Walk by the Spirit" Galatians 5:16
 7. Galatians 5:22–25; ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.
 8. If we focus on establishing and building these qualities within ourselves then evangelism comes naturally
 9. And our success is determined by how well we cultivate these qualities, not on whether someone else accepts the words of Jesus
- F. We can all be good soil!
- VI. Till your soil!
- A. Remove the pathways
 - B. Remove the rocks
 - C. Remove the thorns
 - D. Cultivate the fruit