



THE PARABLES OF JESUS

SESSION 2

Parable of the Sower/ Soils : *Participants Guide*

WELCOME

Ok guys! We've made it to **Week 2** –today we will be in **Matthew 13:1-9 & 13:18-23**. We will be covering the **Parable of the Soils/ Sower** as well as looking at Jesus *explanation* of the Parable of the Soils/ Sower.

If you remember from last week, we said that parables were _____ in detail, _____ in image and _____ with a message. So, Jesus leads off with this Parable of the Soils – which bats lead-off in the batting order of parables – and points His listeners toward the truth [the seed] of the Kingdom of God. The invitation is to live with a posture of receiving God's Word and then – through Jesus Christ – to listen and obey God's Word. That to be a disciple of the Kingdom means that we should be ready to hear AND remain focused on the message of the Kingdom – in such a way that we are defined by it.

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read **Matthew 13:1-2**

SET THE STAGE

In our discussion today, we are going to read about a typical situation where Jesus used parables to teach. Imagine the scene – Jesus is surrounded by a crowd [enemies, seekers and disciples] on the shore of Lake Galilee in Palestine. He wants the crowd to be able to hear His teach – so, He jumps into a boat and rows out a short way from the shoreline. The crowd of course moves up – even a little bit into the water. His voice can be heard clearly across the water, and He begins to speak...

QUESTION

Why do you think Jesus often taught by the sea?

- *Who was Jesus' audience in this passage?*

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read **Matthew 13:3-9**

THE PARTS

Ok, so let's break this down quickly. Let's look at the main parts of this parable:

- We have a sower.
- We have a bag of seeds in the hands of the sower.
- And, we have 4 soils:
 - Hard soil [along the path], where birds liked to feast.
 - Rocky soil – not much soil / no depth of soil
 - Thorny soil – chokes out any growth.
 - Good/ Fertile soil that produces different measures of fruit [, & *fold*]

Every time seed was sown by a farmer, certain things took place. Jesus mentions four of them:

- Some of the seed that was cast about would fall along the path that was beaten down, soil that was hardpan, and that seed had no possibility of penetrating the earth. The seed that was cast in that manner never germinated or bore fruit but was plucked by the birds of the air. In a sense, the seed seemed to be wasted.
- **Two of the seeds grow a little before they fail:**
 - Some of the seed would fall on the rock and had nowhere to go underneath the ground. When the plow came through, it couldn't break up the rock. So, the seed rested just barely below the surface, on the rock, with no possibility of taking root. So, the seed failed.
 - Some of the seed would fall along the sides of the field where other things were already growing, such as thorns and brambles, but it could still take root because there was soil. However, when the seed took root and began to grow alongside the thorns and brambles, it would be choked and die out – meaning the seed grew a little but ultimately failed.
- Some of the seed would actually hit the good soil – that had the nutrients needed for germination and growth. The seed that fell on this soil took root. It grew and produced different measures of fruit in the good soil.

QUESTIONS

This parable is known as the “Parable of the Soils/ Sower.” Do you think this is the most descriptive title for this parable?

- *Do you think there's another title that would be more appropriate?*

Has there been a time when you've been like the fertile ground in the parable of the sower, and the Word of God has taken root in you, creating a fruitful spiritual life?

- *What was going on in your life during that time?*
- *Why do you think you were more fruitful soil at that time, and not at other times?*

What do you think He means by the statement, “He who has ears to hear what I'm saying, let him hear.”

THE DISCIPLES RESPONSE & JESUS EXPLAINS

if we were to read **verses 10-17**, the disciples came to Him and asked, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” Basically, He responds with some will hear and understand [*like the disciples*] and some will not [*in this case His mother and brothers (end of chapter 12) and the Pharisees*]. And how blessed the disciples are that they get to witness and hear the teachings of Jesus.

The disciples must still seem a little confused so Jesus explains the parable to them.

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read **Matthew 13:18-23**

EXPLANATION OF THE SOWER/ SOILS PARABLE BY JESUS

He starts off by teaching them that the first soil is akin to the one who hears the Word [*the seed*] and doesn't understand it. The evil one [*the birds*] come and snatch it away. This is the seed that is thrown on the path or hard ground.

QUESTION

What kind of person does this soil represent?

In **verses 20-21**, we see the seed that was sown on the rocky ground hears the Word and receives it with joy but the Word does not take root in his heart. They endure for a while, but when persecution comes – and let's be real here – BECAUSE OF THE WORD [*the seed planted in their soil*], they fall away. This is the seed that is thrown on the rocky ground.

QUESTION

The shallow soil results in quick growth that fades quickly in the heat. What kind of person does this soil represent?

In verse 22, we see the seed that was liberally thrown among the thorns is the one that hears the Word of God but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches or "stuff" choke out the Word. And it proves unfruitful.

Now, some may look at these middle two soils and think it teaches that people can be saved and lose their salvation. They can be in a state of grace and be justified, but it doesn't last. This kind of thinking goes against what the Bible teaches about how God preserves those He redeems – the regenerate. Ephesians 1 tells us that God gives those He redeems the seal of the Holy Spirit. We are told that He who began a good work will finish it to the end. So, this parable does not contradict what is taught in other places in Scripture.

QUESTION

In your opinion, what are the weeds that often prevent growth and fruitfulness in a person's life?

- *What are some things that often distract us from focusing on God's Word?*

Last, in verse 23, we see a picture of the seed that was sown on the good soil. The receiver hears the Word and understands it. They bear fruit and it yields in different measures [100/60/30 fold]. Different people bear fruit that looks different in the soil.

QUESTION

- ***Why do you think the good soil produces different – even declining – measures of fruit?***

CONCLUSION

The parables we will be discussing this spring are:

- ***The Parable of the Pharisee and Tax Collector/ Publican; the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant; the Parable of the Prodigal Son; the Parable of the Talents; the Parable of the Ten Virgins; and, the Parable of the Good Samaritan.***

I would encourage you to read ahead and study these parables in the days and weeks ahead. I am excited to see where this study leads us as a group and individually in understanding the teachings of our Lord, Jesus Christ.