

## The Seed and the Soil Gospel of Mark ch. 3 - Week 3

parable. Jesus says, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

*What was the result of the seed finding its home in the good soil? What do you think Jesus was referring to as the crop in verses 8 and 20? As you reflect on your life, how do you feel about the crop you are producing?*

As Jesus was seated in that boat, He was the sower who was scattering the good news on all the different types of soil represented by the people on the shore. Not everyone would "hear and behold" what He was telling them.

*Look back on the various things that prevented the seed from bearing fruit in this parable; the enemy stealing away the seed, a shallow rocky soil with no room for roots, thorns that compete and choke out the seed. What if the producing of the harvest is contagious. If the Kingdom of God and his Gospel takes root in one area of our lives...what if it began to reproduce in other areas of our lives? Is there anything you've notice that you could do to improve the yield of your crop?*

### WRAP-UP

The Parable of the Sower, told by Jesus, uses farming imagery to illustrate how the message of the Gospel impacts different hearts. It describes four types of soil: the hardened path, rocky soil, thorny ground, and good soil. The seed, representing the Word of God, faces different outcomes depending on the condition of the soil. The path symbolizes those who reject the message immediately, while rocky soil represents those whose faith is shallow and fades under pressure. Thorns represent distractions and worldly concerns that choke spiritual growth. Good soil, however, represents those who hear, accept, and produce a fruitful harvest. This parable invites us to reflect on our own receptivity to God's Word and how we can nurture deep roots for spiritual growth.

### MEMORY VERSE

*23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. - 1 Peter 1:23 NIV*

*Challenge – Don't be satisfied to read this parable and walk away. Reflect on the way God's word was received on the different soils and ask God to show you how you can let its meaning seep down deep in your soul.*

### INTRODUCTION

If you are a regular church attendee, or even an occasional one, you are probably familiar with the Parable of the Sower. As He taught, Jesus often used parables, which are simple stories that illustrate a spiritual truth. In this parable, the sower sows seed on four types of soil and sees four different results. This parable is a part of a larger story and an invitation to participate in the Kingdom. It is both a message of life and a warning. Let's slow down as we study this parable and heed both.

### Ice Breaker

Are you a gardener and if so, what will you be planting in your garden this year?

### Key Passages

**20 Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop--some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown." - Mark 4:20 NIV**

### STUDY QUESTIONS

#### 1. Seed Sown along the Path

*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. ... 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. - Mark 4:3-4, 14-15 ESV*

*1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. - John 1:1 NIV*

Listen and behold (Gr. *akouō and idou*) are the first things Jesus says as He begins to teach. He was crowded on the shores of the lake by people from near and far and so, He got into a boat so He could be seen and heard. But the people needed to pay attention to hear His message, and so should we. Jesus uses farming language which the crowds could relate to, and luckily for us He explained the meaning behind this parable to His disciples.

Jesus tells us the seed is the Word, or the logos.

What does John 1:1 tell us about the Logos (word)? So, what is being dispensed in this parable? In what ways is the word (logos= good news of Jesus) like a seed?

In the first scenario the farmer sows seed along the path. The path is the road we follow, our life's journey. We see in Matt 7:13-14 we have choices in what path we follow.

*13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. - Matthew 7:13-14 NIV*

When the seed fell beside the path in the first scenario, Satan (the birds) immediately makes an appearance and carries off what was sown. If we are on the broad path that leads to destruction, how might Satan reinforce continuing down that broad path when we are faced with the Gospel of Jesus? What arguments do we commonly hear in challenge to the message of Jesus? Why would someone choose to continue in a direction contrary to what Jesus offers?

## 2. Shallow Rocky Soil

*5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ... 16 Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. 17 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. - Mark 4:5-6, 16-17 NIV*

For healthy plants you need an adequate supply of both nutrients and water provided through a well-developed root system. But if there is not enough soil to deliver the food and water as well as to give stability, the plant is in trouble.

In this second scenario Jesus says the soil was shallow, the seed near the surface germinates quickly but has no depth, no reserves to draw from when it is stressed by the scorching sun.

What prevents the Good News of Jesus from making its way to the remote recesses of our soul? What circumstances have you faced that challenged your faith and how do you draw from God's reserves to stand in those situations?

Jesus said that when those represented by seed on rocky soil faced pressure, trouble or affliction they immediately stumbled and fell (*skandalizō*) Even

though they had received the word with joy, it was superficial and temporary. Our relationship with Jesus must be based on more than praying a prayer and going to church. If we are going to face the challenges of this world we need deep roots, and that means letting Jesus into every area of our lives. The deeper our relationship with Him becomes, the better able we are to stand against the difficulties we might face.

## 3. Seed Among the Thorns

Thorns are never a good thing. In Eden, God said the ground was cursed to grow thorns and briars because of mankind's sin (Gen 3:18). At Calvary a crown of thorns was made to mock Jesus as He died on the cross (John 19:2). And in the third scenario of this parable the thornbushes competed with the good seed.

*7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. ... 18 Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 19 but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. - Mark 4:7, 18-19 NIV*

If unwanted plants grow in your field, they will compete for the nutrients, water and sunlight needed for your crop to grow. The same is true in our hearts. What is listed in verse 19 that competes for our time, our attention and our hearts? Which of these occupies your thoughts most often?

It is easy for the details and complexities of our daily lives to become a distraction from our relationship with God. And if busyness doesn't distract you, finances certainly will. Perhaps deeper still are the desires and cravings for something we long to possess. Any of these things can take hold of our hearts and choke out what Jesus desires for us- an undivided heart. Jesus must be "THE" desire of our heart, not a desire of our heart.

## 4. The Good Soil

*8 Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times." 9 Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear." ... 20 Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop-- some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown." - Mark 4:8-9, 20 NIV*

The explanation of those called good soil is brief. They are those who hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop. Notice the first thing required to be good soil is to hear what God is saying. And that is the way Jesus concludes this