

The Parable of the Soils – Morrison Summer Series

Scripture Text: Matthew 13:1-23

George W. DeHoff: “Matthew 13 – seven parables of the kingdom.” (Commentary Vol. 5)

Wayne Jackson on Parables: “(A) conveyed spiritual truths to honest souls; (B) concealed truth from the dishonest who might abuse it; (C) occasionally caused assent to certain truths before meaning was discerned; (D) used a story format, making the principles memorable.” (NT Commentary)

Parallel passages: Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20, Luke 8:4-15.

Although three Gospel writers record this account, Matthew seems to capture the whole story just a tad better so we will focus on Matthew’s account and reference Mark and Luke.

In order for us to better understand this parable, we will divide our lesson text into four points.

I. The Background – up to Ch. 13

12:1-9 Jesus plucking the corn

10-21 Healing on the Sabbath

22-37 Jesus accused of casting out by Beelzebul

38-45 Looking for a sign

46-50 “Who is my family?”

II. The Story – MT. 13:1-9; MK. 4:1-9; LK. 8:4-8

1-3 Mark 4:1 tells us the crowd was so large Jesus had to get in a ship to speak

Local tradition calls this the “Cove of Parables” – natural horseshoe-shaped amphitheater that would carry the voice over 300 feet (travels better over water than land).

Rabbis commonly taught in parables while sitting

Audience: poor farmers (most of the Roman empire inhabitants were poor)

Parable (PARABOLE in Greek) literally means “a placing beside”

Mark 4:2 – to the hard-hearted, parables are a warning; to those who are open-hearted, parables illustrate principles of the messianic rule of God.

Luke 8:4 – although the sower is integral to the story, there is no more mention of him again. The emphasis is on the seed/ground/soils, not the sower.

Fields can be as far as 6-8 miles away from their house. Literally “going forth to sow.”

3 Seed was often sown before the ground was plowed, literally broadcast the seed then plow

They walked along the path and threw it out

There could have been a sower in the background sowing as Christ is teaching

4 Wayside – throwing beyond the field

5 Stone – not filled with rocks, the entire land was a rock with a little grass on top (like Readyville)

Stony – “people who ‘quit’ the church because things did not go exactly their way”

Not enough moisture

7 Thistles probably unseen – probably cut or burned previously but not uprooted

8 Good ground – Typical yield – 5-15x, 10x was considered a great yield. Gen. 26:12 – 100x yield was a miraculous yield.

This is a tremendously good yield for Palestine

Recently asked Kevin George, one of the biggest farmers I know and comes from a long line of farmers, how much yield on average does he get: “As far as the seed itself, for wheat we plant 3 bushels (60#) per acre. I've seen it make 40 and I've seen it make 100. Typically, 60-70 is what you'd expect. Soybeans, we plant 1 bu/acre with a reasonable expectation of 45-50 and on good years 60-70 bu/acre harvested. Corn, we plant 1/3 of a bushel and expect to see 150 bu/acre and over 200 on exceptional years.”

9 Jewish tradition spoke of God's sowing the Law into Israel's heart at the Exodus

Mark 4:9 – “Ears to Hear – Isa, 6:10; 43:8; 44:18; Ezekiel 12:2

III. The Aside – MT. 13:10-17; MK. 4:10-12; LK. 8:9-10

10 Disciples of Rabbis kept asking questions until they understood

11 Understood, at the time, only by those closest to Christ

DeHoff: “It takes time to study, know, and understand the truth.”

14-16 cf. Isa. 6:9-10 – the people hardened their hearts – it is their fault they don't hear!

IV. The Application – MT. 13:18-23; MK. 4:13-20; LK. 8:11-15

18 Rare display – explaining the parable

19 All of Jesus's seed is good, emphasis on the type of ground

This should encourage us to be spiritual sowers

22 Rabbis said that one would be consumed with either the Law or the cares of the world

Which type of ground are you?

- Wayside? Are you somewhat standing 'outside' and only picking up a little here and there? Come inside to the good ground and get roots!
- Stony? Are you interested in God and His Kingdom yet don't let or allow God's Word to grow? Develop a deeper root system and grow!
- Thorny? Are you on fire for the Lord but quickly being choked out by the cares of the world? Cut down the thorns and 'grow, grow, grow!'
- Good ground? Keep growing – II Peter 3:18 – in grace and knowledge!

The main emphasis is on the type of ground. A seed will only bring forth as good as the ground it is in!

You can put truckload after truckload of fertilizer into a swamp continually for months yet if it is bad ground, you'll never get a better yield. The key element in this scenario is the soil.

"If you ain't got good enough dirt you won't get nothing!" Kevin George, big time farmer

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