

# The parable of the Sower

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Preacher: John Auger

[ 0 : 00 ] everyone. This reading is taken from Luke 8, it's verses 1 to 15 and it should appear and has appeared behind me to save you ruffling through your Bibles. After this, Jesus travelled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases. They were Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had come out. Joanna, the wife of Chusa, who was the manager of Herod's household, and also Susanna, and as well as many others. And these women were helping to support the group out of their own means. Now while a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable.

A farmer went out to sow his seed, and as he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path. It was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. And some fell on rocky ground. When it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. And still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop a hundred times more than was sown.

And when he said this, he called out, Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear. Now the disciples asked him what this parable meant. And he said, The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, though seeing they may not see, and though hearing they may not understand.

This is the meaning of the parable. The seed is the word of God. Those along the path are the ones that hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so they may not believe, and therefore not be saved.

Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root.

[ 2 : 56 ] They believe for a while, but in the time of testing, they fall away. And the seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way, they are choked by life's worries, by riches and by pleasures, and therefore they do not mature.

But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a great crop.

This is the word of the Lord. Yes, it's me again.

In case you were wondering, I am getting paid double time. But double nothing comes to nothing. Imagine there's no heaven.

It's easy if you try. No hell below us. Above us, only sky. When Jesus tells a parable, he asks the hearer to imagine the story he is telling, to enter into the world pictured by the parable.

[ 4 : 24 ] And just as every good song, whether it's a pop song or any other type of song, tells a story, in the same way Jesus' parables are stories, short stories. And when we look at the ministry of Jesus, we see that Jesus liked telling stories, telling parables.

Jesus spoke all these things of the crowd in parables. He did not say anything of them without using a parable. It's in Matthew. And about a third of Jesus' teaching was in parables.

Now, a strange thing is that although they were stories about people and events, his audience would have... Sorry.

About people and events, his audience would have understood. Servants, lost coins, harvest, making bread, finding treasure. But he told them so that his hearers would not understand them.

There was a mystery to them. A mystery which had to be uncovered. So, in this passage we read, his disciples asked him what this parable meant.

[ 5 : 29 ] He said, The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, though seeing, they may not see, though hearing, they may not understand.

So, when we look at this parable of the sower, or the parable of the seed, and probably after the prodigal song and the Good Samaritan, the most well-known parable, is a parable that Jesus did not expect his hearers to understand.

Indeed, as we see the verses from above, his disciples did not understand what it meant either. But we do know that Jesus wanted people to follow him, because we read, before this parable was told, that Jesus went about proclaiming the kingdom of God.

So, he wanted people to follow him. But people, Jesus told these parables, in a way that was a mystery, so that those who were interested, who were willing to learn, would come and ask him.

Ask him, What is this all about? What's this story you're telling about a sower and a seed, and all this different sorts of ground? What does it mean? So then he could explain it to him, to them, and then they would follow him.

[ 6 : 49 ] And the disciples were clearly those who wanted to learn. So they asked Jesus to explain the meaning of this parable. Now, Jesus is the Lord of the ordinary, as well as the extraordinary.

The Lord of the everyday. When our children were at home, I used to hang out the washing. And we had three boys.

Actually, we had three boys. Me, Sylvia, and the mother-in-law. And I would be hanging out, at least 32 pairs of socks, and 32 pairs of pants, along the washing line.

But Jesus would be there, amongst that ordinary event, in the green garden, with the sun, with the birds singing, with nature all around.

And those who have hung out washing, will understand that picture. And in the same way, those listening to Jesus, would have understood, understood the story of a sower.

[ 7 : 55 ] His parables were based on experiences, his hearers would know very well. The people of Israel, were people of the land. The land promised by God, to the people of Israel.

Most of them would have got their living from the land, growing and harvesting crops. They were familiar with seeing farmers, going out to sow their seed. Many of them would have sown seed themselves.

And they would know that seed, land, sorry, that seed would land in different places, and have different results. But although they would have understood, the picture that Jesus was painting, they didn't understand what it meant.

Because they would not have heard, the interpretation of it, given by Jesus. But they would understand, about seeds sown on productive land, and on land that would produce, a good return.

They would recognize themselves, in this story. So, what was this seed?

[ 8 : 56 ] And what did it mean, when the seed was sown, in different places? All those listeners, and it was a great crowd, from town after town, were not to learn what it meant, but not at the moment anyway.

Only the disciples, would be told by Jesus, what he meant by this parable. In fact, this and the parable, the weeds in Matthew, are the only parables, which Jesus explains in detail.

Perhaps because it was important, for the disciples to know, what these particular parables meant. So, in this case, Jesus decided to explain, the parable to his disciples.

Why, in this particular case, did Jesus say, well, I'm going to tell you, what all this means. Perhaps the first two verses, of the next chapter, may explain this. Because the first two verses, of Luke 9, we read, when Jesus had called, the twelve together, he gave them power, and authority, to drive out all demons, and to cure diseases.

And he sent them out, to proclaim, the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. So, Jesus was going, to send out his disciples, to proclaim, the kingdom of God. The start of the proclamation, of the gospel.

[ 10 : 06 ] And this parable, explains what might happen, when people hear the word. So, the disciples, not be surprised, by the different ways, in which this message, of the kingdom of God, would be received.

So, although this parable, is usually known, as the parable of the sower, it is really, the parable of the seed, and of the soil. Jesus does not, in fact, say anything about the sower.

Some commentators, suggest, the sower is Jesus. But Jesus, doesn't say this. Although, in explaining, the parable of the weeds, Jesus does say, it is the son of man, who sows the seed.

So, Jesus says, starts off by saying, the seed, is the word of God. In the same parable, in Matthew, it's the message, about the kingdom. It's the same thing. The first thing, to learn from this parable, is that the word of God, needs to be spread.

It needs to be sown. The world, needs to hear, the word of God. The word, about the kingdom of God. The word, about Jesus, who had come into the world, to seek, and save the lost.

[ 11 : 12 ] Who came to deal, with the sin, and evil in the world, by dying, on the cross. Who came to seek, and save, those who were lost. So, the word, is spread.

The kingdom of God, is proclaimed, but the message, lands on different types, of soil. A path, rocky ground, thorns, and good soil. So, what does all this mean?

Paths, are normally hard, as they have been, walked on by many feet, over many years. So, the seed that was spread, fell on hard ground, with no deep soil, for it to bury in.

It was trodden on, and was available, for the birds, to swoop down, and eat all the seed. None was given, the opportunity, to grow. So, Jesus explained, that the birds, that take the word away, is Satan.

Birds, who swoop down, and take that seed, of the word of God, is Satan, the deceiver. The word, had some effect, on the hearers, as it enters their hearts. But the devil, takes it away, before they have the chance, to believe, and be saved.

[ 12 : 23 ] Rocky ground, has thin soil, so that the seed, cannot go down too far, and germinates very quickly. But because of this, because of this quick growth, the seed, does not have time, to put down roots.

So when the sun shines, the plants, are withered. Because the roots, cannot reach water. And Jesus says, that in this case, the word is initially, heard with joy.

But because there is root, no root, trouble, and persecution, come. And they fall away. The seeds, that fall on thorny ground, has to compete, with thorns, which are better suited, to get the nutrients, and the soil.

So the worries, of this life, and the deceitfulness, of wealth, choke the world, making it unfruitful. Jesus said, it was difficult, for a rich man, to enter, the kingdom of heaven.

But the seed, which fell on good soil, produced a crop, a hundred times more, than was sown. Parable in Matthew, says the seed grew, and produced a crop, multiplying 30, 60, or even a hundred times.

[ 13 : 25 ] So why did the seed, produce a crop, on good soil? Because it was good soil. It had been ploughed, and covered with nutrients. The soil was deep, so that roots, could grow, and draw on the water, required for the growth, of the plant.

What about, the meaning of this, for us today? I believe a key point, of this parable, is not necessarily, about the seed, or the word, or the soil, but about, the scattering.

Our task, is to spread the word, is to scatter the word, to preach, that the kingdom of God, is here, to point people, to Jesus, who can bind up, the brokenhearted. Jesus said, a bruise, he will not break, and a smouldering wick, he will not stuff out.

There's a song, which I, really like, which I think, one person here, will know, and then it says, my tears are drying, my tears are drying, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, my tears are drying, my tears are drying, your beauty, and kindness, made tears, clear my blindness.

We are people here, who are trying, by our beauty, and kindness, which Christ, shines through us, to help people, in this world, who've got broken hearts, who are sinful, who don't know, which way to go, who are blind, to the word of God.

[ 15 : 07 ] We have people here, to show them, the way, to clear the tears, from their eyes, and make them see Jesus. St Francis said, there are two means of mission, proclamation, and the witness, of our lives.

That is our task, in whatever way we do it. We're not all preachers, but we all have, the Holy Spirit in us, and we can point people, to Jesus, in the way we behave, and in what we say.

In the short letters of John, it says six times, that we should love, one another, and that is what we should do. In these times, when there appears to be, so much division, in the country, we should show, the outside world, what love is, by showing our love, for one another.

Now another key point, of this parable, is that it's not, our responsibility, how people receive the word. That is their responsibility, not ours.

In fact, it's God's responsibility. Paul says, in Corinthians, I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants, nor the one who waters, is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.

[ 16 : 21 ] The one who plants, and the one who waters, have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded, according to their own labor. For we are co-workers, in God's service. All of you, all of us, our co-workers, in God's service.

And, our responsibility, is not, to save people, because that's, we can't do it. It's what God does. But it's to let people know, that there is salvation, in Jesus Christ, and what he done on the cross.

The fact he's alive today, that the Holy Spirit, can live in you today. And that he can draw you, from the darkness, into light. And, our responsibility, is to scatter, the word of God, about the kingdom of God, and the love of God.

When I was preparing this talk, I had a, thought, more than one, but I had a thought, was perhaps a bit wide, of what this parable was about, but I think may be helpful. What if we look at this parable, and we are the ones, who are hearing the word.

Now I'm sure all of us, who have had times, when we have found joy, in hearing, or reading the word of God, but something happens, and that joy is snatched away, by Satan. In the same way, we have heard the word, and then problems, and troubles, choke that word.

- [ 17 : 38 ] Or our concern, with the things of the world, to secure the riches, which are in Jesus Christ. In these times, our roots in the Lord, are not as deep, as they should have been. We don't remember that, to them, that is the Lord's people.

God has chosen, to make known, among the Gentiles, the glorious riches, of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Another mystery, Christ in you, Christ in me, that's where the hope of glory is, for those around us.

But praise God, there are many times, when we hear the word, and it produces something good, and we produce fruit. Blessed is the one, who does not walk, in step with the wicked, or stand in a way, that sinners take, or sit in a company of mockers, but whose delight, is in the law of the Lord, and who meditate, on his law day and night.

That person, is like a tree, planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season, and whose leaf, does not wither. Whatever they do, prospers. The word of God, Jesus, must be at the root of our lives, and this is what will give us growth.

I pray that we all be like that tree, planted by streams of water, and that we will yield fruit in season, and that our leaves, we will not wither. Amen.

- [ 19 : 13 ] Thank you, John. Not to consider. Let's just take a couple of minutes, just to absorb, what's been said to us this morning.

Then we're going to sing our final song. God bless you.

God is good. And we know that, everything, that when we fail, when we go wrong, we know that God is good. We're going to finish our service today, by singing, the goodness of God, because God is good.

Please stand. I love you, Lord.

Oh, Oh, Your mercy never fails me. All my days, I've been held in Your hands.

- [ 20 : 57 ] For the moment that I wake up, Until I lay my head, I will sing of the goodness of God.

All my life, You have been faithful. All my life, You have been so, so good.

With every breath that I have laid, Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God.

I love Your voice. You have led me through the fire, In the darkest night, You are close like no other.

I've known You as a father, I've known You as a friend, And I have lived in the goodness of God.

- [ 22 : 25 ] All my life, All my life, You have been faithful. All my life, You have been so, So good.

With every breath that I am able, I will sing of the goodness of God.