

20250504 Sower, Seed, and Soil – Ps Bijoy

Mark 4:1-20

The theme of these verses is really simple: how we listen to God really matters. In verse 3, “Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed.” So, it should come as no surprise that Jesus opens his teaching with a command to listen. It’s a very strong word. It’s an imperative. It’s a command. Our attention is mandatory.

The Sower sows the seed – V 1-9

In this parable, Jesus described something they were all familiar with – a farmer casting seed on the ground and the seed falling on different types of soil. A sower went out to sow. What does he sow? Jesus says in verse 14, the sower sows the Word of God. Although, the sower could be anyone who preaches the word, a pastor, missionary, colleague, but in this context of Gospel, God is the sower. And Gospel is the seed (God’s word). And it happened, as he sowed: The seed fell on three areas without lasting success: on the pathway (the wayside), on the rocky ground (on rock), and on the thorny ground (among thorns). But some of the seed fell on good ground and produced thirty-, sixty- and hundred-fold crops. So, it’s a very simple parable and rightfully we might assume that everyone understood the message but unfortunately that’s not the case.

In verses 10 – 12 : “When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. He told them, “The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, “they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!”

The Bible often talks of having ears to hear. Not everyone who hears the gospel will really hear the gospel. We see in verse 12 that Jesus quotes something. What is it? It’s a quote from Isaiah chapter Six. What’s going on there? Isaiah six is that great passage where Isaiah is caught up in a vision, and God forgives his sin and sends him out to preach to the hard-hearted people of Israel. Isaiah’s prophetic mission is to tell his generation that they won’t listen to God because they haven’t been listening to him. And since they won’t listen, their window into God’s kingdom is closing. It’s going to get harder for them to understand what God is saying. God will still speak of what’s to come. He’ll still prophecy about Jesus. But they won’t understand it because they don’t want to. So Jesus is talking about the hardness of the people’s hearts. We need humility to understand the truths of His Word.

Therefore, to those who are outside (hardened hearts), all things come in parables, so that ‘Seeing they may see and not perceive’: Parables, in their spiritual function, are more like riddles or puzzles than

easy illustrations. They can be understood by those who have the right ‘key.’ But none of them could understand the spiritual meaning until Jesus explained the key to them: The sower sows the **word**. If you miss the key, you miss the whole parable. If you think the seed represents money, you miss the parable. If you think the seed represents love, you miss the parable. If you think the seed represents hard work, you miss the parable. You can only understand it by understanding the key: The sower sows the word.

Verse 13- 20 : This parable is not merely a story of a sower sowing seed. It is a question from God to us all. When the sower sows his seed, what will the seed find to rest on? What kind of soil is our heart made of? Jesus presents four types of soil, but there are ultimately only two kinds. There is the soil of unfaith (bad soil) and the soil of faith (good soil). Jesus said that the word of God is like a seed. It gets planted in our hearts and then has the potential to bear fruit. But not every seed grows into a plant and bear fruit. The kind of soil it lands on makes all the difference.

So, what are those four types? Because whenever the seed of the Word is sown, all four types are present. So, here are the four types, from the parable in verses 15-20.

- 1. Hard and Dry (Wayside v. 15)**
- 2. Shallow and Rocky (Stony ground, V. 16-17)**
- 3. Crowded and Anxious (Among thorns, V.18-19)**
- 4. Soft and Open (Good ground, V. 20)**

First, the hard and dry heart (wayside)

Verse 15, “Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them.”

What happens to this kind of heart? When they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes the word away. He snatches it up before it sinks in. Pharisees are the best examples for this kind of heart, the more they hear the gospel, the more they harden their hearts. It’s filled with pride and the scariest heart of all. Remember the devil is still trying to snatch away those biblical truths from our heart so that it might not bear any fruit. C.S. Lewis talks about this in his great fictional book *The Screwtape Letters*. It’s a series of letters of counsel from one senior demon, Screwtape, to a junior demon, Wormwood. Wormwood has been assigned a man to keep from coming to faith in Christ. In one letter, Screwtape says, “It is funny how mortals always picture us as putting things into their minds: in reality our best work is done by keeping things out.” In context, Screwtape is talking about prayer. “Do all you can, dear

Wormwood, to keep our man from praying! Take out the desire!” The only way we don’t allow our hearts to be hardened is by humbling ourselves before God and earnestly seek him through our prayers. Therefore, the bible warns us to be soberminded and watchful because genuine prayers act as a shield against the enemy.

There are some that hear the word, but never meditate upon it, never lay it to their hearts, never cover it with second thoughts. It is important to understand that Satan doesn’t want the word of God to take root in a person’s heart. Like a bird swooping down and snatching a seed, he wants to “remove” the seed of the word from the “soil” of a person’s heart. There is a spiritual warfare going on and we have to be sober minded. Every time the word of God is proclaimed, spiritual warfare occurs in the hearts of every person. But here is the fascinating thing: entrance into the kingdom of God, eternal life begins not with doing, but with receiving, or as our parable will show us, listening rightly.

Stony/Shallow Ground

Verses 16&17

“Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. 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.”

The ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves and so endure only for a time: Some people are like the ground that is rocky, they receive the seed of the word with a flash of enthusiasm that quickly burns out. When tribulation or persecution arises for the word’s sake, immediately they stumble: The stony ground hearer isn’t attacked directly by Satan, but by tribulation or persecution. When the thrill of praise songs fades away, they lose the enthusiasm. With this heart, things are good for a while but because we’ve never considered his word, we’ve never chewed on it, we’ve never really thought it through, we’ve kept it shallow like so many spring gardens set in the hot sun, and it dies. When things get tough, we don’t find the Joy in following Christ.

Crowded and Anxious Ground (Among thorns)

Verses 18&19

“Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 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.”

This is the kind of soil we in our context and culture are most prone to. Some people are like the seed that fell among the thorns. They receive the word but allow the interests and cares of this world to choke it out. This kind of heart is just too crowded. It has too many things at the same level of importance. It upholds social status, comfort and security, and personal desires alongside the things of God. It's the heart of anxiety, worried about things out of our control because we've let so many things control us. We all struggle with anxieties, and I have been through it as well. We need all the support that's available for us, such as family, friends, church and sometimes professional help. But I'm talking about the kind of anxiety that is caused by our too many competing loves and priorities inside our heart. Here's what we need. We need Jesus to come in and fill our hearts. We need Jesus as the sole ruler of our heart. It means we hand over all of our life to him, everything.

Soft and Open (Good ground)

Verse 20, “Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop - thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.”

This is the kind of heart that wants Jesus irrespective of their seasons in life. They draw near and they lean in, and they want Jesus. And it is only good soil that brings about fruitful harvest. Now, not everyone in Christ will yield a hundredfold. But all in Christ will yield something. It's the way we know the seed has taken root in our life.

But I want you to see something else from this context. Why was Jesus teaching in parables? Jesus wanted to see who would come to him and ask questions. Jesus wanted to know who would come to him looking for answers. Jesus wanted to know who would come to him and dig deeper and draw closer to him. This is how you know you have good soil in your heart. You desire more of God. You desire more and more. You cannot have enough. You want to know more. You want deeper roots. You want to hear his words. You want to be changed. You come to the Lord with open hands asking him to mould you and change you. You are not blind to the reality of who you are in your sins before the Lord, and you love God because he has rescued you by his grace and mercy.