

**THEME:**     **THE PARABLES OF JESUS**

**TOPIC:**     **THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER (The Four Soil)**

**TEXT:**       **MATTHEW 13:3-9, 18-23; MARK 4:3-9; LUKE 8:4-8**

## **INTRODUCTION**

A common description of a parable is that it is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Jesus told many parables (**Mark 4:34**).

The general "theme" of Jesus' parables is to do with "the kingdom of heaven".

Many of the parables start with "**The kingdom of heaven is like....**" as shown in **Matthew 13:24, 31, 33, 44, 45 & 47**. Jesus made reference to "**the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven**".

## **WHAT THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER IS ABOUT - The Four Soils**

1. As Jesus went about preaching the gospel of the kingdom of heaven (**Matthew 4:17, 23**), He did not always find a receptive audience...
  - a. Even where He did mighty works, some did not repent – **Matthew 11:20-24**
  - b. Some sought to trick Him, so they might have reason to accuse Him – **Matthew 12:9-14**- It was for this very reason that Jesus began teaching publicly in "parables" - **Matthew 13:10-13**
2. The problem Jesus faced was that many people, though they had ears to hear, their ears had become "**hard of hearing**" – **Matthew 13:14-15**
3. To illustrate this problem, Jesus told a parable that has come to be known as "**The Parable of the Sower**"
  - a. It can also be properly called "**The Parable of the Four Soils**".
  - b. Or "**The Parable Of The Seed**" – It was told by Jesus to illustrate different reactions to the gospel message
4. The parable itself is recorded in **Matthew 13:3-9** (also **Mark 4:3-9; Luke 8:4-8**)
  - a. It is one of the few parables in which we actually have Jesus' own interpretation of the parable
  - b. The significance of this particular parable is enhanced by the words of Jesus in **Mark 4:13**.

## **I. EXPLANATION OF THE PARABLE**

### **A. "THE SOWER"...**

1. Not specifically mentioned, but compare **Matthew 13:37**
  - a. This is in explanation of "The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares"
  - b. In which Jesus explains "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man"
2. So it is likely that the "sower" in this parable had immediate reference to Jesus
3. But it is a fair use of the parable to apply it today to anyone who faithfully proclaims the message of the Son of Man

### **B. "THE SEED"...**

1. The seed is "the word of the kingdom" - **Matthew 13:19a**
2. As in the gospel of the kingdom, which was the theme of Jesus 'preaching - **Matthew 4:23**
3. It was also an important element of apostolic preaching - **Ac 8:12; 28:30-31**

### **C. "THE WAYSIDE" (The First Soil)...**

1. This soil represents one who "hears...and does not understand" - **Matthew 13:19a**

2. Most likely, these are those who have hardened their hearts prior to hearing the Word – **Matthew 13:15**

3. The "birds" represent "the wicked one" (called "the devil" in **Luke 8:12**)

a. Who snatches away the Word from those whose hearts are hardened

b. Their condition therefore is one of being "blinded" by Satan to the gospel – **2 Corinthians 4:3-4**

4. While Satan contributes to their blindness, it is precipitated by their own hardness of heart!

#### **D. "THE STONY PLACES" (The Second Soil)...**

1. This soil represents the one who...

a. "hears the word and immediately receives it with joy" - **Matthew 13:20**

b. "yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while" – **Matthew 13:21a**

c. "when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles" - **Matthew 13:21b**

2. Some hear the Word and receive it with great joy...

a. But with no root, they are not grounded in the Word

b. So that when troubles arise, there is no endurance and stumbling occurs

3. Here we learn that an emotional reception without a strong foundation based upon the Word will not enable one to stand against tribulation and persecution

#### **E. "AMONG THE THORNS" (The Third Soil)...**

1. This soil represents the one who...

a. "hears the word" - **Matthew 13:22a**

b. But whose ability to bear fruit is choked by:

i. "the cares of this world" - **Matthew 13:22b**

ii. "the deceitfulness of riches" - **Matthew 13:22c**

iii. "pleasures of life" (added in **Luke 8:14**)

2. How these three "thorns" can cause us to be unfruitful is explained in other portions of God's Word...

a. The cares of this world

i. Can cause us to be unprepared -. **Luke 21:34-36**

ii. The evil in cares and anxieties is that they can detract our minds from what is truly important - **Luke 12:29-32**

b. The deceitfulness of riches

i. The danger is described in **1 Timothy 6:9-10**

ii. Again, the evil in riches lay in diverting our attention away from God, and feeling self-sufficient – **1 Timothy 6:17**

c. Pleasures of life

i. Those involving the flesh in particular divert our minds from the things of the Spirit - **Galatians 5:17**

ii. Sowing to the flesh makes it impossible to reap of the Spirit! - **Galatians 6:7-9**

#### **Conclusion**

The Parable of the Sower, teaches that the effectiveness of the Gospel message depends not only on its proclamation but also on the individual's receptivity and ability to grasp and apply it in their lives....

The main message of the Parable is that people respond differently to the message of God (the seed) depending on the condition of their hearts (the soil). Some will accept the message with initial enthusiasm but give up when faced with challenges, while others will fully embrace it and produce lasting fruit.

Each type of soil represents one's spiritual state, or rather, one's readiness to receive the good news offered by Jesus. We are all culpable when it comes to accepting the Word; we have a choice of what to do with what we hear.

Any good farmer knows his soil must be tilled, fertilized, and watered before it can receive seeds and be a means of growth. Soil, as used in this parable, is simply people.