

The Parables

Part 2 – The Sower

Matthew 13:1-9; 18-23

By teaching in parables the Lord Jesus intended to both reveal and conceal the truth (13:10-17). William Hendriksen writes: "Jesus now, more than ever before, begins to speak in parables in order to further reveal the truth to those who accepted the mysterious, but to conceal it from those who rejected the obvious." In this way the parables as a means of teaching were a demonstration of grace to those who believed and an act of judgment upon those who did not.



The Parable of the Sower is recorded in each of the synoptic gospels (Matt, Mark, Luke). In the teaching of Jesus, agricultural themes were a rich source of material for illustrating the nature of God's kingdom. In the Old Testament, promises of spiritual restoration are often illustrated by or compared to sowing seed and fruitful harvests. On the other hand the prophets used agricultural devastation as a way to symbolize God's judgment.

The most surprising feature of the Parable of the Sower is Jesus' description of a sower who casts seed upon four kinds of soil only one of which is truly capable of producing fruit. Jesus was confirming what the disciples were already observing: that God's Word does not have the same effect everywhere it is proclaimed. Not all preaching yields the fruit of repentance and faith.

Unlike the typical farmer who carefully casts seed upon the good soil, the sower of the gospel casts it everywhere. Gospel witnesses are blessedly careless in the way they spread about the good news. They are not so naïve as to believe that every person who hears will believe. But the task of the faithful witness is to get the gospel out. God in his sovereign mercy will determine the outcome.

Main Idea: Jesus used a parable of a sower casting seed to illustrate how the word of God is either received or rejected.

1. The Word of God and salvation.

Vv. 1-9

- The "seed" in the parable of the sower is the Word of God. The sower is first symbolic of Jesus. But his apostles after him the church following them will become sowers of God's Word as well. The Parable of the Sower illustrates the relationship of the Word of God to salvation. That is it symbolizes the fact that God draws, saves, and continues to grow his people through means of his word.
- The Word of God has a place of prominence in the life of the Christian. Jesus symbolizes the in-breaking of God's kingdom as sower sowing seed because the chief means by which God saves his people is through the ministry of the Word.
- Jesus is still the chief Sower. He passed along the ministry of God's Word to the apostles who in turn entrusted it to the church.

- Notice the seemingly careless way in which the sower casts about the seed. This symbolizes the generosity with which the message of salvation is to be offered to all.

2. The Word of God and judgment.

Vv. 10-17

- Jesus's disciples noticed that his shift to teaching in parables which were difficult to understand represented a major change in his ministry. "Why," they wondered, "would Jesus use a teaching method that made the truth difficult to grasp? He explained that given the people's repeated rejection of his teaching he would now speak to them in mysteries as a means of judging their unbelief.
- Jesus is the sovereign Lord of salvation. He alone is Savior and he alone is Judge. It is not to us to either save or judge. Our task is to cast forth the gospel with the sort of generosity symbolized in the parable.

3. The Word of God and the human heart.

Vv. 18-23

- After teaching the Parable of the Sower Jesus turned to his disciples to explain the meaning. The various soils in Jesus' parable represented the different ways that people generally respond to the Word of God. He divides these common responses into four categories. You will notice that three of the responses represent an expression of unbelief while only one describes the believing heart.

a) The hard heart. (vs. 19)

b) The shallow heart (vv. 20-21)

c) The crowded heart (vs. 22)

d) The receptive heart (vs. 23)