

In essence, parables are earthly stories with heavenly meanings. There are two purposes of parables – to reveal God’s Word to believers, and to conceal God’s Word from unbelievers (Matt 13:11). Believers will be blessed as they will be able to understand God’s Word, while unbelievers’ spiritual blindness and deafness will be exposed due to their lack of understanding of God’s Word. The root cause of the unbelievers’ inability to see and to hear is their heart (Matt 13:13-15). Their hearts are “*waxed gross*” (Matt 13:15), i.e. their hearts are thickened, and are no longer receptive to the things of God. In comparison, we see the heart of a believer (Matt 13:16-17). The disciples were tender-hearted, thus they had the privilege to partake of the spiritual and physical blessings of seeing and hearing God’s Word.

In this parable of the sower, Christ describes four types of ground, each representing a different condition of the heart in response to God’s Word.

1 Matthew 13:4: A Hardened Heart

This seed landed on the “*way side*” (Matt 13:4). The fields (where the seeds were scattered) were divided by footpaths. Thus, some seeds may land on the footpaths or the wayside. The seed will sit on the footpath and will end up being eaten by the fowls. The footpath or wayside represents the hardened heart of one who only hears God’s Word but does not understand it because he does not believe. God’s Word simply sits on top of his heart.

2 Matthew 13:5-6: An Uncommitted Heart

This seed is planted on “... *stony places, where they had not much earth ...*” (Matt 13:5). This represents one who hears the Word of God and joyfully receives it immediately, but when faced with trials and difficulties, rejects the Word and turns away. He is not fully committed to the Word of God. Do we have the confidence to say that “... *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*” (Matt 4:4)?

3 Matthew 13:7: A Distracted Heart

This seed is planted into thorny ground, where the thorns choke the seed. This describes one who heard the Word of God, received it and began to live his life in light of God’s Word. However, when distractions come, such as “... *the care(s) of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches...*” (Matt 13:22), he will end up becoming unfruitful. No man can serve two masters. We cannot have the best of both worlds.

4 Matthew 13:8: A Good Heart

This seed is planted on good ground. The ground is prepared and receptive. It describes one who hears and understands the Word of God and believes it with all his heart. He fully surrenders to the Lord Jesus and has a tender and malleable heart which brings forth fruit. His heart is obedient and God is pleased to use him.

Let us examine our hearts, and ensure that we have an obedient and good heart that fully surrenders to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!