

KINGDOM PARABLES – Week 3 – Study Guide

The Miracle of a Seed

The parable of the Sower is found in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. In Luke’s version of this story, he reminds us “The seed is the word of God” (Lk.8:11). This parable is used to teach us how the Word of God functions in our lives and in the world around us as well as how it builds the Kingdom of God.

1. The Parable of the Sower – Mark 4:1-20

In this Parable, the field is the world, the seed is the Word ; Jesus sows the word . He is pictured as the farmer who sows the word as he goes. He sows it everywhere; it has the same message of salvation and is available to all. It takes time for the word to grow, and it must be placed in an environment that will foster growth.

Mark 4:2-9

² He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: ³ “Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times.”⁹ Then Jesus said, “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”

Review the four soils that Jesus presents in this story and describe how the soil affects the growth of the seed:

PATHWAY SOIL – _____

ROCKY SOIL – _____

THORNY SOIL – _____

GOOD SOIL – _____

2. This Parable begins and ends (verse 3 and verse 9) with a call to **“Listen!”** He wanted his audience to “hear” this and to think about its meaning! If you were not familiar with the interpretation that Jesus gives later in v. 13-20, how would you interpret this story?

Read Mark 4:10-12 in your Bibles. What clues does Jesus give us there about its purpose ? Can you find a "spiritual" interpretation here? Who is this parable for?

¹⁰ When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. ¹¹ 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 ¹² so that,

"they may be ever seeing but never perceiving,
and ever hearing but never understanding;
otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!"^{1a}

3. Jesus Interprets the Parable – Mark 4:13-20

The interpretation Jesus gives the Disciples calls attention to the RESPONSE of the people around him to the word of God. Here the emphasis is on how people (like the seeds) respond to the soil they are planted in. Environment has an effect!

¹³ Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? ¹⁴ The farmer sows the word. 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. ¹⁶ Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.

Review what Jesus says about the people among whom the word is sown. How does each receive the word? does anything happen in their lives?

Pathway People – How do they receive the word?

Rocky soil people – How do they respond? What do they need?

Thorn-choked people – What happens in their lives?

People with prepared hearts –

4. This Interpretation of the Parable also calls for a Response from the audience.

As you think about the various types of responses to the message Jesus brings, can you see *yourself* in any part of them? How about *people you know*?

5. Mark 4:21-25 A Lamp on a Stand – Jesus gives a warning!

²¹ He said to them, “Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don’t you put it on its stand? ²² For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. ²³ If anyone has ears to hear, let them hear.”

²⁴ “Consider carefully what you hear,” he continued. “With the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and even more. ²⁵ Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.”

What is the warning?

6. Redeeming the Soils – In the gardens of real people, soil can be redeemed; It can be enriched with fertilizer, with the addition of sand or black dirt; dry soil can be watered; thorny soil can be treated to remove the weeds; rocks can be removed and ground made good. Jesus has provided remedies for redeeming the soil in our hearts. He desires that we bear much fruit.

What does God do to redeem the soil in our hearts?

Isaiah 58:11 –

Isaiah 55:9-13

2 Corinthians 9:8-11

Psalms 1:1-3

Do you need to do to respond to Him? “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

7. The Parable of the Growing Seed – Mark 4:26-29 -The Importance of the Harvest

²⁶ He also said, "This is what **the kingdom of God** is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷ Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. ²⁸ All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. ²⁹ As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because **the harvest has come.**"

How does this parable illustrate the power of the Word of God ?

How does it illustrate Growth under God's initiative between the proclamation of the Word and the Harvest ?

8. The Parable of the Mustard Seed – Mark 4:30-32

³⁰ Again he said, "What shall we say **the kingdom of God** is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which is the **smallest of all seeds** on earth. ³² Yet when planted, it grows and **becomes the largest of all garden plants**, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade."

This parable turns on the small size of the mustard seed and the greatness of the plant it inspires.

What is Jesus teaching us about the Kingdom of God?

TO THINK ABOUT – We have studied sowers, seeds, and soils in today's lesson. Once again Jesus speaks using common, earthly things to illustrate the heavenly. Each part of his parables anticipates the Eternal Kingdom of Heaven. He speaks so that we will see ourselves as part of his message. **"If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."** (Mk. 4:23)