

THE SOWER AND THE SEED

BIBLE TEXT: Matthew 13:1-23

LESSON 75 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psalm 1:3)

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Matthew 13:1-23

¹ The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.

² And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

³ And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;

⁴ And when he sowed, some *seeds* fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

⁵ Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:

⁶ And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

⁷ And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

⁸ But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

⁹ Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

¹⁰ And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

¹¹ He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

¹² For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I The Sower, the Seed, and the Soil

1 The ship occupied in order to reach the multitudes, Matthew 13:1, 2

2 The Sower — the Lord Jesus, the Preacher of the Word, Matthew 13:3;

Mark 4:14 ¹⁴ The sower soweth the word.

3 The seed — the living, abiding Word of God, Matthew 13:4;

Luke 8:11 ¹¹ Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.

1 Peter 1:23 ²³ Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

4 The soil — the people to whom the Word is preached, Matthew 13:9

II The Four Different Kinds of Soil

1 The seed by the wayside — the indifferent hearers, Matthew 13:4; 13:19;

Luke 8:12 ¹² Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

2 The seed on stony ground — the unstable hearers, Matthew 13:5, 6; 13 : 20, 21

3 The seed among thorns — the encumbered hearers, Matthew 13:7; 13:22;

Mark 4:18-19 ¹⁸ And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,

¹⁹ And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

Luke 10:40-41 ⁴⁰ But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

⁴¹ And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

4 The seed on good ground — the honest hearers, Matthew 13:8; 13:23;

Luke 8:15 ¹⁵ But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

III A Warning to Them Who Heed Not the Word

1 The query of the disciples: "Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" Matthew 13:10

2 Parables are for those who know not the mysteries of the Kingdom, Matthew 13:11

3 "Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have," Matthew 13:12;

Luke 2:18 ¹⁸ And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

4 The spiritual blindness and deafness of those who see not and hear not, Matthew 13:13;

John 1:9 ⁹ That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

John 3:19 ¹⁹ And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

IV The Prophecy of Isaiah Fulfilled Again

1 The Lord's message to Israel of old: seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, Matthew 13:14; Isaiah 6:9

Isaiah 6:9 ⁹ And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed,

abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

¹³ Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

¹⁴ And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

¹⁵ For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

¹⁶ But blessed *are* your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

¹⁷ For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous *men* have desired to see *those things* which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear *those things* which ye hear, and have not heard *them*.

¹⁸ Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.

¹⁹ When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth *it* not, then cometh the wicked *one*, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

²⁰ But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;

²¹ Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

²² He also that received seed among the thorns is he that

but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

2 Deaf and blind, lest they should hear and see, and be converted, Matthew 13:15;

Isaiah 6:10 ¹⁰ Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

3 Blessed are they who see and hear the things the prophets desired to see, Matthew 13:16, 17;

1 Peter 1:10-12 ¹⁰ Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace *that should come* unto you:

¹¹ Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

¹² Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

NOTES:

The Parables of Jesus

A large proportion of Jesus' teachings are in the form of parables, a mode of instruction which was prophesied of old, "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (**Matthew 13:34-35** ³⁴ All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: ³⁵ That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. **Psalms 78:2** ² I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old). And *Jesus*, the greatest of all teachers, did this for the particular benefit of humanity. A parable is defined as a "comparison." The parables of Jesus are a comparison between material things with which men are familiar, and spiritual things with which they are not so familiar, in order that they may be led into a better and deeper understanding of those things "which God hath prepared for them that love him." And the Scriptures teach that there is a striking analogy between the natural and the spiritual. A parable, therefore, is not a riddle; it is intended to reveal, and not to conceal, the truth. It is the devil's design to conceal the truth; but Jesus came to reveal it, and His parables are remarkable for their simplicity. He never employed the language of the theologians. Thus this great Teacher sought to put the truth in a form that would bring it within the grasp of man's finite mind. "And the common people heard him gladly."

Spiritual Blindness

But there is another angle to this matter of understanding spiritual things. When the disciples asked Jesus why He spoke to the people in parables, He replied, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given" (Matthew 13:11). And Jesus proceeded to explain that there was a class of people too dull of hearing to grasp spiritual things. Such people existed in Isaiah's time; they existed in Jesus' time; and they exist in our day, too. Therefore the Lord often repeated His warning, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." It is possible for one to be mentally keen but woefully dullspiritually. And the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day were outstanding examples of this class. Jesus was seeking to plant the truth in the heart, without which there is no such thing as an understanding of things spiritual. "The

heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

²³ But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth *it*; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Corinthians 2:14). "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (II Corinthians 4:3, 4). We need not marvel, then, that there are multitudes who have eyes to see and they see not; and ears to hear and they hear not. The difficulty lies in the heart, and not in the mind.

The Parable of the Sower

The Sower in this parable is the Lord Jesus Christ. "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man" (Matthew 13:37). That "good seed" is the Word of God (**Luke 8:11** ¹¹ Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God, which Jesus was sowing at this very time, as He sat in the ship and taught the multitudes standing before Him. And the soil upon which the Seed fell were the people listening to His words. The listeners, therefore, had a typical example before them of the very parable which Jesus was teaching them. But the meaning of this parable is not confined to the people who stood before Him. The parable has a prophetic significance in that it reveals the kind of reception which will be accorded His Word, as "this Gospel of the Kingdom" is preached.

Jesus is the greatest Teacher the world has ever known. Of Him the lawgiver Moses prophesied, saying, "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken" (Deuteronomy 18:15). And when Jesus stood upon the Mount of Transfiguration, a Voice from Heaven came, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matthew 17:5). All other teachers are "of the earth, earthy"; but the Lord Jesus came from above, a truth which even Nicodemus recognized, for he said, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God." "He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all" (John 3:31) If, then, we hope to make Heaven our home, we must hearken diligently to the teachings of this great Teacher.

The message which Jesus brought also came from above. "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me" (John 14:24) And again of this Word He says, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). Wonderful is the secret of life hid in the Word of God. "Heaven and earth," said Jesus, "shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). And of these "words" the Apostle Peter wrote, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (I Peter 1:23).

There is therefore no fault to be found with the Sower, nor with the Seed. They both came from Heaven. The fault with which Jesus deals in this parable lies with the soil, which is "of the earth, earthy." The Seed has been faithfully sown, and it will always bring forth life where it finds good soil. Wherefore, Jesus proceeds to describe the ground upon which the Seed is sown.

The Way-Side Hearers

The first kind of soil described is the "way-side" ground which has been hardened by traffic. The seeds fell upon it, but the

fowls came and devoured them: "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart." And these may be defined as the indifferent hearers. They hear the Word and forthwith go their way and forget what they heard. They are more concerned with material things than they are with spiritual things. Indifference today is keeping multitudes upon multitudes out of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Stony-Ground Hearers

The second kind of soil is the "stony" ground. This is the soil where the seed takes root, but because it has no depth the hot sun soon withers what has come forth, and it is carried away with the winds. And Jesus explains that "he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended." This class may be defined as the unstable hearers. An unstable man is one who hears the Word and receives it into his heart, and begins with joy the life of a Christian. But he failed to count the cost, and is not prepared to face the tribulations and persecutions which sooner or later will confront everyone who undertakes the Christian warfare. Jesus has not left us ignorant of these facts; He advises all who would be His disciples first to count the cost (**Luke 14:25-33** ²⁵ And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, ²⁶ If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have *sufficient* to finish it? ²⁹ Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, ³⁰ Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. ³¹ Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? ³² Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. ³³ So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple). Multitudes today are failing to go all the way because they did not count the cost.

The Thorny-Ground Hearers

The Lord has revealed in this parable a third class also who fail to make the goal. "And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them." "And these are they," He explains, "which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful" (Mark 4:18, 19). And this class may be defined as the encumbered bearers. Martha was one who was inclined in that direction. She invited her Lord into her house, but was cumbered about much serving, while her sister Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard His Word. And Martha becoming vexed said, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?" And Jesus replied, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:38-42). If a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ allows the "care of this world" so to encumber him as to rob him of "that good part," it is only a few steps farther, and the "deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in" will also "choke the word." And not a few who were once faithful followers of their Lord have ended on this route,

QUESTIONS

- 1 What was Jesus' purpose in presenting the Truth in parables?
- 2 Why did He speak to the multitudes in parables, but to His disciples in plain language?
- 3 Why can a converted man understand the Truth better than a sinner?
- 4 What was the seed which Jesus sowed and in what manner did He sow it?
- 5 How many kinds of ground were there and what did they symbolize?
- 6 Why did Jesus emphasize the necessity of hearing His words?
- 7 Quote the phrase Jesus often repeated, during His ministry, to emphasize the hearing of His words.
- 8 In what way are His words like seed?
- 9 Tell of an instance related in the Bible which shows forth the power of His words.
- 10 What will happen to the man who rejects His words, or even neglects to hear His words?

Here are three classes of people who will not find an entrance into that heavenly Kingdom on that great day when the trumpet sounds — not because they were ignorant of the Way, but because when they heard the Word they failed to keep it in their hearts. No fruit came to maturity. But the encouraging part of this parable is that there was also a class where the seed "fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold." And "that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15). And this class we may call the honest hearers. Jesus has made it very plain in this parable and in many other portions of Scripture that not all who begin the Christian race will end it successfully. And it is not hard for us to discern to which of these four classes we belong.

**"I'd rather walk with Jesus alone,
And have for a pillow, like Jacob,
a stone, Living each moment
with His face in view, Than
shrink from my pathway and fail
to go through."**