

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

MATTHEW 13:3-9 • TV152A

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Matthew 13:3-9

“And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

I want you to open your Bible today to the book of **Matthew, Chapter 13**. I will be reading from **verse 3**, but we will be using most of this chapter.

I am speaking to you today on this subject: **“THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.”**

Our Lord spoke to the multitude by parables. The disciples asked him one day; they said, *“Why do you teach them in parables?”* He said, *“Because they have eyes but they do not see and ears but they do not hear and hearts but they do not understand.”*

“Blessed are your eyes they see and your ears, they hear, and your hearts, they understand. But, I speak to the multitude in parables.” He spoke many parables.

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This one is the “**Parable of the Sower.**” Let’s look at it in **Matthew 13:3**. You just keep your Bible open to that particular chapter and let’s look at the “**Parable of the Sower.**” And it says; *“He spake many things unto them in parables saying, behold a sower went forth to sow.”*

Now, what our Lord says here is that a certain farmer in an eastern country one morning gathered his seed together and put it in a sack and went out into the field. And he began to sow the seed; he began to scatter it in every direction. The sower went forth to sow and he scattered the seed in every direction.

Now, there was a pathway along the field where people walked, where the ground was hard and well packed with footprints of the people who had walked there. Some of the seed that the farmer sowed fell on that hard, fallow and well-packed ground.

Our Lord said that it did not come forth, but that it laid there. As the sower went on across the field throwing the seed, the birds in the trees waited until he had gone and then they swooped down and picked up the seed that had fallen on the hard and fallow ground.

Now, that is the first type of ground that he tells us about. He said, *“The sower scattered the seed”* and some of it fell on this pathway, on the hard, fallow, unplowed ground. Of course, the seed did not take root, it did not bear; it just laid there.

After a while the birds of the air came and bore it away and he continued to sow. Some of the seed fell on rocky, stony, ground. In other words, there was a part of the field where the plow had not turned over the dirt.

The dirt was just a thin layer on top of the rocks. Some of the seed fell there on this rocky soil. It fell there where the soil was so thin, right next to the rock. He said, *“This seed took root and sprang up quickly;”* the little tender plant came up quickly.

“Then the sun came out and because the plant had no root, because the plant did not reach down into the moisture, deep within the ground, it withered and died.”

Then the sower moved on and he said; *“The sower scattered the seed and there was a corner of the field in which the thorns and briars and vines grew. Some of the seed fell among the thorns and the briars and it sprang up.”*

But, as it grew, the thorns and the briars and the vines grew and choked the plant and it did not bear any fruit; it died also.

Then our Lord said that *“some of the seed fell on good ground,”* ground that had been plowed, ground that had been prepared, and ground that was rich and ready to receive the seed.

“When the seed fell on the good ground it began to grow and it brought forth much fruit, some a hundredfold and some sixtyfold and some fortyfold.”

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Now, there are the four types of ground; you remember that. We are going to look into all four types of ground that our Lord mentions here. He said, *“A sower went forth to sow and he scattered the seed, some of it fell on hard ground, unplowed, ground, fallow ground.”*

“The birds of the air swooped down and took it away. Some of it fell on real, thin soil, that covered rocks and it grew up quickly. But then, the sun came out and it withered and died.”

“Some of it fell among thorns and briars and they choked the plant. Some of it fell on good ground and it brought forth, some a hundredfold, not all the same in the whole field, some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, and some fortyfold.”

When he had left the multitude his disciples came over to him privately and they said, *“Lord; declare unto us the parable of the sower; tell us what you are teaching to people. Open our understanding and tell us about the parable of the sower.”*

That’s what I want to do, just take the Scripture and look at what it says. Now, this parable is also recorded by **Luke** and by **Mark**. But you stay in **Matthew chapter 13**. We will be referring to some of those verses, but mainly **Matthew 13**.

First of all: Our Lord said this to them; *“The seed is the Word of God”*

Now, that’s the seed, the preacher of the Gospel is the sower. He goes forth over the world, wherever he goes, by television, or by radio, or from the pulpit or the missionaries, out yonder in the jungles, wherever a man preaches, a true minister of the Gospel; he’s like the sower, scattering precious seed.

Now, what is that seed? Our Lord said, *“The seed is the word of God.”* Now, when the sower goes forth with the seed, the first thing that we know about the sower and his seed is this; he didn’t make the seed; God made the seed.

The same thing is true of the man who preaches the Gospel (yes, the Gospel is his only his seed). If a man doesn’t preach the Gospel, if he preaches human reason and human logic, if he preaches human tradition, if he preaches ritualism, if he makes it up, then it’s dead seed. It is lifeless seed.

But, when a preacher goes forth bearing the precious seed, the Word of God, it is not his own seed but it is God’s Word. God makes the seed.

The Scripture says: *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God.”* In other words, all Scripture is God-breathed. *“Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit to write the word.”*

And this is the seed that was sowed; it is God’s Word.

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Paul said to young Timothy; *“Preach the word.”* God said, *“My word which goeth forth out of my mouth will not return unto me void; it shall accomplish that whereunto I have sent it.”* Now, the seed is God’s Word. The sower is the preacher and the seed is God’s Word.

Secondly: The seed is living seed!

God’s Word is the living Word. Listen to this Scripture: *“We are born again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible seed by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever.”*

One time an atheist came to a preacher and he said to him; “how do you know that God made all things?” He said, “I can make things that you claim God made.”

He said, “Look; I have made a seed of corn. I have in my hand a seed of corn that I made and I have a grain of corn. I have in my hand beside it a grain of corn that you said that God made. Now which one is the grain of corn that God made?”

The man looked at them carefully and they did resemble; they looked very much alike, both were just shriveled, dried, grains of corn. You know, it is very difficult to tell waxed flowers from real flowers.

The preacher looked at these two grains of corn and he said to the man “I will tell you, if you will give me a few days, I will tell you which grain of corn you made and which grain of corn God made.”

The man said to him: “Why do you need a few days?” Well, he said; “I will tell you that I am going to plant them and the one that comes up is the one God made because it has life in it.”

“You may make one that resembles the one God made and you may make one that no one can tell the difference by looking at it but the one that has life; that’s the one that God made.”

So, this Word that we preach, this seed that we sow, this precious seed is living seed. It’s the living Word of God. We are born again by the living Word of God; the Word gives life. **James 1:18** says: *“Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth (the Word of life).”*

Thirdly: Notice the thing about the preacher who sows the seed: Our Lord says in **verse 37**: *“The sower is the Son of man and the seed is the word of God, (the living Word of God).”*

Here is something else about it: the preacher’s task is to preach the Word. He is not responsible for the harvest. His task is to preach the Word. He is not responsible for the harvest. God is the Lord of the harvest. The harvest is in the hands of God.

It says over in **1 Corinthians 3: 5 and 6**; Paul said this: *“I have planted; Apollos has watered; God giveth the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth anything, but God that giveth the increase.”*

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So, the Lord of the harvest is the God of glory. The preacher's responsibility is to be true and faithful in preaching the Word, in sowing the seed.

Just like the farmer who goes out and scatters the seed, he cannot make it grow, he cannot make it yield fruit; God is the Lord of the harvest but he can plow and he can water and he can fertilize and he can sow the seed.

That's our responsibility as the ministers of the Gospel, to preach the Word of God. We are to preach the truth of the Word about God, His character, His attributes, His glory, His Gospel, His saving mercy, His judgment, His wrath, and His truth.

We are to preach the truth of the Word about man, his fall into sin, his need of a Saviour, and his inability. We are to tell men the truth about themselves.

Fourthly: Then, we are to preach the truth of the Word of God about Christ!

That is what Paul said about the Corinthians; he said, "*I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified.*" It is my business as a preacher of the Gospel to faithfully preach the Word about God and the Word about man and the Word about Christ.

It is my business to faithfully preach the Word about salvation. What is salvation? "*For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.*"

Salvation and redemption is not in the law it is in Christ. Salvation and redemption is not in good works or in human merit, it is in Christ. Salvation and redemption are not in the ceremonies of religion or the ordinances of religion; they have their place; they do what God gave them to do but they do not save; Christ saves.

We are to preach the truth about judgment, and the truth about eternity. We don't know anything about the soil; we can't tell what kind of soil it is.

As we are preaching; as I am preaching right now; these Words are falling on different types of soil; this is the Word of God, the truth of God's Word. It is falling on different types of soil and I don't know anything about the soil.

But, I do know something about the seed. I do know something about the Word and that's my responsibility and that's my business. It's not to harvest; God is the Lord of the harvest.

It's my business to proclaim the truth, the truth about God, the truth about Christ, the truth about man, the truth about redemption, the truth about salvation, the truth about death, judgment, and eternal condemnation.

So; that's the first thing that the disciples said: "*Lord; declare unto us this parable.*"

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He said: *“The sower is the Son of man,”* the preacher of the Gospel, whether it be our Lord or his apostles, or those today, who faithfully preach his Word and the seed which is scattered, which is sown, is the Word of God.

First of all: He said: *“Some seed fell on hard and fallow ground”*

I told you a moment ago that there was a pathway. You who were raised on farms; you know something about the garden or the fields and how you have a pathway around the field and sometimes a pathway through the field.

As this sower scattered the seed, some of the seed, as he scattered it, fell there on that hard, fallowed ground that had not been plowed. People had walked on it and pressed it down and the seed just laid there, that's all, just laid there.

Those birds were sitting up in the tree watching. As the farmer moved on, they just swooped down and picked up the seed and bore it off.

What did the Lord say about that fallow ground? Are you listening? Our Lord said: “That fallow ground, that hard, baked, beaten, hard soil are people who are exposed to the preaching of the Word; they hear the Word; when it is preached to them.

But, they have no interest; they are totally indifferent. They are unconcerned and they are hardened. They may be hardened in sin; they may be hardened in their tradition. They may be hardened in their unconcern; they may be hardened in their religion as well as in their sins.

They may be hardened in the traditions of religion but somehow these people get in the way of the Gospel. Somehow their path crosses the path of the Gospel, maybe right now.

Maybe someone has gotten up this morning and read the paper and had a cup of coffee and walked over and turned this program on. Here I am preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I am talking about the things of the Kingdom of God. I am talking about the mercy and love of God in Christ. I am talking about the precious atoning, redeeming, and cleansing, satisfying, sanctifying, blood of the Son of God. I am talking about the one Mediator between God and men.

And some people are sitting there and you are hearing these words but they are just falling on hard hearts, hearts hardened by sin or hardened by tradition, or hardened by religion. It bears no fruit; it just sits there.

Our Lord said after the sower goes on, after the preacher goes off the air and quits his sermon, that the seed is laying there. You have heard it but then Satan comes, the fowl of the air and he replaces that seed with some other interest; he just bears it away.

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You get taken up with things. You have to fix dinner in a little while or you have to go to Grandma's house for a little while or you are going fishing this afternoon or you are going boating or you are going to do something.

That seed, that Word of God that I faithfully preach to you; it's gone "*and the place, thereof, knoweth it no more.*"

You know, Herod heard John the Baptist. He heard a great preacher. In fact, our Lord said of John the Baptist; "*he's the greatest man born of woman.*"

Herod heard him. The Scripture says "*that he heard him gladly*" but his heart was hard, hard with self-will. He was going to do what he was going to do.

His heart was hardened through self-will and through lust. The seed did not bear any fruit. John the Baptist was gone and Herod was still steeped in his rebellion and in his sin.

Agrippa heard Paul but his heart was hardened by ambition, pride, and human glory. Felix heard Paul and even trembled but the Word bore no fruit.

The Lord God has sent his Word. He has not left himself without a witness. He has sent His Word by preachers, pastors, prophets, evangelists and teachers. He has sent His Word from the pulpit in books, in Bibles, in over a thousand languages.

Our Lord has sent His Word by missionaries in every nation. Yet, man's heart is hard; his heart is hard, unconcerned and indifferent. The deceitfulness of sin has hardened his heart and the deceitfulness of religion and he will not hear. Now, that is the first type of soil.

All right, our Lord said as He continued; "*Some of the seed fell on stony ground.*" Do you remember me mentioning that a moment ago where the soil was right on top of the rock, just a thin layer of soil, just a ½ inch of soil or an inch of soil on top of the rock (stony ground)?

The seed fell on that stony ground and it did begin to grow. It germinated and sprang up and the little tender plant came up but there was no root, no taproot reaching down into the soil to get the nourishment, life, and water underneath. The sun came out and just baked it and burnt it and it withered and died.

Our Lord continued, he said: "*The seed that fell on the stony ground; those are the people who hear the word of God and they hear it gladly and they receive it immediately and they show an interest in it and they receive the word and begin to follow its teachings.*"

"*But; they have no depth; (they have no taproot, no root reaching down into the nourishment of Christ) and they soon wither and die and fade away.*"

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In other words, they have no real conviction of sin. They have no true repentance and Godly sorrow. They have no conflict or struggle in this matter of conviction and conversion. They have no genuine love for Christ and no saving faith in Christ.

They have no awareness of what it means to be saved, what it means to know God, what it means to be separated unto the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, to know the living God in Christ Jesus. They don't know what that means.

They express gladness. He said, "*They receive the word immediately* (gladly and show a lot of interest but their interest is not in the person of Christ; their interest is in the benefits of Christ)."

Oh, they are glad to have forgiveness and they are glad to be healed. They are glad to prosper and they are glad to be in good health and they are glad to have their prayers answered. They are glad to make new friends and they are glad to be going to heaven. They are glad to miss hell and they wear little buttons that say; "it is fun being saved."

They make quick progress in religion; they profess faith today and they are teaching a Bible class tomorrow. But, something happens; the hot sun of trial and difficulty. I don't know what direction the trial may take or from what direction it will come.

Maybe it is the rain from heaven or maybe it's the floods from earth, or maybe it's the wind that you can't even tell really where it comes from, but trial comes, the hot sun of trial and difficulty, and persecution because of the Word of God.

It hits them and because they have no root, they quickly wither and die and fade away. That's what our Lord said, "*The seed falls on stony ground, the thin layer of earth and it springs up quickly but it has no root*, (it has no source of strength. It has no source of grace. It has no source of nourishment)."

Therefore, when the sun comes out and bakes it, it just withers and dies. He said, "*These are people who hear the gospel; it sounds good to them.*" The preacher promises them forgiveness, health, prosperity, life, heaven, and all of these things.

They just accept it and with gladness they rejoice in it and they go out and start witnessing and teaching and preaching.

Then, they run headlong into a severe trial, sickness, sorrow, death, or persecution for the sake of the Word, or any type of trial and they quit; they just quit because they wither and die. They had no root; they had no taproot reaching into the water of life, into Christ.

They had no root reaching down into the person of Christ, drawing from him the strength and grace and help that they need in this time of trouble.

Our Lord told Paul: "*My grace is sufficient.*" John said, "*They went out from us because they never were of us.*" They never had that root. You see, the strength of the believer is not in

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himself, neither is it in a plant itself; it is in the nourishment that the plant gets from the ground in which it is planted.

So, we are planted in Christ and our taproot; that's what Job said; *"the root of the matter is in me;* (it reaches into Christ and draws from him all that we need)." He is our strength; He is our sanctification; He is our wisdom, and He is our life.

Now watch this: *"Some fell among thorns and briars."* Now, listen to me: Our Lord said is saying; "The seed is sowed and over there in the field were briars and vines and thorns that the plow had not dug up and plowed up."

The seed fell. It grew just like the thorns and briars grew but the little tender plant was soon choked out by the big briars and thorns that were there. Our Lord said: *"These are people who hear the word;* (they hear the truth of the Word; they hear the Gospel)."

They make a profession of faith and they endure for a while but then three things: *"the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things choke the word and they become unfruitful* (they drift away with the cares of this world)."

Our Lord one day said this to the believers: *"Take no thought what ye shall eat, what ye shall drink, what ye shall wear."* Those are the cares of this world; "What are we going to eat? How am I going to keep my job? How am I going to support my family?"

"How am I going to make a living? How am I going to pay my taxes? How am I going to pay my house rent? How am I going to raise my children? How are they going to be educated, you know? I've just got to give myself to the cares of this world."

He said: *"Your heavenly Father knows you have need of these things. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you."* Set your heart on the Kingdom of God and these things will be added to you. These are the things that the heathen seek after but you seek first the Kingdom of God and God will supply all of your need.

He said: *"Look at the lily of the field; they toil not, neither do they spin. Yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."*

He said: *"Consider the sparrows of the air; they aren't worth much and yet not a one of them falls to the ground without your heavenly Father."* He said: *"If God clothes the flower of the field and feeds the birds of the air, shall he not much more clothe and feed you, O ye of little faith?"*

Secondly: The deceitfulness of riches!

Oh how the hearts of men are wooed by possessions and by riches and by the things of this world. *"The love of money is the root of all evil."* That is what the apostle said.

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Spurgeon, the great preacher of London, England said this: “For every one man that I have seen fall through poverty, I’ve seen 50 fall because of riches.” How riches steal our hearts away from Christ!

You know, the prophet of old said this: *“Lord, keep me from poverty lest I steal but keep me from riches lest I forget God.”*

This is what our Lord is talking about. A man hears the Gospel; maybe he’s just an ordinary fellow, you know, just getting by and hears the Gospel. He likes what he hears and he starts going to church and he starts hearing the preacher and then he gets a promotion.

Then, he gets on a committee, and then he gets in the Country Club and then he gets running around with the crowd that makes money and he invests money.

After a while his church is not important to him anymore or the Gospel is not important to him anymore; God’s not important to him anymore. The deceitfulness; riches deceive; they deceive. They steal your heart from Christ.

Thirdly: The lust of other things!

Let me tell you this, nothing is worthwhile that takes you away from Christ. I don’t care what it is; that will apply to anything. Nothing is a blessing unless it draws you closer to Christ, unless it makes Him more important, unless it sets your affections and heart on Christ. If anything in your life takes your heart away from the redeemer it is not worthwhile.

Fourthly: The last ground, he says; *“Some fell on good ground.”*

Now, the ground wasn’t good by nature; it is just like all other ground. What made it good? It had been plowed; it had been broken up; it had been prepared by the farmer. It had been just disked and plowed, and broken and torn apart until it was ready for the seed.

Our Lord said: *“These are the people who receive the word; they hear the word and understand it and it brings forth fruit.”*

The Holy Spirit prepares the heart to receive God’s Word. He breaks it with Holy Spirit conviction. He breaks up our old hard, callous, indifferent, unconcerned heart, and we become concerned.

Why is it one day in your life that you didn’t give a flip for God’s Word and then suddenly a little later you became interested in the Gospel?

The Holy Spirit convicted you. It showed you that you needed Christ. It revealed to you the Saviour, the beauty of Christ. It gave you repentance and faith and brought you to Christ.

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He said: *“That good ground that received the word of God and understandeth; which also beareth fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold and some fortyfold.”* Every believer bears fruit.

I believe that we are talking about the fruit of the Spirit described in **Galatians 5:22**, *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance”*

The good ground bear good fruit to different degrees but it all bear fruit because the Word of God lives and brings life to His glory!