

Matthew 13.1-9, 18-23

What is the basic definition of a parable? A story based on real life; no proper names are given; it has a lesson with a direct application to the needs of the people

Introduction: Jesus was teaching people in the vicinity of Capernaum (*Matthew 13*), on shore of the Sea of Galilee

-There were so many people that he had to get off the shore a little because it was hard to speak to the people (they must have been pressing closer and closer to him)

Basic question of this parable: Why do some people accept the gospel and some people reject it?

-A very deep question

-People worship with us, hear the gospel, then go away and never respond

-**Why?** That is a very profound question

-**Whose fault is it?** Their own fault - God allows us all to have free will – we all make choices, and we have to live with the consequences

-After all, the gospel is free, and salvation is free – Why would anyone reject it?

Matthew 13 has seven parables in it

-How peaceful it must have been on the shores of the Sea of Galilee

-Jesus was a little off shore in a small boat

-The people on the shore were listening to every word

There was a lot of farmland in that area

-In fact, they were probably surrounded by farmland as Jesus spoke

-It is very likely that as Jesus spoke he pointed over to a farmer who was doing just what Jesus was talking about (sowing seed for the next harvest)

This is one of the most famous parables that Jesus ever spoke: **Read Matthew 13.1-9, 18-23**

Matthew 13.1-9

V1 – “The house” – **Which house?** Probably the house of the apostle Matthew (*Matthew 9.10*)

-**Why was Jesus at first sitting?** Because that is the way that rabbis taught in the First Century; they sat down to teach - **Read Luke 4.20** – very interesting!

-Our custom today is for the speaker to stand before the audience, but that was not the custom in the First Century with the Jewish people

V2 – **Why would so many people come out to hear Jesus preach?** Because they were searching for something that was missing in their lives

-They knew that this life was not all there was

-Also, the religion of their day had grown cold and lifeless

-There had to be something more to finding God

-**Why was the multitude standing on the beach?** No place to sit

V3 – **Why did he speak so much to them in parables?** Because we all need concrete pictures of what Jesus was talking about (the principles alone are not always good enough)

-**What is the name of this parable?**

-Many commentaries say that we should call this the Parable of the Soils

-**But what title did Jesus give to this parable?** Parable of the Sower (*Matthew 13.18*)

What are some of the great principles of farming that we still practice today?

- 1. It is very hard work – it takes many hours of effort to produce food
- 2. It is a very rewarding life
- In most farming communities, many farm boys want to grow up and become farmers (in spite of the hard work and low pay)
- 3. What is sown is what will be reaped – in other words, pumpkin seeds will produce pumpkins
- 4. There are many obstacles to overcome in farming
- In Middle Tennessee, for example, there is a thin layer of soil and limestone a few inches down – it makes farming a life of hard work
- Palestine had that kind of soil: a thin layer of dirt and rocks on down

Who was the sower in this parable? The parable does not say directly - in fact, the sower is not emphasized much at all in this parable

- However, **Read Matthew 13.37** (from the parable of the tares among wheat)
- **Read Jeremiah 31.27** (God)
- So let us assume that in its original version, the sower is Christ
- So is there an application to us today?** Yes, we are to sow the seed just as Christ did
- Where in the Bible are we told to spread the gospel?** *Matthew 28.19-20, Mark 16.15-16*
- What would the field represent?** **Read John 4.35**
- There are various fields of unsaved people around us
- It is not just the job of the preacher, the elders, the deacons, or the Bible class teachers, but it is the job of each Christian to help spread the gospel
- In schools of preaching, the preacher is taught that his life should be "transparent"
- In other words, people should be able to look through him and see Jesus (which may explain why the sower takes such a small role in this parable)

What does the seed represent? **Read Matthew 13.19** – the word of God

- In what sense is the Bible like seed?** When it is planted, it produces only after its kind - the Bible only will make Christians only
- It doesn't matter what the package of seeds says on the outside - the seed is still going to reproduce after its kind
- What kind of sowing did farmers do in the First Century?** "Broadcast method" – a bag over shoulder - then he went through the fields throwing seed everywhere
- Why did he throw the seed everywhere?** Because he was sure to hit the good ground occasionally

V4 –What was the first result of broadcasting the seed? Some of the seeds fell beside the road

- There were paths between these fields – some of the seed fell on the paths beside the roads
- What happened to the seed that fell on these hard places?** It did not germinate (because the ground was too hard), so the birds came and ate the seed
- What is the responsibility of the listener?** To accept it
- What happens with so many people?** They do not let the message sink in and go into their hearts
- They ignore the message; they are happy and see no need to respond
- When people do not let the message sink in, what does Satan do?** Snatches the seed away (removes any effect that the seed might have had)
- Thought question: How can we get people to accept the message?** We can't - they have to make that decision - there is nothing we can do to force people to accept the gospel!
- What hardens the hearts of people so that they will not accept the gospel?** Too many material goods, too good of a life, no need for God, being too self-satisfied

- Remember that Christ was the sower in the original sense of the parable
- What does that tell us about the preaching of Christ?** He failed many times to convert people
- Examples of that?** Rich Young Ruler – went away sorrowful (also, most of the scribes and Pharisees)

V 5 – What was the second result of the broadcasting the seed? Some fell on rocky ground

- Here in the northwest suburbs of Chicago, we have what we call “McHenry County potatoes” (rocks in the shape of potatoes) – most gardens are full of them
- What was the condition of the rocky ground?** Very thin soil, with many rocks
- What kind of person was represented here?** This person heard the word, accepted it, and then fell away
- Why did these seeds not grow very much?** No depth of soil
- Why does this type of person not grow very much?** No depth, no serious study of the Bible
- In most congregations we see some people who accept the gospel too quickly
- For that reason, we should never put pressure on people to obey the gospel
- Reason?** If there is not true conviction, they will just fall away immediately
- What specifically caused this person to fall away?** *V 21*: affliction and persecution (rough times)

What kind of affliction and persecution make people fall away? Criticism from families, etc.

- There are many who we have baptized who did not think this through, and they found out that it was easy to start the Christian life, but hard to finish the course
- Maybe this person still had evil in his heart; maybe he had evil habits and an evil lifestyle and did not repent
- Then problems developed, and he fell away
- An accurate observation: The person who is pressured into being baptized will not last

V 7 – What was the next situation with the seed? It fell into with the thorns

- Which grows faster: weeds or flowers?** Weeds (creation is corrupted by sin)
- There is a book that the author of these notes read several years ago entitled *Second Nature*
- The author of the book said that at first he thought weeds were just "unappreciated flowers," but after study, not so – weeds only grow where man has broken the ground (not in the wild)
- We have some very healthy looking weeds in our yards and gardens, and they have tremendous roots and are far stronger than delicate little flowers – they show very aggressive behavior in dealing with other plants in their way
- What did the thorny plants do to the good seed?** Choked the seed out
- What is it like to choke on something?** Horrifying
- Several years ago, the author of these notes was eating a meal with his mother, and she choked on a piece of food
- The author did the Heimlich maneuver on her and had the great honor of saving her life, but it was a horrible experience
- It all took place in just a few seconds
- What chokes out the life of a new Christian?** *V 22* – deceitfulness of riches
- How are riches deceitful?** They promise far more than they can deliver
- We can name all kinds of people who have fallen away from a congregation because of the deceitfulness of riches (some are falling away right at this very moment)
- **Read Matthew 6.24** – We have to make a basic decision in life: to serve God or money
- So the love of money has caused many to allow their Christian faith to be choked to death

V 8 – Isn't it great that Jesus didn't end the parable with v 7 (it would have been so depressing)

-**What was the last kind of soil where the seed fell?** The good soil

-The disciples may have been discouraged over how few were accepting the gospel

-But Jesus was promising here that there would be some who would accept the gospel and become great assets to the church

-In every faithful congregation, there will some great success stories – people who were converted from the world and who became great Christians and who bring forth so much fruit for the kingdom of God

Great lessons from this parable:

1. We must not look for quick results - it takes a long time to grow a tree

-An oak tree takes decades to get tall and strong

-And it takes many years to grow a strong, solid Christian, one who can always be counted on to stand for what is right

2. We should be most concerned about spreading the seed, not about how big the harvest is going to be

-We never know from looking at a person whether or not he will be receptive to the gospel

-Our Lord converted some pretty despicable characters, and let us remember the former lives of the Christians at Corinth - **Read 1 Cor. 6.9-11**

3. There will be some successes

-There are still some good people out there searching for the truth

-Let us never compromise the truth in an attempt to get new members