

Text: Mark 4: 1-20

Title: Parable of the Sower

Date: 7-12-09

Place: Sovereign Grace Baptist Church, Princeton, New Jersey

Mark 4: 1: And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. 2: And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine, 3: Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow: 4: And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. 5: And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: 6: But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. 7: And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. 8: And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred. 9: And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. 10: And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. 11: And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all *these* things are done in parables: 12: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and *their* sins should be forgiven them. 13: And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?

Proposition: This is a parable easy to be understood. But in it our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us a very solemn word: most who hear the gospel of the grace of God preached, even most that profess faith in Christ after hearing the gospel, are unregenerate, lost, and perish under the wrath of God.

Mark 4: 14: The sower soweth the word.

I. THE SOWER IS THE SERVANT OF GOD.

I stand before you this morning, like a farmer, who passes along his fields sowing seed. It is the Lord Jesus who ministers seed to the sower. I hope for a plentiful harvest. But like the farmer, all I can do is sow the seed.

I Corinthian 3: 5: Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? 6: I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

II. THE SEED IS THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

The Gospel is concerning Jesus Christ the Son of God.

John 14:6: Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Jesus Christ is the Way.

Proverbs 14: There is a way that seemeth right unto man

Man's wisdom seems right unto him; man looks to himself and thinks there is some goodness in him and it seemeth right unto him; man trusts in his will and it seems right unto him; man looks to his works and it seems right unto him

Proverbs 14:12: There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death. Jesus Christ is the Way. "no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Jesus Christ is the Truth.

Not only did he speak the truth but Christ is himself the Truth. He is the Word of God.

John 1: 1: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2: The same was in the beginning with God. 3: All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4: In him was life; and the life was the light of men...14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth....17: For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. 18: No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.

Paul told the Corinthians, I came "declaring unto you the testimony of God--Jesus Christ and him crucified."

We worship God in truth when we worship God in Christ Jesus the Truth. He said, "no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Jesus Christ is the Life.

1 John 5:12: He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

We are ruined by the fall. We have no way, no life and no truth in us except Christ abide in us and we in him.

It is by this seed sown, the word of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ, that God gives life and grows us in grace and knowledge of Christ.

1 Peter 1:23: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. 24: For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: 25: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

The sower is the messenger of the Lord--his preacher, those who are his witnesses. The seed sown is the word of the gospel of Christ. Now, let's consider the parable.

III. SOME HEAR AND RECEIVE THE GOSPEL AS SEED SOWN BY THE WAYSIDE.

Mark 4: 4: And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up....15: And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

Why are you hear this morning? Do you have a concern for your soul? Is it your chief desire to see the glory of God? Do you have any thought that eternity is just a breath away?

The Lord Jesus Christ says that some hear the Word with no concern about any of these things. You hear the word of God this morning: Christ Jesus the Lamb of God--the one who made propitiation--satisfaction for the sins of his people is your only hope, in him God eternal covenant is yes and amen. But as soon as you hear it, you dismiss it.

Why? The Lord says, Satan cometh immediately--like a buzzard upon the field--and taketh away the word that was sown in your hearts. O that Christ might be your strength like he was for Abraham:

Genesis 15: 11: And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

IV. SOME ARE DESCRIBED AS STONY GROUND HEARERS

Mark 4: 5: And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: 6: But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away...16: And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; 17: And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

Immediately, Some Receive it with gladness.

So often folks will be so excited after hearing the gospel preached. They cry; they agree; they speak of how they can't wait to come back.

But they have no root in themselves. The only root we have by nature is the root of bitterness.

- No true God-wrought conviction.
- No God-given faith.
- No repentance.
- No commitment.

When affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately--just as fast as they received the word--they are offended.

Matthew 5:10: Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Not only persecuted but who endure it

V. NEXT WE HAVE THE THORNY GROUND HEARERS.

Mark 4: 7: And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit....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.

The wayside hearer has no interest at all in who God is, what Christ did and what God says about his sinfulness. The stony ground hearer springs up fast and withers away as fast he sprang up. But the thorny ground hearer is entirely different.

The thorny ground hearer hears the word. As far as the carnal understanding, the gospel enlightens him. He has a taste for the heavenly gift; he goes for a long time in religion. Everyone around him thinks he is the genuine article and he thinks it of himself.

- This one is like the Pharisee whose life appears thoroughly godly
- This one even says I am a sinner
- This one cries tears like Esau and Judas
- Gives like Ananias and Sapphira
- Trembles at the word like Felix
- This one may preach and cast out devils and do many wonderful works
- Be held in high esteem like Diotrephes
- Associate with great men like Demas
- Be as secure as the 5 foolish virgins

The thorny ground hearer may say he agrees with the words of Paul that Christ Jesus is the:

I Timothy 6:...blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; 16: Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which NO MAN CAN approach unto.

1 Corinthians 12:3:...that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and *that* NO MAN CAN say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost

He is ever ready to proclaim the words of the Lord Jesus Christ that:

John 6:44: NO MAN CAN come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 9:4: I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when NO MAN CAN work.

But in his heart he does not believe the Master when the Master says:

Matthew 6:24: NO MAN CAN serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

The Master says, "Hearken, he that hath ears to hear let him hear." Worldliness is a briar patch--thorns. The cares of this world may be justifiable cares in your own mind, running after riches--material possessions--may seem to you as no real harm, or the lusts of other things-- Fame - Acceptance - Position - Power - Sensuality - Pleasure--may seem like it is yours for the taking and you see nothing wrong with taking it. But the Master says, these things do nothing but choke the word and it becometh unfruitful.

I John 2: 15: If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Sadly, the thorny ground hearer will justify himself until he hears Christ say, Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I never knew you.

Hear the Lord's word of promise, believer--Mt 6: 25-34

VI. THEN OUT OF THESE FOUR, WE FIND THIS NEXT ONE--THE TRUE BELIEVER RECEIVES THE GOSPEL IN GOOD GROUND.

Mark 4: 20: And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

The good ground is the heart prepared by God the Holy Spirit: a regenerate heart, a new heart, a pure heart. The sharp plow of the law has cut deep and broken up the stoney ground. The lightning and thunder and rain of God's wrath has beaten the clods of vain confidence into pieces. The stoney heart has been taken out. The LORD God said in Moses song:

Deuteronomy 32: 2: My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: 3: Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. 4: *He is* the Rock, his work *is* perfect: for all his ways *are* judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right *is* he.

The believer hears the word, receives it, and brings forth fruit. Some thirtyfold, some sixty, some an hundred, some sooner and more plentifully, but all bear fruit from God.

Galatians 5:22: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23: Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Application:

This parable of the Lord is to you who are taught by the Master--take home these 2 things.

1) Hearken, take heed, hold fast the gospel of Christ.

Mark 4: 13: And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?

How *will* ye know?

Mark 4: 10: And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. 11: And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God:

Ask him. THE GOSPEL IS TAUGHT IN THE HEART OF A SINNER BY CHRIST JESUS THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT JUST AS REAL, JUST AS EFFECTUALLY, AS IT WAS HERE WHEN HE SPOKE TO THEM. The seeing eye, the hearing ear, and the believing heart are from the Lord. Faith is not something men create of themselves. Faith is by the gift and operation of God's free grace in Christ. If you believe, and continue, it is because "unto you it is given."

Go to the Master and ask him. Hearken, and hear the word of the Lord. And abide in him.

John 15: 4: Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. 5: I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. 6: If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned.

2) This parable is also an encouragement when you see some who go unaffected, or who appear for awhile then disappear back into the world--God's word has not returned to him void.

Isaiah 55: 10: For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to

the eater: 11: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it. 12: For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap *their* hands. 13: Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign *that* shall not be cut off.

This is the doctrine of the Master, Christ Jesus the Lord. HE says, "Hearken! He that hath ears to hear let him hear."