

## The Sower

A good teacher will use the very best and effective tools for teaching his students. He will try to impart wisdom to them using imagery and descriptive words that will guide in understanding. Jesus, when He was on the Earth, was the best teacher, because He was God in human form. Since He was God, He was able to impart the very best wisdom. Colossians 2:9 says “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” What Jesus said, then is vitally important. The topics about which Jesus spoke were also important. He did not teach science although He knew science, and used scientific arguments. He did not teach math. Jesus taught about truths that are eternally important. He taught truths about Himself and about God, and He always used the best ways to describe them.

Jesus used something called parables as a teaching tool. A parable was a story about something that could happen in real life, but the elements in the story represented real life people, events, and truths. For instance, in one passage Jesus tells the story of a rich man who built a vineyard. The vineyard represented Israel and God’s chosen people. The rich owner represents God. Jesus said that the owner put some men in charge of his vineyard. Those renters represented the religious leaders throughout Israel’s history. Jesus then told the story that the owner had sent servants to get some of the fruits of his vineyard, but the caretakers beat the servants and killed some of them. This represented the prophets that God sent to warn Israel of its godlessness. Finally, the owner in the story sends his son, hoping they will listen to him. But the men who are running the vineyard kill him and throw him out. This represented how the religious leaders would eventually kill Jesus. The fictional story had parallels in real life, and some who were listening could understand the real point Jesus was making.

That is how Jesus taught. Matthew 13:34 says “All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them.” Jesus taught to reveal and conceal what He was teaching. If someone did not understand, they either asked Jesus or walked away. Many times the disciples came and asked Him what He meant by a certain parable, and Jesus had to explain it to them. Mark 4:34 says “But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.” These parables imparted spiritual truth to Jesus’ disciples, but they also impart spiritual truth to us, if we will listen. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote down and sometimes explained these parables so that we could understand them. Let us look at one of the most famous today. You can find it in the book of Mark, chapter 4. If you have a Bible, I invite you to turn there this morning.

Mark chapter 4 verses 1 and 2 says: “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. And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine, ‘Hearken!’” Jesus taught multitudes of people as He went around Israel, and preached wherever he could find a crowd and a pulpit. This time Jesus used a boat as a pulpit to speak to the crowd. He begins by calling them to attention. What He has to say is very important, and He doesn’t want anyone to miss out. Then He begins His parable:

“Behold, there went out a sower to sow: 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. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. 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. And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Jesus at the end of his sermon says, “If you want to hear what I say, listen. Try to get understanding in this matter.”

Jesus tells the story of a sower. Back in Bible times, a farmer would plow up his field with a plow and a team of oxen, then get his bag of seed. The farmer would walk through his field and throw seed all over it. If he had a very large field, he could not be very careful about where he threw, and so would throw everywhere. Some of

the seeds would fall on different parts of earth, and so some would do well and others would not do very well. In this story, Jesus told of four different types of soil where the seeds landed, and what they produced. It was a very simple story, and one that most people listening would have understood, since Israel was very agricultural. No one would have been offended by this story if they didn't understand what Jesus was saying.

The disciples themselves didn't understand exactly what Jesus was saying, and so asked him. Verse 10 says, "And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable." Jesus wanted His disciples to know of what He had been speaking, and so He started to explain the parable to them. He said, "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: 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." Jesus said that He wanted them to understand all that He was teaching. He then said that he hid some of the spiritual truths so that if someone was refusing to come to Him, they would not be held accountable for not hearing.

Jesus would eventually give His disciples the task of spreading the Gospel all over the world, and so it was important that He told them what this and other parables meant. So in verse 14 he begins to explain the parable. He says, "The sower soweth the word." In Luke 8:11, He says, "The seed is the Word of God." This is the Bible, yes, but the words that are in the Bible, meaning the good news about Jesus. God spreads His Word to everyone. It is the same Word for everyone, even if it is in different languages. God's Word is the same, but what is different is the different soils that the seed falls upon. So Jesus explains that the soils are different hearts. Each person reacts differently to hearing the Word of God, the Gospel of Jesus, and Jesus wants us to consider these different reactions to His Word.

Why did Jesus use the picture of a seed as the Word of God? God has given a very special power to His Word. The Bible can affect a person like no other book can. It can change your life, if you will let it. Hebrews 4:12 says "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." 2 Timothy 3:15-16 says "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." The message of the Bible can change lives. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." In order for you to be a new creature, you must believe the message of the Gospel. In order for you to believe the message of the Gospel, you must hear or read it in Scripture. The Bible, more than any other book, it important and life-changing.

Before we continue, I want you to ask yourself this question: Which one am I? As you hear me describe and explain each different type of soil, can you put yourself in one or more of the categories? In order to answer that question, you need to answer another question: "What do you think about the Word of God?" What is your impression of God's Word? Have you ever read the Bible? Do you understand it? Do you read it regularly? Since this parable addresses the different ways that people react to the Bible, you need to evaluate what you think about the Bible. Is it not important: just another book? Is it full of lies and inconsistencies? Was it written by God or written by man? How do you act when you hear it? That is the question we are asking this week. The Bible has the answers, if you will listen for them.

The first type of soil is soil that is too hard. The listeners would have understood this to be the road that ran through the field. The dirt had been packed down so much from walking on it, and it had not been plowed, so that no seed would be able to penetrate its surface and start to grow. The seeds would lay on top of the hard-packed dirt, and unless water or wind came to move them to better soil, they would be snatched up by birds looking for something to eat. They would produce no fruit at all, not even getting in their roots. Jesus explains the first type of soil in verse 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."

People who have this type of heart are people who hear the Word of God, but are hardened to it. They have something in their lives that prevents them from understanding. When this person does hear the Word of God, either preached in a sermon, shared by a friend, or read themselves, he does not respond to it. Before the Word of God can do any kind of work in his heart, Satan sends a distraction or a reason to not make a decision regarding God and Jesus Christ. He may whisper things like, "You can't really trust that book!" Satan may bring other things into your life that make you desire something other than God. Perhaps you once thought it might be nice to get back into church, but now would rather stay at home and watch television. Perhaps you heard the Word of God and thought, "I should do that!" but now can't be bothered with it.

The Bible says that the enemy of God is Satan. Satan is an angel that at one point decided he wanted to take God's place in heaven. At that, he was cast from heaven by God. God is more powerful than Satan because He created him. Satan ever since has been trying to get back to the place he feels is rightfully his. Since he cannot be the king of heaven, Satan is on the earth as mankind's enemy, too. He is our adversary. In fact, the word "Satan" means "adversary." The Bible says that he is our enemy. It says in 1 Peter 5:8 "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Satan wants only to destroy lives, and in your life, he wants to keep the Word of God from making any headway in your life. Is that what has happened and is happening in your life?

Are you cold to the things that the Bible talks about? When you are invited to church, do you get angry? I realize that there are many good reasons you may have for wanting to stay out of church. Maybe when you were little, you had a member of your church do something mean to you. Perhaps you had a parent who was a hypocrite. Maybe the pastor of a church you once attended ran off with another woman and left his wife and kids behind. Maybe you've tried reading the Bible and can't make any sense of it. I don't know what your particular reasons are for the way that you feel, but I do understand that it isn't easy to get around them. I myself have seen many so-called Christians and the way they treat their spouses, their kids, and other Christians. Yet I can see that despite that, God is still good and His Word is still true.

Friend, does this describe your heart? Are you hard to the things of God? When you hear it, does it do anything? Or is the Bible like a seed laying on a well-worn road? You will have no fruit in your life until you can soften your heart to the things of God. It may be that you have lived with your bitterness for a very long time, like feet on that well-worn path. Will you soften to your heart today? Will you in humility ask God for help to love and understand His Word? Will you ask God to help you have a tender heart toward Him? The heart that is the heart that this type of soil pictures is a heart that is not saved and still in sin. You cannot have salvation with a hard heart.

The second type of soil is the type that is the kind that is too stony. In order for seeds to grow, they need lots of good soil into which they can sink their roots. The deeper they can sink their roots, the better they will grow, because they can get to the nutrients. However, in some parts of Israel, there was a layer of topsoil over hard stone. The sun bears down on the soil, and because of the rock underneath, the soil warms. This warm soil helps the embryo of the seed get a sprout out of the seed coat and toward the sun. Seeds in these types of soil will appear to be bigger and healthier than other plants, because of their rapid initial growth. However, the roots cannot go very deep because of the layer of rock. With no way to reach water, the plants have no strength. When the sun beats down upon the plants, they quickly wither and die, before they can produce any fruit at all.

Jesus says in verses 16-17 "And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; 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." Jesus says that this kind of heart hears the Word, receives it with gladness, endures for a while, but when affliction or trouble comes, they are offended. Matthew says that this affliction comes because of the Word.

Luke says that the person will fall away during a time of temptation. Any way you read it, the situation with the person changes, and he no longer wants to be the way he was before.

People who have this kind of heart are people who hear God's Word and feel that it will help them out of some kind of trouble they are in. A person with this heart will read the Bible because he finds it inspiring. He will start going to church because he likes the people there. He will pray because he likes the thought of being a praying person. But he has never had a real relationship with Christ. He has never been born again. He looks and acts like a Christian, but has no depth. The Word of God has never penetrated very deeply in his life. With this type of person, eventually, some tragedy will come into his life that will be the end of his so-called Christianity.

He will lose someone or something important to him, and conclude that God must not be a good God after all. The fun and excitement of church will wear off, and it will be too hard to keep up appearances. Someone will make fun of him for being a "Bible-beater" or a "religious nut" and he will decide he doesn't need the hassle of having that kind of stigma put on him. Perhaps something will happen to him personally, and since the Word of God has not gone very deep, he has no strength. He will drop out of church, put away his Bible, and never think of God again.

Friend, does this describe your life? Are you the kind of person who goes to church but doesn't really understand what the Bible is teaching? Maybe you have been a part of church for a long time, and you keep going either to keep up appearances or because it makes you feel good. Maybe you read the Bible because you think that by doing so, God will take you to heaven when you die. Listen: going to a church where the Bible is preached is a good thing. I think it is so good that I am the pastor of that kind of church. Reading your Bible is a good thing. You ought to be in the Word of God every day. But if those things are in your life, they ought to be in your life because God has changed your heart toward Him. If they are in your life because you want to feel better about yourself, it will not be long lasting.

I have known too many people who start off strong. They make a profession of faith at some emotional meeting, and start attending church. They seem to be growing in the Lord, but eventually something happens to them and they drop out of church. Is that you? Does your spiritual maturity go very deep? Are you growing in the Lord? Did you make a profession of faith because you thought that Jesus would solve all of your problems, only to find that you still had them? Maybe you found you had worse problems. This is no reflection on Jesus, only on your heart. The only problem that Jesus promises to solve is the problem of where you will spend eternity.

Jesus says in John 5:24 "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Jesus came because you and I were condemned to spend eternity in Hell because of our sin. Jesus came to pay the price for our sins. He came to do what we could not do for ourselves. That problem Jesus solves perfectly and completely. If you today will place your faith and trust in Jesus Christ for your salvation, you can be saved. Will you start a relationship with God today?

The third type of soil is thorny soil. This is the kind of soil that has many other types of plants that are designed to steal nutrients from other plants. Seeds that fall upon thorny soil will do well initially. The seed will be able to sprout and grow a little. The roots have more room to grow because the soil is deep, so they sprout up. But soon the weeds that are around them begin to vie for the nutrients in the soil. The weeds in the ground block out the sunlight from the plant, and soon there is not enough nutrients for it. After a little while and a short fight, the plant will die without producing any fruit.

Jesus describes this kind of soil in verses 18-19: "And these are they 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.” Jesus says that the kind of person whose heart is like this thorny ground is the person who hears the Word of God and again, starts to grow in the Lord. She likes the Bible and the church, and feels she is a believer in God. She considers herself “religious,” and takes it seriously. Then one day, maybe, she misses a service or doesn’t read her Bible. Instead of renewing her relationship with God, the next time something else comes up, she takes the opportunity to do that instead. She becomes more interested in vacation, entertainment, spending her time and money on other things, and eventually wants nothing to do with church, God, or the Bible.

The fact that Jesus uses the analogy of a weed, or thorn, is very interesting. My wife gardens and I have noticed something about the kinds of things that grow in gardens. There are different kinds of weeds for different plants, and they seem to look very similar. For instance, the weeds that grow around potatoes look very similar to potato plants. The weeds that grow around broccoli look very similar to our broccoli plants. Weeds are something that steal nutrients from plants. They grow very quickly and are very hard to eliminate. The weeds in Jesus’ story represent things in our lives that become more important to us than the things of God. The words in the Bible cannot do a good work in us because they are choked out by the distractions we have in our lives. We care more for our houses and cars than church and other Christians. We don’t want to be bothered when the Bible talks about sin that is in our lives. We would rather be entertained than troubled by what God says we should do with our lives.

Friend, does this describe your life? What are the things that are most important to you? Do you put your pleasure before doing what pleases God? Do you put how you feel before how you know what God wants you to do? It may be that you are in a church right now and enjoying reading the Bible. Let me ask you a question: What would cause you to stop being interested in the things of God? What would make the Bible seem uninteresting to you? Are you “religious” right now because it a new fad? Or has the Word of God taken root in your heart. It may be that you consider yourself very spiritual, and that you feel you have a good grasp on who God is. If at some point you start to be concerned with other things, and those things take you away from God, you can know that this soil describes your heart.

Now, I need to explain what I am not saying. I am first of all not saying that you cannot have interests outside of God and His Word. I love studying the Bible, but I also like to spend time with my kids. I like to go fishing occasionally. It’s not wrong to like to do things that have nothing to do with church. The problem comes when those things are more important and subsequently draw you away from God. If you fish more than you read the Bible, that is a thorn in your life. If you spend Sunday morning watching TV when you could be at church, you can know that the TV has become a weed in your life. Second, I am not saying that if you used to go to First Baptist Church and are no longer going that you are unsaved. I am merely saying that if there is something that is more important to you than God and His Word, then you can know that your heart is like thorny soil. If you were once vibrant for Christ and are no longer interested because of other things, the Bible says that you are bearing no fruit for the Lord. You are not a born again person.

The last type of soil that Jesus describes is the best type of soil. It is the type of soil that is rich and ready for growth when the seed comes to it. It digs down its roots, sprouts and grows. It yields fruit that can be used for the pleasure of the sower. Jesus said “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.” This is the person who, when they hear the Word of God, they are converted and live a life of response. His life is one of growth in Jesus Christ and a flourishing testimony. The deeds that he does are ones that truly please God because they are done through the power of His Spirit. This is the type of man who is truly born again.

Friend, does this describe you? Are you living a vibrant Christian life? Do you have a consuming passion for God’s Word and the fellowship of His people? Are you excited about learning more about Him? Are the good things that you do a direct result, or fruit, from what you have learned about God? If these things are true, then

it means that you are really born again. The Word of God has grown as a plant in the soil of your heart, and you are living a life pleasing to God.

“Well,” you say, “My life isn’t that bad. It’s pretty good.” In this passage there are four types of soil. Three describe people who are not born again, and whose final destination is experiencing the wrath of God in the place the Bible calls Hell. Only one type of soil, the last one, describes the heart that has been changed by the Word and Spirit of God. It is a life full of deeds done for God as a direct result of the Word of God. “Oh,” you say, “so all I have to do is be a little better.” Friend, being better is good, but that is not what makes you saved. You cannot clean up your life enough for God to save you. You must come to Him humbly, accepting what Christ did on the cross for you. Then He Himself will clean you up.

There is no one who can ever be good enough to get to heaven. The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 7:20 “For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.” Proverbs 20:9 says “Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?” Obviously, the answer is “no one.” Romans 3:23 says “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” We are all unclean sinners who bear no fruit for God. But Ephesians 2:8-9 say this, and listen carefully: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Now listen to this next verse: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Those verses, found in the book of Ephesians, chapter 2 verses 8-10, say that salvation is nothing that we do for ourselves. No good works can save you, only the grace of God which comes by faith.

If you will believe what God has said, namely that Jesus Christ paid the price for your sin on the cross, you can be saved. If you today will admit your sinfulness to God and believe in your heart that Jesus Christ was punished for your sins, you can be saved today. It is then that you can start to live a life that is pleasing to God. Will you accept Him today? Or will your heart be hard? Will you accept your shallow religion, or will you let the cares of this world choke the Word, or will you accept His Word and grow in the Lord? If you have any questions about what we have talked about today, please don’t hesitate to contact us. You can do so in the following ways:

You can stop by our church building, which is located at 909 W. 8th St., by the softball diamonds. You can call us at 732-3321. You can E-mail us at [church@fbcpr.org](mailto:church@fbcpr.org). That’s CHURCH at F B C P R dot O R G. Or you can log on to our website, which is [www.fbcpr.org](http://www.fbcpr.org). If you would like to have a copy of this broadcast, either in audio or transcript form, you can find it on our website tomorrow. I would like to once again invite you ladies who are interested to our ladies Bible study. It meets every Monday for the next several weeks at our church building from 11:45 to 12:30. Feel free to bring a lunch with you and study the book of Ruth with us. Please join us again next week for the Way of Truth Radio Broadcast, brought to you by the First Baptist Church of Park Rapids, Minnesota.